

SOME CONSIDERATIONS OF THE ETHICAL ISSUES IN FOLKLORISTIC TODAY

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Contemporary culture includes the folklore as a component with specific expression, regardless of the level of technical progress or (of) the social system. Folklore is the outcome of a history-controlled process and it is also a steady, bipolar process. At present, it is expressed by great variety of forms, less identified in tradition, often atypical and confusing for specialists. The later will soon be obliged to modify the scope of research, under the pressure of the new system of action of folklore. By *folklore* I understand that element of culture defined in the UNESCO Recommendation for protection of traditional culture and folklore adopted at its 25th session of November 19, 1989, in Paris. I shall call it further „oral culture“, to avoid the limitative vision of some European schools, which include in folklore only literary musical and choreographic texts. This oral culture occurs both in the rural and (in) the urban milieu, in all socio-professional groups, at all ages, in both sexes, in subordinated or coordinating milieus, in élites, middle classes or lower classes. Folklore is not a lower or higher product of the human conscience within a culture. It is the outcome of cooperation, of a mutual exchange between the product of different classes, groups etc. The oral culture is the resultant of steady processes of interrelation between oral and printed creations anonymous and „authored“ works, the professional and the non-professional, the formal and the informal, the constant and the extempore. The folklore of the rural areas is only part of the oral culture which, as a whole, is a „system of systems“, in dynamical, accelerated motion. Like most intellectuals of the past centuries, contemporary specialists also know and study that unavoidable process which faces oral culture, innovation, which results in the partial or total modification of the traditional group patterns. No progress is possible in a human community in the absence of innovation. The folklore creation, necessary *par excellence* and having definite functionality, is a resultant of (the) two acting forces – the traditional and the innovating one. In (the) South-East Europe, the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were characterized by the emergence of special interest in the study of (the) relationships between folk culture and the other national forms of expression of culture, from the Middle Ages to modern times. That period of culture acquisition is tributary to a pronounced „ruralism“, also because of the fact that in most countries of that area the population living in the rural milieu was much more numerous and that milieu was more stable, with thoroughly organized structures and rules verified and accepted by the whole community for many centuries. This does not diminish, however, the role of the urban milieu in creating the popular culture, in outlining the guidemarks of the national culture and in influencing the rural milieu. The prevalent research accounts for an outstanding wealth of documentary material. Research viewed from the angle of the history of ideas and trends should reconsider the role of the Middle Ages in determining the culture of South-East Europe.

In that part of Europe, the traditional world did not exist in isolation and it did not behave as a closed universe, especially as it is situated in the vicinity of great waterways – on one side, the Danube, on the other side, the Black Sea, with its links with the Mediterranean world. One we may say that these „water roads“ facilitated contacts with the central – European world and with the Mediterranean East, are which provided wide scope for great cultural syntheses, involving oral culture.

We may still call the Middle Ages „our roots to which we fell connected by the endless thread of orality“ (Jacques Le Goff, *Imaginarul medieval*, București, 1994). The spiritualness of the European South-East has been marked by the Middle Ages, as it has been constantly and coherently preserved in the rural milieu, until recently. An important number of factors contributed to the advance of common oral culture elements on wide areas: the existence

of free military villages, migrations, itinerant trade widely extended between the East and Central Europe, moving of flocks, conflicts with the Ottoman Empire and Orthodoxy – on an extensive area (P. P. Panaitescu, *Introducere în istoria culturii românești*, București, 1969, p. 203–205).

Oral transmitting provides the framework for occurrence of syncretism, characteristic of the folklore-type culture, together with other specific characters – variability, anonymous source, collective aspect. Once created, the folklore message is irreversible and irrepeatable. The oral is usually opposed to the „printed“ way of existence of a product of the „profound“ culture. We are faced with a system of performing and receiving with audio/visual means, having precise and well differentiated consequences on the capacity to memorize and reproduce, to immediately reconsult and to stimulated the innovating capacity of the creative individual.

The contemporary society has a so-called „industrial culture“, consumption-oriented, an outcome of the technological explosion of the latest decades. The electronic systems of visual and auditory broadcasting, reproducing movement and color hues, render visible the resemblance with the type of oral folklore transmitting in its syncretic occurrence. The ritual and the non-ritual, the every-day facts and the ceremonial, the formal and the informal, the legal and the illegal, fundamental notions concerning life, cares, doubts, fear, hope, everything occurs under the form of an image with sound and movement. The human voice itself is „alienated“ and „electronically fractured“. This „industrial culture“ is transmitted first of all by television, video cassettes, but also by the INTERNET and the Cd-rom. A television broadcast acts like a folklore „variant“, before its replay or distribution in video-cassettes. It is a syncretic product broadcast by audio-visual media and received by the „mass“ of „consuming“ population. The broadcast is *not* available progressively to a limited number of spectators, with possibilities to be repeated identically or almost identically at brief time intervals, as is the case of theatrical performances or films seen in movie theatres. The broadcast is simultaneously received by a province, a country, a geographical area or even the whole planet. In the ancient city, the public square sheltered the performances of itinerant troupes, the songs of minstrels or troubadours or community rituals. In the center of the village round dances were organized. Those functions are now transferred to administrative socio-cultural structures with prevalent urban character or they are replaced by mechanisms involved in the technical informational system, which widens their area to continental dimensions. The oral culture has now „transcontinental anotranscultural“ modeling guidemarks. This world of culture mediated by technical instruments of mass broadcasting is initiated in and receives the folklore of flying saucers (UFO), spiritism, occultism, sects and fundamentalist religious factions, or „isolated“ cultures of other continents. Ancient motifs and subjects of fantastic fairy tales have been taken over by science fiction scenarios. On the screen, Prince Charming is now Superman, Soldier-girls is Superwoman, and the Ogre or Dragon are replaced by robots, programmed by evil minds to induce trouble and panic among the inhabitants of the planet or in the galactic space. Forms specific to transmitting oral culture use the harmonious blending of music, movements, text, colors, shapes, in order to impart to the average man less familiar information, often exotically and not always scientifically grounded.

The folklore individual is submitted to an „informational bombardment“, as already mentioned, which results in the modification of many local, individual or group guidemarks.

The process may be compared to the impact of the „popular books“ on folklore. The old calendars, gromovniks, trepetniks, the translations of *Fiore di virtù*, the legends about Alexander The Great, the books of dreams or the chronographs describing „history from the beginning of the world“, circulated intensely in the culture of the South-East of Europe from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. They were all replaced by information spread by mean of the audio-visual. Modern technology permits information, which a century ago circulated regionally during the lifetime of one or two generations, to be simultaneously received in the most diverse and remote parts of the globe. The migrations theories, worked out by philology and folklore students in the nineteenth century, seem to acquire special practical conditions. Yet, the irradiation center is not Vedic India, Mesopotamia or Egypt, but a system of points disseminated throughout the world, which are simultaneous sources of irradiation of the cultural information. In a first stage, the folklore individual who receives that information becomes confused, starts getting alienated and gradual gives up the observance or use of traditional models. Traditional guidemarks are used for selection and assimilation for a while. However, the individual or certain groups begin to question the value of those rules and sometimes give up and deny, the model used by the community as a guidemark for centuries on end. The rural community which I considered to be more balanced, stable and conservative is dominated by the town's authority. The „industrial“-type culture is certainly transmitted from the town to the village. The ancient feudal court which acted as a factor of information selection for the rural community was a mediator between the rest of the world and the local community. Village have now direct access to the information mediated by the „industry“ of audio-visual products (and of broadcasting, such as TV), whose conception is prevalingly urban.

That industry provides a channel networks to contact the planetary narrative universe. Contemporary world is ruled by the „mass-media without borders“.

News about our friends, acquaintances or extravagant personalities living in another hemisphere are quickly imparted to us by e-mail. The winged horse who crossed spaces to carry the hero of a fantastic fairy tale to a different realm used to ask Prince Charming: „How fast should I fly, with the speed of wind or with that of thought?“ The hero's answer disturbs us within the wonder-laden context of the traditional narration, revealing impressive depths: „With curse-speed“!

The whole hyper-technologized society of our days is faced by processes characterized as essentially folklore ones, using modern technologies to replace orally. Spatial and temporal dimensions, so important in the past for the direction and speed of information circulation, are essentially modified. Traditional transmitting, from the parents to their offspring, has changed in a new perspective to group message preserves its quality of „cultural models“. The contact between the various cultural models turn into a relatively simultaneous process, due to mediatization. That fast process quickly followed after another important „aggression“, undergone by the traditional rural community in part of the South-East of Europe, through several channels: the doing away with the private ownership of the land, the prohibition or organizing groups or group activities (such as carolers groups, in some areas, in certain periods), the exclusive materialistic-atheistic education, the exclusive use of the rural folklore in festive artistic events or for ideological propaganda. Contemporary technological invasion is a „threat“ for folkloric in some of its traditional forms and results in the loss of certain genres or species, whose function no longer meets the requirements of the present community. One may also point to innovation, not always appropriate, materialized in the forms of expression of the traditional models.

Sometimes such innovations about folklore products characterized by some people as „subculture“ or „kitsch“. In my opinion, it is not easy to assay the „quality“ or „aesthetic value“ of some contemporary folklore creations. The existence of some guide marks, differentiated according to age, socio-professional criteria, sex or religion entitles us to admire the lucid saying of the folk individual that „beauty is in the eye of the gazer“. The fast contemporary process of mutations refers to traditional concepts and motifs.

In the traditional community, typical motifs of songs acted as patterns throughout history, revealing the specific character. They vividly express the fundamental concepts of „beautiful“ and „ugly“, „kind“ and „evil“, the essence of virtual partners. TV commercials seem to outline a new type of female beauty, by means of the young top models which advertise cosmetic products or wear fashion designs. At the end of the twentieth century, the mediaeval princess of the fairy tale, legend or ballad, so well known in the folklore milieu, has been replaced by a modern, smart girl, with Anglo-Saxon features and sporting hobbies. Science-fiction films supply easily identified images, to replace the ancient traditional legendary characters – the dragon, the ghost, the ogre. The cycle of Dracula films may be expected to remodel the image of the „classical“ ghost. Popular terminology and imagology will be enriched by a new type of „vampire“. TV channels provide folklore consumers with the unusual presence of demonic characters viewed with understanding and liking, seen sometimes as model super-heroes. A certain non-conformism of the image and an excess of imagination render traditional patterns obsolete and devoid of substance.

The town, a spot of highest agglomeration, the place where new systems of rules, based on political and administrative regulations, are created, become a vital center and the focus of cultural irradiation. It is a model and a hope for the village. In my opinion, it is useful that researchers should pay more attention to folklore aspects in the urban milieu, and to start complex investigations right there.

The Christian religion (prevailing Orthodox, but also Catholic to a smaller extent, as well as Islamism) represented an essential guidemark for the traditional society of the South-East of Europe, especially in times of crises, helping in finding the coordinates of ethnic identity. Their relationship with oral culture should be thoroughly and lucidly investigated.

Careful analysis should also be directed to another type of „information bombardment“, resulting from the direct, repeated and rhythmic contacts of the folklore individual with other cultural areas. Its study is absolutely necessary for the understanding of the future configuration of oral culture, not to be neglected in contemporary society. What I mean is the daily travels of the petty traders who go to Istanbul, Debrecen, Budapest, Belgrade or other commercial centers for their trade.

They have taken over the former commercial routes of the Middle Ages but the dynamics of their travels is particularly fast, thanks to modern technical systems in the field of transports. Such people become informative sources of a folklore type, not only by the products they trade – clothes, food, decorative items, recorded video and audio-cassettes – but also by the diversified amount of information they store following their direct contact with other cultures and civilizations, which they impart to other people. I think that a chapter of present-day folklore research should record and analyze the „stories of those Balkans and Central-European commuters“. A group of petty traders traveled by train from Istanbul to Bucharest, a woman from Craiova (Oltenia, in Romania) was surprised to hear a cock crowing in Giurgiu station and she cried out: „O, my God! A Romanian cock! There (in Istanbul, our note), I've seen them only roasted on the spit“. What a wonderful expression of the way she had received the culture she had just contacted. The stories of the Romanian women dressed in Maramureş costumes who were shopping in the Istanbul bazaar would have been quite worth recording as well. Such cultural contacts had always existed. Ancient commercial and cultural routes which had been operational for hundreds or even thousands of years, have just been reopened after half-a-century of circulation prohibition. Circulation speed is quite different now from that of the past century. The folklore individual at the end of the twentieth century finds new dimensions and values for time and space.

Some cultural areas of the South-East of Europe evince a very active emigration phenomenon, entailing the transplant of cultural identity in communities not long ago unknown to the area (Australia, New Zealand, South Africa). Cultural microunits are created in those regions, molding their identity within new contexts.

The study of contemporary folklore should also focus on the important group of people who work abroad. Up to 1990, their number was reduced and relatively well known. Today they are very numerous, and have reached many areas of the planted, especially in the Near East, but also in Italy, Yugoslavia, Germany or Hungary. The role of woman in this new economic trend is outstanding and worthy of study. Women have been thought to be more conservative for hundreds of years, as they maintained traditions and managed the household. At present, they are active factors in supplying products to their petty trade and even in working abroad. A great number of women from the rural milieu work as servants or saleswomen in some countries of the Near East, such as Israel. It is imperative to work out a new strategy in present-day folklore research, to provide data adequate scientific and documentary foundations to the analysis of mechanism of change for traditional patterns.

It is worth emphasizing that whole sets of transnational folklore elements penetrate national „cultural boundaries“. Consequences are hard to foresee. The phenomenon is not to be identified with the so called cosmopolitanism. In my opinion, our geographical areas are influenced by North-American models and especially by the already familiar ones, of the cultural area of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The very dynamic modern society is liable to encourage new values and new creations. Yet, access to accurate and complex information is essential for a perennial creation. The folklore community should learn which are genuine values, according to contemporary super-technologized society. These values are to be the foundation for restructuring and resemantizing folklore products to meet the requirements of the contemporary folklore group.

Oral culture preserves as perennial products only what is necessary. Present-day oral culture, marked by ethnic specific and inevitably determined by the education level of the folklore group is supposed to play an active part in preserving identity elements.

An important factor which modified traditional models is the exploitation of oral culture in tourism. The market demand calls for astounding innovations. Two instances of present-day Romanian phenomenology are worthy of note: the proliferation of Dracula's image, never recorded so far in Romanian culture, fully consonant with the film image, to which a portrait of Prince Vlad the Impeller is added, for commercial reasons; the painting of Easter eggs in blue, in utter contradiction with tradition, to satisfy the requests of French and German tourists. In both cases, the preference of the well-to-do western tourists has resulted in the emergence of brutal and atypical innovations.

According to the Oxford dictionary definition, *identity* is „absolute sameness; oneness; condition or fact that person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality“.

The study of popular culture, especially from the angle of folkloristic – that ethnological domain familiar to most people – turned to deciphering and explaining the elements associated with *national ideas*, ever since the eighteenth century. „National identity“ has focused most efforts of research. At present, more and more countries witness a pregnant trend of ethnological research to dismantle the almost functional link – according to traditionalists – between the „national“ concept and the study of oral cultures. The European identity which involves the South-East European identity, seems to no longer interest specialists in point of its national components. Concerns related to the knowledge of „sources“ and of own specificity, or of the structures defining such units are more and more obvious. On the other hand, the reorientation of interest to new perspectives resulted in a genuine „obsession“ with defining and specifying the coordinates that should be taken into account, when assaying the sphere of any identity aspects. An abundant and prolix literature thus emerged. The Finnish folklorist Pertti Anttonen maintains that cultural identity cannot be „something that is“ but rather a resultant generated by problems of the type: *when, where, how* and especially *why* a certain reality was perceived in specific forms, and models (Making).

The trend to „restore“ archaic ethnic cultural history, by studying traditional culture, especially in the rural milieu, was and still is one of the outstanding directions of ethnological research. Yet, such perspective request appropriate methods. In order to get precise guide-marks, to prove the sequence of cultural strata, their oldness weight and continuity, a comparatist angle was emphasized centered on the defining of the geographic area of dissemination of phenomena or the characteristic linguistic community. Research in the South-East of Europe has been dominated by this, angle of folkloristic, ethnomusicology, ethno-choreology, ethnography.

Dimitrie Cantemir was a great Romanian scholar of princely descent who lived at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and ruled Moldavia for a brief interval. He wrote about the Dispute of the wise man with the world (*Divanul sau Gâlceava înțeleptului cu lumea*) in the manner characteristic of the contemporary European scholars. That topic of great interest for European medieval literature recorded the conflict between body and soul, water and wine (Eucharistic elements) flowers etc. In modern terms, the problems of existential analysis raised by the scholar were reduced to „I“ and „the others“. This dilemma is both topical and universal, it is a *question of identity*. The identity problem seem to engross all those involved in socio-human research, more particularly ethnologists. Questions refer to the identity of the researcher-ethnologist, *he* in relation with, the group or individual under study – the other one, the other ones. A more complex and confusing question refers to the identity of the discipline or disciplines, whose specialists study the complex systems by which a person is differentiated and defined in relation to the non-human reality or to any other type of context, and similitude between cultures are specified and defined.

I do not agree with the assertions of some specialists, who maintain that most people know nothing about ethnicity and that this is only a pretext for the advance of tourism and trade based on handicraft ware, for folklore performances or for critical periods.

Throughout history, the awareness of belonging to a group was felt as an identity mark, with all its elements on the material level or of that of „intangible“ culture. Yet, this identity is not perceived as a fixed, unchanging, unfailing, „monolithic“ symbol, but as a way of focusing the elements which define the group as against „the others“. Modern society has succeeded in outlining concept on a theoretical plane and in transmitting and turning them to account in institutionalized frameworks. Also, beyond the tendency of a part at the contemporary society to transgress coordinates of national identity we witness a period of more acute perception of ethnic (or group) identity, in most various areas, using the most refined means of expression. I do not agree that an ethnic group cannot define its identity from within. Identity is marked no matter whether it is accepted or not by outsiders. The system or symbols and meaning characteristic of a community, regardless of the number and quality of its members, represents a communication code by which every member of the group is identified and which also ensures the protection system against the possible aggression of other groups or extra-human pressure. This identity is a kind of perception acting according to the reciprocity principle. It has to be mutually accepted by all units in contact especially when they do not exist in isolation. Identity provides security to the individual and helps for future options. It is hard to imagine that identity will be absent in the next millenium, as it is an essential coordinate for crossing the temporal, spatial and cultural threshold.

Ethnicity is a creation of social, which reveals the symbolic nature and molding function. Some specialists consider that important guide-marks for defining the „self“ as against „the others“ are different common meanings of the social, world outlook or genres and categories of folklore. The feeling of belonging to an ethnic group is deeply rooted in history, it is not only a modern perception. The inhabitation of stable places, within marked spatial and temporal frameworks, the awareness of a common descent, the legendary structures of the oral culture, the main religion, all help in preserving those type-guide-marks of identity. Symbols bear the identity expression of an individual, group, zone, or nation, inducing the emotional approach by means of the mutually accepted and known message. Symbols are the bearers of the value models (positive and negative). There occurs a disagreement, when the outside observer has a false perception of values, as against the group members, when the ethnologist extends his own personal perceptions and impressions, ignoring or wrongly interpreting what is accepted by the community as a symbol and especially as a positive value. The sense of belonging to an ethnical, national identity is obvious in various degrees and it occurs in various levels in oral culture. This feeling may be concealed or neglected, if people are submitted to an artful process inducing inferiority or superiority complexes.

An instance of masterful ethnological interpretation of culture facts, by selectively perceiving and commenting ethnic variants within a feast generally spread in the Orthodox world is provided by the chapter *Des ancêtres aux nouveau-nés* in a study of the famous specialist Marianne Meşnil and Assia Popova, *Eseuri de mitologie balcanică*, Bucureşti, 1997. Referring to the commemoration of the forty saint martyrs of Sevastia on March 9, the authors discuss only the first level of approach. They reach the conclusion that there is a kind of „complicity“ in the complementarily and opposition of that commemoration on either sided of the Danube, in population belonging to different ethnic groups. Bulgarians recall the existence starting with birth (mladenci) while Romanians refer to death (moşi). The Christian significance of this commemoration, the age and specific character of the Christian foundation of the two peoples (apostolic, for the Romanians; ninth century for the Bulgarians) and especially the term used in Romanian (*măcinici* or *mucenici*, i.e. martyrs, not *moşi*) are not at all taken into account. The name of *mucenici* is an obvious proof of the relations between the popular ritual and the Christian meaning of the feast. Those anthropomorphous dough moldings boiled or baked, commemorate the martyrdom of the forty saints killed in Sevastia during the reign of Emperor Licinius, for their perseverance in adhering to the Christian faith. In the Romanian and Greek traditional calendar, the saints and martyrs commemorated mostly lived in the Christian period of the first four centuries A.D., when that faith was prohibited and death was suffered on account or persistence in religious beliefs. They may be considered *moşi*, ancestors of the Christian faith, founders of the Church, around whom all the departed gather, as they carry the same faith, the „victorious“ Church. The specific character of this festival among the Romanians is not the awareness of the course of life from the cradle (Bulgarians) to the grave (Romanians). The ancestors of the Romanians, speakers of a Romance language identified Christian Romanians with the martyrs (*moşi*) commemorated on March 9, in the Orthodox world. In my opinion, the primary Christian message has been perceived differently by the two communities, who received that monotheistic religion in different periods of its assertion and following different conversion means. Orthodox Christians consider that the departed „go to sleep within God“ and wait for the *Parousia*, second coming of the Saviour, and General Resurrection of the Faithful. This outlook on life, death, resurrection, and everlasting life should be considered when analyzing the system of traditions and customs.

Cultural diversification, globalization and a swift process of deritualization of many elements of the deep-going culture determine the emergence of secularized forms of social events. The model of „popular festivities“ is generalized replacing „feasts“. They become pretexts and contexts for meetings, entertainment, exchange of ideas, the acquaintance of a „planetary person“, more and more obvious in outer expression. This category of activities includes the celebration of the New Year at midnight, in the center of the great cities, under the open sky – model provided by audio-visual mass media channels, based on information from Paris, London, New York – or the newly introduced „Day of the Sun“. This is marked by a festival as music and entertainment, an altogether secularized variant of the midsummer festivities (June 21), according to the Scandinavian or Anglo-Saxon model. Such phenomena, in addition to many others which should be identified and recorded by ethnologists (Saint Valentine Day, Halloween) represent exceptional

sources for modern research. They are to be recorded and analyzed as landmarks in identifying the stages characteristic of the processes of diversification, on the one hand, secularization and globalization, on the other hand.

Present-day ethnological research has several objectives, such as working out documents for every element of the oral culture, from the angle of every type of language which expresses it. Documents should meet the requirement of utmost objectivity. They should be made so that „data banks“ could integrate them, close to non-conventional sound and image archives, of folklore and ethnography. These „data banks“ will provide typologically processed and systematized information on the present culture and on the processes undergone by it, aimed at those interested, in the next millennium. The ethnologist should observe the right to privacy of an individual or of a group, dignity, freedom of speech. His role should be a positive one, mediating between groups or individuals and the rest of society, in moments of great diversification. The results of researchers of this kind should not turn into arguments favoring conflictual states, at national or international levels, between an individual and a group, between categories or subunits of any type. If a specialist exceeds his qualification, or if he states value judgments pretending that they are absolute truths of a scientific authority concerning some aspects of the „intangible“, „profound“ culture, which he is not entitled to do, a subjective angle may be detrimental not only to the results of research, but especially to the subsequent stages of data taking over and turning to account, undertaken by other specialists or by the political, or economic decision factors.

A special issue is that relative to „copyright“ in the case of sound or image documents, made by folklorists, ethnomusicologists or ethnologists.

The report of the Straznice meeting in Czechia (19–22 June 1995), on the way to apply recommendations to protect traditional culture and folklore, refers to the UNESCO document adopted in 1989 in Paris, where it is emphasized that „folklore is intellectual creativity which merits the ascription of the intellectual property aspect and legislative measures for the protection of collectors and collected documents“ (ECTC Bulletin; 1, 1995, p. 43).

Every state has to work out a strategy and the appropriate legislature to protect traditional culture in the context of the mentioned „informational bombardment“ and of the processes of cultural globalization.

Specialists acting within various ethnological disciplines are morally responsible for the collected data and for their interpretation. If previous research was based on the full record of sources and data, modern research is entitled to use information with respect for confidentiality, to the extent that this does not influence the objectivity of the result of research and „truth“. A code should be accepted, to turn to account data by the specialist, so that their scientific value should not be harmed and individual and group rights be also respected. Research should not be distorted or harmed by biases and the group estimations on the „value“ which act as identity marks should be accurately presented.

The idea of an „emergency ethnology“ should be accepted, not so much for saving traditional information, but for recording and analyzing swift contemporary processes, which influence tradition and occur in a variety of forms, angles and interrelations even more difficult to identify and control.

Ironically, the same „obsession“ to define one's identity seems to characterize the very disciplines meant for investigation, in addition to the investigated object. The defining or redefining, the diversifying of prospects, the obsession of individual perception and of relations between the researcher, the typical informant and the studied group represent genuine identity problems for ethnology. This paper is not aimed at defining or establishing responsibilities or the domain of disciplines, but I may state that for our field of interest, these specifications are essential, the same as any other identity problems.

In 1991, in an interesting lecture delivered at the Folklore Fellow Summer School of Turku, Professor Bente Gulverg Alver of Norway initiated a series of discussions concerning one of the most sensitive chapters of socio-human research, that of ethics of research. The specialists of the nineteenth century and those educated in the first half of the twentieth century were exacting especially in points of the faithful reproduction of the literary, musical or choreic text. The philological method reigned supreme. The informant, relatively „passive“ within research, was given less attention. (However, as early as the beginning of folklore studies, there had existed obvious concerns to work out specific types of creators). The development of ethic principles in contemporary ethnological research is an activity which should involve the contribution of specialists from different domains, according to their specific character. Generally applicable principles of ethics in ethnological research should also be established. Their application becomes a moral obligation, as a reflex of observing principles of human equality and respect, which are the foundation of the ethical code of ethnology.

There are several elements of the deontology of research in the fields of ethnology, which I am not going to discuss at present. Two of these are more important: a) ethics relative to the documentary: source, under two of its expression forms: the source, the informant – subject, and the rigorous reproduction of the acquired information, and b) personal experience and information, with a major role in scientific creativity, in achieving components specific to the disciplines and in painting out their representativity.

I do not agree with some ethnologists' assertion that „personal experience“ may integrate the results of the collecting activity. Without ruling out such a perspective, the act of information acquiring, of „document creation“, a major aspect for the knowledge and formation of a scientific personality, is an act of high responsibility, whose outcome is the objective source for the analysis and interpretations of phenomena. There is a twofold perspective in presenting investigated phenomena: that of the representative of the investigated group and that of the specialist who carries out the investigation.

The problem of the type of relationship established between the researcher and the subject-informant has been raised under various circumstances and from various point of view. It is a mutual exchange relation or an unidirectional one? The investigation acquires several data which he „processes“ subsequently. Most often he rewrite a cultural model or structure, according to his own outlook, influenced by his own formation and by the information amount and quality. Sometimes, the decoded information, „occulted“ in time and transferred in space in various ways and degrees in an attempt at generalization, is no longer acknowledged by the source. Methodologically speaking, any generalization and extension of the interpretation should start from a *type*. To establish its data, research should acquire a „data bank“, objectively collected. The interpretation of the information might be the result of a „negotiation“, in order to fairly represent both the researcher and the outlook of the group, as seen from the data supplied by its representative.

Present-day research should not be based on the traditional material or moral „reward“, or „exchange“, but on „cooperation“, with a view to getting the most objective image from this twofold perspective: of the „self“ – the informant as a person and as a representative of the group – and of „the other“, represented by the researcher. The true message, communication, can be achieved only from a bi-directed perspective, fully aware and friendly. The informant – subject is no longer conventionally „passive“ towards the act of research, and research can no longer be placed in areas exclusively characterized by exoticism. Modern society, as an object of ethnological investigation, is open, without any discrimination in point of area, ideology, policy, stage of economic development, socio- professional category, traditional view concerning rural / urban, culture / civilization.

The bias of the ethnologist who would consider his own experience as a value reference point in making estimation makes it possible to create a kind of „hegemony“ of certain cultural models, quits dangerous for the future.

It is easy to identify the existence of instability, with an obvious touch of confusion, approximation, and even contradiction in establishing domains and notional categories of the ethnological disciplines. Some are due to our incapacity to know and objectively record phenomena, to ambiguous interpretation as well as to the peculiar aspects occurring during the evolution of the tradition of national schools.

Disciplines of the social sciences jointly create the cultural approach, side by side the systems of traditional culture. Ethnological disciplines have to study man as a culture – creating being, starting with the material creation of tools up to the subtle working out of concepts and ideas, in a synchronous and diachronous perspective. It is worth mentioning that the rhythms of contemporary society have modified the perception of the two dimensions of a historical approach. Life styles, conceptual patterns, moral systems, rules related to jurisdiction, every day life and the archeological view of spiritualness normalized and disturbed behavior, in a word the diversity of forms of culture and of cultural patterns and their relationship represent research topics for ethnologists today. And above all, the defining use of some terminological concepts, valid for international disciplines, which might provide specialists with their own „scientific“ system of communication are some of the tasks which should be solved fast.

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