

Archives and the Burden of Interpretation: Why Can't Ethnographic Documents Help in the Reconstruction of Croatian National Memory During Socialism?

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Besides the archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HAZU), the Ethnographic Museum and the Dept. of Ethnology at the Faculty of Humanities in Zagreb, the Documentation of the Institute of the Ethnology and Folklore Research is the most important archive of folk heritage and popular culture in Croatia from 1947 until present day. My contribution examines the changes of its content, organizational scheme and utilization according to the changes of theoretical approaches, fieldwork methodology, research topics and the notion of fieldwork per se, having in mind the post-socialist, democratic transformation of Croatian society burdened with the aggression, the war induced nationalism and the destructions of material and cultural heritage during the 1990s. The communist's censorship in the former Yugoslavia does not mean the direct interfering of the ideological apparatus into the research policy of a marginal scientific institution. More important for cultural advocacy was the epistemological confinement and "cognitive control" over the ethnographic documents following the discipline's immanent shifts and changing priorities – from national, folk or autochthonous to popular, quotidian and mass culture, from ethnographic objects *in situ* to communicational phenomena *in context*. As a matter of fact, during 1940s and 1950s, the institute was the state-sponsored 'shelter' for nationalist and clerical intellectuals, writers

and musicologists, and for a long time it did not even have the three Communist party members to meet that minimum demand for making a party cell. Having broad, humanistic education, Croatian folklorists and ethnologists accepted the Marxist critique of new mythical beliefs, religion and ethnocentrism, but they rejected the notion of specific "proletarian" culture and continued to record all kinds of oral genres, costumes and performances within "the drama of quotidian" with their capacity to signify ethnic, religious or local identities. Just like their colleagues in the Eastern Bloc they remained dead to political rituals, ceremonies, commemorations, entertainment industry and propaganda activities that built up the coherent symbolic universe of the fragmented social body of the federal Yugoslav state.

The fact that the IEF Documentation – besides its abundant resources of 2,000 manuscripts, 3,466 audio-recordings, 1,316 video-recordings and 60,000 photographs – offers next to nothing to those interested in popular subjects of the cultural history of socialism – the development of tourism and consumerism in socialist Croatia, its educational policy, its public/private religious practices, its internal migrations and emigration, gender roles in everyday practices, ethnonational identifications, political symbolism and rituals – does not reflect some Croatian ethnographic curiosity. It rather bears witness to the fact that the cultural archive produces as much as it records cultural artefacts and that researchers' self-censorship as well as their "disciplinary blindness" determines the structure of the archivable content in its relation to the past and future. The structure of the IEF archive demonstrates that the socialist period was not the era of big revolutionary changes and social shifts, but a short, disturbing episode in a centuries long life of the small (rural more than urban) communities in constant search for their

imagined collective identities, integrity and heritage that can be displayed, performed or celebrated in the new global market of cultural products, often under the roof of the ruined but protected "industrial heritage".