
ETHNIC IDENTITY THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITIONS (IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM)

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Approaching the new millennium the antagonisms and general social, political, economic and cultural crises perturbing European and other societies lead to a revision of the identity of every ethnic community, ethnic group or nation within a country or region. The universal nature of culture or of the mass culture of the 60s are making way for the entity of cultural features of nations, ethnic communities and groups (which manifest themselves in differences, similarities and counterparts).

In this atmosphere of historic, social and economic transformation of the late twentieth century we tend to see museums as places which spread culture and identity, but also as places where other cultures and cultural differences are preserved and fostered and compared with one's own. Who are we in the global society? More than ever what we need is our own "identity card". We may possibly find it in the thematic and, perhaps even better, in the permanent exhibition of a museum. But is this the right way of preserving our cultural identity? We shall try to answer this question below.

In the past the Voivodina Museum, for example, started by presenting Serbia's identity through a modest collection gathered by Matica Srpska in Novi Sad (under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). Nowadays the museum has expanded and become a multinational (multi-ethnic) museum in which a variety of nationalities try to find themselves within a heterogeneous area. "The impact of the region's geographic position on man's creativity in shaping, changing and passing on culture in Voivodina consists first of all of the awareness that there is something special, unique in the nature of the geographic location as well as of the specific nature of its cultural and historical development. This is the highest level of abstracting notions and ideas of the real world which are faced with".¹

• Example 1. On the permanent exhibition and on the ethnological section within the permanent exhibition of the complex museum:

1 Dragoslav Antonijević, Uvod, Etnološki deo stalne postavke. Muzej Vojvodine, Novi Sad 1997, p. 265.

In the region of Voivodina which is rich with archeological sites and places of significant cultural interest we find ourselves in precisely such a place determined by nature, culture and civilization which cannot fail to generate associations and ideas about "connecting geographic features with historical facts" as part of a wide range of fine and subtle links between Slavic, Hungarian and Germanic peoples with their wealth of related ethnic communities and groups whose classes and successors have played a role in the turbulent and complex ethnic and cultural processes which shaped Voivodina's ethnic features.²

396 The basic methodological approach of the exhibition's ethnologic section is to exhibit objects and their functional use. The function of the objects is presented within the overall context of life and of the ethnos while emphasizing as much as possible their interconnections and interrelations with the structure of the population and geographic area. In that way every ethnic community represent only one section of a whole which is determined in place and time. The objects were selected based on aesthetic criteria and they tell us the story of the chronological development of material culture in Voivodina over a period which includes the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. We have to remind ourselves, however, that the cultural genesis of the objects is much more remote in time and that they contain elements from ancient eras. The peoples which migrated to this area brought with them elements of ancient times which survived in eclectic European styles.³

The ethnographic exhibition in the Museum of Voivodina primarily presents the past and refers to issues of ethnology and anthropology. This actually means that it presents the values cultures and communities which are in the process of disappearing and that it draws attention to timeless values which are endangered by modern progress. Owing to this approach many visitors are able to establish a close relationship with the objects and can attempt to reconstruct their personal cultural identity amidst a multi-ethnic population. Through the seven thematic sections - Vernacular Architecture, Agriculture, Weaving, Carpets, House furnishing, Customs, Folk Dresses - presented in a horizontal historical cross section the exhibition "narrates" the global identity of the region.

- Example 2. The interaction of culture in a heterogeneous area (spiritual culture - family customs):

In the process of acculturation people adopted elements from the rich cultural environment which, at first, were not part of their own culture, but in the course of time were included in it for the simple reason that they continued to place in their everyday life and gradually became part of it. Leach's theory of communication may provide us with insight in this process. According to Leach human beings establish communication through expressive actions which

2 Ibidem.

3 Ibidem.

function as signals, signs and symbols. Such signs simply existed in the common area and generated a certain communication between different ethnical communities. Consequently, Leach's main thesis is that regardless of cultural particularities at some level the "mechanisms" of various forms of communication must be the same, that every such form is "transformed"⁴ in our consciousness, that man's life depends on symbols and that in an interactive sense the system of symbols depends on different creations of society itself.⁵

This is to be understood in that some objects from the collections are separated and treated like symbols of the global system within the society. Easter eggs, for example, are part of the relevant collection in the museum, but they are also part of certain rituals and of people's religious conviction. Moreover, they also represent ethnic characteristic (according to the specific styles of decorating and dyeing them or specific motifs etc.).

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Family customs and particularities in Voivodina presented in the exhibition carry with them the characteristics of the spiritual aspect of the traditional cultures of all ethnic groups in the region. The co-existence of so many groups in the same area meant many specific, cultural features of spiritual identity were lost, but on the other hand also contributed to the manifestation of customs as specific cultural features.⁶

The research of the co-existence of different ethnic communities in a geographic area has its impact on the specific work in complex museums and requires certain elements of approach to the presentation:

- a) cultural features are to be preserved as special symbols of identity,
- b) for some elements it can be established that they are the same in the culture of each ethnic community and that the only difference is of a linguistic nature,
- c) dedicate more attention to the process of acculturation,
- d) interdisciplinary research of some thematic collections or cultural phenomena.

By preserving the integrity and identity of every nation and ethnic minority through ethnological work it is possible for every ethnic community to reconstruct its traditional past - that of its home or village in its native region and also much wider. Ethnographic collections presented to the scientific and general public play a major role in preserving the identity of minorities. Though there exist tendencies toward acculturation, there is also a reverse process of isolation within one's own micro-community.

Nevertheless, we continue to be convinced that it is of major significance to present all these small communities in a horizontal cross-section which enables us to really understand their meaning in time and space.

4 E. Leach, *Teorija i komunikacija*. Biblioteka XX, Beograd 1983.

5 C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York 1973, p. 99.

6 Vesna Marjanović, *Customs*. The Voivodina Museum, Novi Sad 1997, p. 351.

ETNIČNA IDENTITETA SKOZI ETNOGRAFSKE MUZEJE IN RAZSTAVE (V NOVEM TISOČLETJU)

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Ko se približamo novemu tisočletju, nas globoka socialna, politična, gospodarska in kulturna kriza v evropskih in drugih družbah sili v revizijo identitete vsake etnične skupnosti, skupine in naroda. Globalno gledano je kultura ali množična kulture zbledela od šestdesetih let naprej, ker je prenehalo veljati, da ima vsak narod, etnična skupina ali sorodna kategorija svojo lastno kulturo in kulturne značilnosti.

V tem ozračju zgodovinskih, socialnih in gospodarskih sprememb poznega 20. stoletja bi na muzeje radi gledali kot na prostor, ki širi kulturo, in identiteto in tudi kot na ustanove, ki hranijo različne kulture in jih med seboj primerjajo. Kdo smo v tej globalni družbi? Bolj kot kdajkoli prej protrebujemo lastno "osebno izkaznico". Naša identiteta je verjetno nekaj, kar lahko najdemo v tematskih ali celo bolje v stalnih razstavah. Vendar bi si morali najprej odgovoriti na vprašanje, če je to prava pot za varovanje naše kulturne identitete.

Muzej Vojvodine, na primer, je v preteklosti začel s predstavljanjem srbske identitete skozi skromno srbsko zbirko, ki jo je zbrala Matica Srpska v Novem Sadu (v času avstroogrske monarhije). V zadnjih letih se je muzej razvil v večnacionalni muzej, v katerem se različne narodnosti skušajo najti znotraj heterogenih področij. "Vpliv zemljepisne lege Vojvodine na človekovo ustvarjalnost pri oblikovanju, spreminjanju in prenašanju kulture te pokrajine se kaže predvsem v zavesti, da je ta prostor in njegov kulturni in zgodovinski razvoj nekaj povsem svojstvenega in edinstvenega. To je najvišja raven abstraktnih pojmov in zamisli resničnega sveta, ki se rojeva pred nami"¹.

• Prvi primer: v zvezi s stalnimi razstavami in z etnološkimi oddelki stalnih razstav v kompleksnih muzejih:

V regiji Vojvodina, ki je bogata z arheološkimi najdišči in s kraji velikega kulturnega pomena, se znajdemo na prav takem mestu z naravo, kulturo in civilizacijo, ki same od sebe rojevajo asociacije in misli o "povezanosti zemljepisnih značilnosti z zgodovinskimi dejstvi" širokega spektra, od drobnih in subtilnih

1 Dragoslav Antonijević, Uvod, Etnološki deo stalne postavke. Muzej Vojvodine, Novi Sad 1997, s. 265.

povezav med slovanskimi, madžarskimi in germanskimi narodi z mnogimi povezanimi etničnimi skupinostmi in skupinami, ki so igrale pomembno vlogo v burnih in zapletenih etničnih in kulturnih procesih, ki so oblikovali etnične posebnosti Vojvodine.²

Osnovni metodološki pristop etnološkega dela razstave je predstaviti predmete in pokazati na njihovo funkcijo. Uporabnost nekega predmeta je predstavljena v globalnem okviru časa in etnosa in čimbolj poudarja tudi njegovo povezanost in povezave s strukturo prebivalstva v prostoru. Na ta način postane vsaka etnična skupnost del celote, ki je prostorsko in časovno opredeljena. Razstavljeni predmeti so bili tudi izbrani v skladu z estetskimi merili. Pripovedujejo zgodbo o časovnem razvoju materialne kulture v Vojvodini v obdobju, ki zajema 19. stoletje in prvo polovico 20. stoletja. Kljub temu ne smemo pozabiti, da je kulturna geneza razstavljenih predmeti mnogo starejša. V njih so nakopičeni sledovi davnih časov. Narodi, ki so se preselili v ta prostor, so s sabo prinesli elemente davnih časov, ki so preživeli v eklektičnih evropskih stilih.³

Etnografska razstava v Muzeju Vojvodine predstavlja preteklost predvsem v vidika etnologije in antropologije. To pomeni, da prikazuje vrednote kultur in skupnosti, ki izginjajo, in da opozarja na trajne vrednote, ki jih ogroža sodobni napredek. Zaradi tega načina predstavitve se mnogi obiskovalci lahko istovetijo s predmeti in skušajo rekonstruirati svojo osebno kulturno identiteto v večnacionalnem prebivalstvu. Skozi horizontalni zgodovinski prerez sedmih sklopov - ljudsko stavbarstvo, kmetijstvo, tkanje, preproge, hišna oprema, šege in narodne noše - se nam prikaže globalna identiteta regije.

- Drugi primer: interakcija kultur na heterogenem območju (duhovna kultura - družinske šege):

V procesu akulturacije so ljudje iz bogatega kulturnega okolja sprejeli tudi tisto, kar, pogojno rečeno, najprej ni sodilo v njihovo lastno duhovno kulturo, vendar se je sčasoma v praksi uveljavilo, ker se je preprosto okrog njih dogajalo in se postopno vključevalo v vsakdanje življenje. Tu si lahko pomagamo z Leachevo teorijo komunikacije, po kateri "ljudje komunicirajo z značilnimi dejanji, ki delujejo kot signali, znaki in simboli." Ti znaki so preprosto obstajali v skupnem prostoru in so ustvarjali določeno komunikacijo med različnimi etničnimi skupnostmi. Zato je Leacheva glavna teza, da morajo biti ne glede na kulturne posebnosti na določeni ravni "mehanizmi" različnih oblik komuniciranja enaki in da se vsaka v naši zavesti "pretvori".⁴ To pomeni, da smo ljudje vse življenje odvisni od simbolov in da je v interakcijskem smislu sistem simbolov odvisen od raznih ustvarjenih oblik same družbe.⁵

Nekateri predmeti v zbirkah so zato oddvojeni in obravnavani kot simboli globalnega sistema znotraj družbe. Tako so na primer pirhi del ustrezne zbirke v

2 Ibidem.

3 Ibidem.

4 E. Leach, Teorija i komunikacija. Biblioteka XX, Beograd 1983.

5 C. Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures. New York 1973, s. 99.

muzeju, vendar so tudi del določenih obredov in del verske opredelitve. Poleg tega sodijo tudi k etničnim značilnostim (zaradi posebnih in različnih načinov krašenja, barvanja ali motivov itd.).

Družinske šege in posebnosti v Vojvodini, ki jih prikazujemo na razstavi, imajo v sebi značilnosti duhovnega vidika tradicionalne kulture vseh etničnih skupin, ki živijo v Vojvodini. Skupno življenje tako številnih skupin na istem območju je pomenilo izgubo nekaterih arhaičnih in ozkih posebnosti, predvsem v kulturnih oblikah duhovne identitete, vendar je to skupno življenje na drugi strani tudi prispevalo k uveljavljanju šeg kot posebne kulturne identitete.⁶

400 Preučevanje skupnega življenja različnih etničnih skupnosti na določenem območju vpliva na specifično delo v kompleksnih muzejih in zahteva določene oblike pristopa k predstavitvi:

- a) ohraniti kulturne značilnosti kot posebne simbole identitete,
- b) ugotavljanje enakih sestavin v kulturi vseh etničnih skupnosti, ki se razlikujejo samo jezikovno,
- c) posvetiti več pozornosti procesu akulturacije,
- d) multidisciplinarno raziskovanje posamezne zbirke ali kulturnega pojava.

Z varovanjem integritete in identite vsakega naroda in narodne manjšine skozi etnološko delo si vsaka etnična skupnost lahko rekonstruira tradicionalno preteklost svojega doma ali naselja in širše. Etnografske zbirke, predstavljene strokovni in širši javnosti, igrajo vodilno vlogo pri varovanju identitete manjšin. Res je, da poteka proces akulturacije, vendar poteka hkrati tudi obratni proces zapiranja v lastno majhno skupnost.

Še naprej menimo, da je pomembno predstaviti vse te majhne skupnosti v horizontalnem prerezu, tako da lahko zares spoznamo njihov pomen v času in prostoru.

BESEDA O AVTORICI

Vesna Marjanović je diplomirala iz etnologije na Filozofski fakulteti v Beogradu. Od 1979 je zaposlena v Muzeju Vojvodine v Novem Sadu kot kustodinja za socialno življenje in običaje. 1992 je postala višja kustodinja, februarja 1997 pa je bila imenovana za vodjo Oddelka za etnologijo. Ga. Marjanović je predstavnic Jugoslavije v Evropskem projektu - Mreža etnografskih in socialnozgodovinskih muzejev - in je urednica Muzejskih novosti za Srbijo. Objavila je vrsto člankov in razprav, povečini o šegah in folklori narodov v Vojvodini.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vesna Marjanović, graduated in ethnology from the Faculty of Arts in Belgrade. Since 1979 she has been employed at the Voivodina Museum in Novi Sad as curator for social life and customs. She became a senior curator in 1992 and in February 1997 she was appointed head of the Department of ethnology. She is Yugoslavia's representative in the European project of a network of ethnographic and social history museums and editor of Museum News for Serbia. She has published many articles and treaties, mostly about the customs and folklore of the peoples of Voivodina.