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MASS CULTURE AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS OF VILLAGE

Decay of the traditional folk culture as a system integrating the local rural community is closely connected with urbanization process of villages. This process was taking place in many dimensions i.e. demographic, economic and cultural. The situation, in which transformations in particular dimensions would occur more or less parallelly, should be treated as exceptional. As a rule, we are dealing with disproportions, which are accompanied by a number of unfavourable phenomena. Improvement in the material situation, which is not accompanied by parallel cultural transformations, promotes an inane life style devoid of higher aspirations, weakening of non-professional interests, and does not allow to utilize sensibly the amassed goods. A reverse situation is, however, much more frequent when the economic stagnation and objective inaccessibility of some goods make it impossible to realize urban cultural patterns known owing to personal contacts or mass media. The sense of discrimination in comparison with town dwellers connected with this phenomenon and low evaluation of the village and farmer's profession represent social costs of cultural urbanization of villages.

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1. Transformations in rural cultural tradition

Presentation of urbanization of village as a unidirectional evolution is a far-reaching simplification. A stable cultural system performing a function of alternativeless regulator of behaviours as described by anthropologists was an instrument for description of isolated tribal communities, which did not have empirical equivalents in the European cultural environment. On the contrary, ethnographers while studying even very "traditional" village communities would tend to underline their only relative isolation, and presence of different habitual patterns and systems of values within their framework. The village culture, unlike that in any other social environment did not have and could not have an endogenous character. Both in its normative aspect and in its symbolic representation, it was benefiting from various sources. We can speak about the traditional peasant culture only as about a certain ideal type in Weber's sense.

Conditions of life and work on a traditional peasant farm were a factor integrating heterogeneous elements into a relatively coherent system of recognized and realized values. Along with their change there were taking place transformations in the old system of values. They concerned attitude to the land and work on it as well as the rank held by formerly recognized authorities. The basic factor generating these transformations was the urbanization process, which would provide an alternative to the hitherto thoughtlessly accepted rural style of life.

At present, all local communities have achieved the stage of their "openness"¹. We can speak only about easier or more difficult contacts with the town, which is connected with differentiation of ecological distances. On the other hand, all inhabitants of villages are subjected to the impact of the mass culture and come across cultural patterns differing from the

¹ F. Jagiełło-Lysiova, Social Conditions for Development of Village Culture, [in:] Tradition and Modernity in Village Culture (in Polish), Warsaw 1979, p. 79.

traditional ones. Accordingly, observance of tradition in the sphere of values, customs, and aesthetic conventions assumes a new sense. Apart from a very few exceptions, application of old patterns is of a purposeful character. Employing here Merton's terminology, we may say that traditional cultural patterns are of an overt character while in the past analogous behaviours represented realization of covert patterns.

Search for factors promoting acceptance of the village as a dwelling environment becomes an important problem, at least, due to the phenomenon of negative selection to the farmer's profession. Such a factor must be a feeling of one's own independence and professional achievements as well as affirmation of advantages offered by the natural environment².

On the other hand, social activation of villagers and also diminishing of their sense of discrimination in relation to town dwellers may be promoted by continuation of values and components inherent in the local tradition and regaining of cultural identity by local village communities. Some authors treat return to these traditions as "a symptom of defence against the overpowering wave of unified mass culture"³. Can cultural traditions of villages really perform such a function? An answer to this question calls for an empirical analysis.

The impact of mass media, mutual competitiveness or complementarity of particular mass media along with their social coverage belong to phenomena lending themselves for quantification. Of empirical character is also analysis of relationships occurring between participation in mass culture and attitudes towards values connected with the local tradition, and determination whether they boil down to displacement of the traditional culture by mass culture or whether both these systems are evolving in a mutually independent way. In turn, in order to determine the significance of cultural traditions of villages, there must be studied relationships occurring between the attitude to tradition along with application of old patterns and attitude to-

² See: A. K. C o n s t a n d s e, Some Remarks about a Possible Revival of the Rural-Urban Dychotomy, Issues of 10th European Congress for Rural Sociology, Cordoba 1979, p. H-47.

³ J. D a m r o s z, Local Village Community - Facts and Postulates, [in:] Tradition and Modernity in Village..., p. 212.

wards values of local character. In this way it will be possible to determine whether the folk culture does provide a convenient and real area for revival of the cultural identity in village communities.

The above problems were an object of studies carried out in 9 rural administrative communes of Poland in 1977. A significant size of the sample, encompassing 1664 families, allowed to perform a statistical analysis of correlations existing between both attitudes and characteristics of the social position and between particular spheres of cultural activity. The analysis afforded a possibility of obtaining conclusions concerning relationships occurring between different types of culture.

2. Coverage and impact of mass media

From among various mass media, the analysis encompassed press and television. Moreover, there were collected data on cinema attendance and readership of books. The analysis of these data allowed to determine the social coverage of particular mass media, relationships occurring between them, and the rank held by mass culture in hierarchy of interests and in patterns of spending leisure time.

Contact with mass culture, especially through television is of a common character, although the interest aroused by this form of spending leisure time may be described as moderate. Despite the fact that almost three fourths of respondents watch TV everyday, only one sixth admit that they derive a great deal of pleasure from an occupation of this type, and only one fourth associate TV with an element in the pattern of spending their leisure time on Sundays. Other forms of cultural activity enjoy much smaller popularity.

Almost two thirds of all respondents restrict their contact with the press to two titles of newspapers or magazines, while further 12.5 per cent do not read them at all. A little under three fourths of respondents do not attend the cinema at all, and over three fourths do not read books. "TV monoculture" seems to be quite common, which is confirmed by the fact that only one

fourth of respondents benefit from various mass media instead of watching TV alone.

This form of cultural activity in comparison with others is least correlated with the educational background and most strongly with the material position. Moreover, TV does not promote, to any extent, growth of cultural aspirations. Such aspirations are stimulated most strongly by reading of books.

In spite of its wide coverage, TV does not represent competition for other mass media, and sometimes, for example with regard to reading of the press, it performs a stimulating role. The strongest correlation occurs between cinema attendance and reading books, thus it concerns more "elitary" forms of cultural activity in this environment. A conclusion which could be drawn here is that a certain category of recipients searching for more ambitious contents tries to overcome the objective restraints existing in the village environment.

The form of cultural activity is related to characteristics of the social status, and especially to the educational background and profession. A weaker, although statistically significant influence is exerted by such characteristics as the material status and age. A bigger cultural activity is displayed by better educated persons, those working outside agriculture (especially white-collar and qualified workers) with material status higher than average.

The above data indicate that there are no major differences in the way of mass culture reception between the village and the town. It refers, first of all, to coverage and functions of TV. The coverage of other media, much more restricted than in the town, can be explained by their smaller accessibility and by structural properties of the rural community, and especially by its lower level of education. The low position held by contacts with culture in hierarchy of interests and in realized patterns of spending leisure time points, on the other hand, at the fact that mass culture does not play the most significant role in the complex of influences otherwise called "urbanization impact".

3. Place and role of traditional folk culture

Only few elements of the village cultural tradition, have preserved their vitality till today. There have been rejected external attributes of membership in the peasant cultural circle. Traditional rites and customs are cultivated by not quite 10 per cent of respondents. Only 3.5 per cent use holiday folk costumes, and about 5 per cent pursue such a style in decoration of their houses. However, folklore preserves its attractiveness in these spheres where acceptance of values characteristic for it does not involve a necessity of revealing one's interests; e.g. over one third of respondents willingly listen to the folk music.

An important element of the cultural tradition and the old life style, which has retained its tremendous vitality, are religious practices. Over 50 per cent of village dwellers go to church at least on every Sunday and during all religious holidays, and only 5 per cent do not go to church at all. There has been observed a significant correlation between religiousness, educational background and profession. This cultural pattern is accepted relatively most often by farmers and rejected by white-collar workers.

Most respondents display a favourable attitude to traditions. Such an attitude, contrary to prevailing opinions, is not dependent upon age or education, and is connected with socio-professional membership. Biprofessional farmers and agricultural workers display their inclination to unconditional acceptance of traditional patterns. There is no correlation between attitude towards tradition and participation in religious practices. This implies that they are not perceived as an element of the old life style, and that attitude towards religious values is not connected with a specific orientation towards tradition or modernity.

The prevailing positive attitude to traditions is not connected with acceptance or any more profound knowledge of the local historical tradition. Only 15 per cent of all respondents

can boast a little higher than minimum level of knowledge about the past of the rural commune centre. For their most part, these are non-farmers and persons with a relatively higher educational background.

Lack of any correlation between values of the old village culture and the local tradition constitutes a significant social problem, as it signifies that in the present situation the values connected with the so-called folklore cannot stimulate socio-cultural activity on the local scale. These social categories, which owing to their interests and predispositions could display such involvement, reveal an ambivalent or negative attitude to the folk culture. On the other hand, those who have a positive attitude towards it or realize patterns characteristic for it - do not have, in turn, any concrete attitudes or expectations in relation to local traditions.

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4. Mass culture and cultural traditions of villages

Mass culture, despite its wide coverage, does not constitute an essential element in the hierarchy of recognized values. Cultural activity was measured in two basic dimensions: intensity of participation and aspirations for contents of higher order. Both these aspects of participation in mass culture do not promote continuation of old aesthetic-customary patterns typical for the folk culture. Accordingly, it appears that even its marginal presence becomes further restricted due to the impact of mass media.

On the other hand, there is no correlation between cultural activity and religious practices, which prove to be permanent and essential element in the cultural scenery of the village preserving simultaneously considerable autonomy in relation to other values. Participation in mass culture does not affect a general attitude to traditions in any visible way either. This testifies, on the one hand, to permanence of such an attitude, and on the other hand, to absence of contradictions between contents of mass culture and the tradition as a value - especially in the supralocal dimension.

This general attitude is oftentime of only verbal character, which is especially the case when it is related to specific elements in the local tradition. The interest taken in the past of "private homeland", that is one's own place of living, is quite insignificant. The impact of mass culture on this area is of an ambivalent character: intensive contact with mass media diminishes the interest in the local historical tradition. On the other hand, it is accompanied by preference given to valuable cultural contents with their selective choice.

In other words, those inhabitants of the village for whom cultural activity represents an essential and noninstrumental need display their interest as, well as - due to possessed qualifications - predispositions towards creative continuation of local traditions. It is an important factor promoting chances for cultural reintegration of the village community. Folklore, on the other hand, which according to some authors "returns to the village" - is not a cultural value vital enough to stimulate processes of regaining its cultural identity by the village. Even if the above mentioned "return" takes place, it is but an element of mass culture not connected with the local tradition. Like other contents transferred by mass media it becomes an object of passive reception and not a pattern worthy of imitation and continuation.

Maciej Frykowski

KULTURA MASOWA A TRADYCJE KULTUROWE WSI

Rozpad tradycyjnej kultury ludowej jako systemu spajającego wiejską społeczność lokalną ma ścisły związek z procesem urbanizacji wsi. Odrzucenie dawnych wzorów oraz akceptacja miejskiego stylu życia łączy się często z ujemną oceną wszystkiego, co z wsią związane, a zwłaszcza perspektywy wyboru wsi jako miejsca zamieszkania. Szczególnie dotkliwie, zwłaszcza przez młodzież, odczuwana jest nierówność szans uczestnictwa w kulturze w porównaniu z mieszkańcami miast.

Jedyną dziedziną, w której ta dyskryminacja nie jest odczuwana, jest uczestnictwo w kulturze masowej, które obecnie, zwłaszcza dzięki telewizji, ma charakter powszechny również na wsi. Jednak środki masowego przekazu, niwelując dysproporcje w tej

sferze, wzmagają zarazem "impakt urbanizacji" przez lansowanie miejskich wzorów konsumpcji. Powyższa teza, mająca charakter obiegowego stereotypu, poddana została empirycznej weryfikacji.

Oddziaływanie mass mediów na odbiorców, wzajemna konkurencyjność bądź komplementarność poszczególnych środków przekazu oraz ich społeczny zasięg stanowią zjawiska poddające się kwantyfikacji. Podobnie empiryczny charakter ma analiza relacji zachodzących między uczestnictwem w kulturze masowej a postawami wobec wartości związanych z tradycją lokalną i ustalenie, czy sprowadzają się one do wypierania kultury tradycyjnej przez masową, czy też oba te układy ewoluują w sposób wzajemnie niezależny.

Kultura ludowa, rozumiana nie jako zespół barwnych zewnętrznych atrybutów, lecz jako styl życia i system wartości, uległa dezintegracji. Jednak owe "zewnętrzne atrybuty" zostały odrzucone w jeszcze większej mierze jako elementy podkreślające odrębność między miastem a wsią. Badania przeprowadzone jeszcze w 1977 r. wykazały, poza minimalnym zakresem świadomego nawiązywania do tradycyjnych obrzędów i obyczajów oraz zanikiem stosowania strojów ludowych, także brak związku między postawą wobec kultury ludowej a stosunkiem do lokalnej tradycji historycznej. Odrzucenie kultury ludowej jako wartości nie wynika z uprzedzeń wobec tradycji jako takiej. W świadomości mieszkańców wsi nastąpiło osłabienie, a niekiedy zerwanie związku między tzw. folklorem, a lokalnymi wartościami kulturowymi.

Z kolei uczestnictwo w kulturze masowej, choć stanowi ważny element wzoru spędzania czasu wolnego, nie odgrywa jednak zbyt wielkiej roli w hierarchii zainteresowań, a także nie stanowi najpopularniejszego sposobu rozrywki. Kultura masowa nie stanowi konkurencji dla tradycji lokalnych, a niekiedy znaczne aspiracje w tej dziedzinie wiążą się z istotną wiedzą oraz pozytywną postawą wobec lokalnej tradycji historycznej: dotyczy to zwłaszcza inteligencji, a w pewnej mierze i robotników wykwalifikowanych. Te właśnie kategorie mogą stanowić społeczną bazę dla kulturowej reintegracji społeczności lokalnych.