

Article

The Role of Folklore and Ethnography in the Works of Arnold Van Gennep

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Abstract: The article describes the creative activity of the French ethnographer and folklorist Charles-Arnold Carr van Gennep. He is recognized as the founder of the folklore genre in France. A large place in his work is occupied by the emergence, development, features and structure of the folklore genre. Through all the work of Arnold van Gennep has a clearly formulated understanding of folklore and ethnography which for him are inseparable. Ethnography is a field of knowledge that is called upon to study the life of a collective (according to the attitudes of that time - a collective of rural residents), revealing the remnant state of traditions, but not denying the inclusion of new forms in them (i.e. phenomena that we call innovations).

Keywords: artistic image, folklorist, folklore, character, tradition, historical, ethnography, patriot, zealot of science.

1. Introduction

Arnold van Gennep born on April 23 1873 in Luxemburg to a French immigrant family and a lieutenant at the court in the Kingdom of Württemberg ; his mother was from a Dutch patrician family. When Arnold was six years old, his parents divorced, and his mother and son moved to France, where a few years later she married a doctor. Against the will of his stepfather, he studied at the National School of Oriental Languages , where he studied Egyptology and Arabic , and at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes at the Sorbonne, where he received training in general linguistics, ancient Arabic, Egyptology, Islam, and the religion of primitive peoples. In the 1990s, when van Gennep was involved in scientific research; in France, the sociological theory of Emile Durkheim supported by Claude Levi-Strauss , enjoyed the greatest authority . A stay in Eastern Europe (Poland, 1897-1901) after his marriage broadened his horizons; he mastered Polish and Russian. Returning to France, in 1901 he headed the translation department of the Ministry of Agriculture. From 1907 to 1914, he worked as a secretary at the International Institute of Ethnography and Sociology. In 1912-1915, A. van Gennep headed the department of ethnography in the Swiss city of Neuchâtel . The scientist's independent character did not allow him to follow the path of a trivial university professor of that time, when teachers

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trained students to become specialists like themselves. He did not join any fashionable trend in science and remained true to his convictions. His independent character and absolute honesty led to the fact that van Gennep lost his professorship: during the First World War, he publicly declared that the Swiss government was not observing its declared neutrality. For this, he was expelled from Switzerland and returned to France. The independence of his scientific position cost him Gennep's scientific career - he always remained outside of official scientific institutions, earning his living through translations, journal publications, and publishing activities.

2. Materials and Methods

It's also an assumption. boldness that he proposes to explain the greater folk continuity in certain regions: it would most often be a question of marshy or wooded countries, where communications are difficult, more difficult paradoxically than in the mountains where they are "long and painful, but durable. This text probably dates from before 1939 (Van Gennep alludes to German National Socialism); it is probably more or less contemporary with the two volumes of the bibliography (1937 and 1938). It is only about France here, although I mention the results obtained in other countries by comparative ethnography and folklore.[1] On the other hand, I only took into account the general impression felt by the general public, educated to various degrees, but not by that of professional historians, archaeologists, scholars in various branches. This impression is that the history of France is a succession of periods of calm and catastrophic periods of wars, long-lasting or very cruel, invasions and controlled cutting of populations, sieges and mass massacres, bloody factional struggles, devastating plagues and famines, political and administrative upheavals. The reaction on the folklore would therefore be represented not by a curve with slow and weak oscillations, but by marked zigzags with maxima and minima very distant from each other. Popular life would have developed from a certain historical point, let us say from what is called Gallo-Roman paganism and would have had its minimum, for example during the Germanic invasions, then during the Merovingian struggles, again during from the dismemberment of the Carolingian empire, and so on until the last cataclysms, the Revolution of 1789 and the war of 1914-1918. For the High Middle Ages and up to the end of the Renaissance, or better said up to the cataclysm of the Reformation, we are too often obliged to have recourse to the hypothesis to ensure that folk continuity persisted under the political and military discontinuity. But from this moment we begin to have more and more information on popular life in towns first, then in the countryside. The reign of Louis XIV coincides with a stabilization of a large number of ancient customs which had persisted despite the Wars of Religion: at this time many corporations and brotherhoods asked for confirmation of their previous statutes; the movement of recatholization better fixes the cult of the Virgin and of the collective patron saints constitutions, write catechisms, order inquiries into devotional practices, protest against superstitions and "vain observances".

3. Results

Through all the work of Arnold van Gennep has a clearly formulated understanding of folklore and ethnography which for him are inseparable. Ethnography is a field of knowledge that is called upon to study the life of a collective (according to the attitudes of that time - a collective of rural residents), revealing the remnant state of traditions, but not denying the inclusion of new forms in them (i.e. phenomena that we call innovations). In his opinion, ethnography studies the genesis of human culture, serves as a kind of introduction to general cultural studies (hence his "biologized" vocabulary: "embryological method", i.e. the method of origin, original state). Ethnography, according to the scientist, "seeks to recognize the starting point of arts, technologies, institutions, ways of feeling and thinking, speaking and singing; it is she who creates the foundations on which, thanks to other branches of knowledge, an accurate and complete knowledge of humanity - a thinking and acting person" is then erected. In the book "Folklore" van

Gennep formulated his understanding of folklore: folklore is a science that studies living facts in the natural environment using observations (similar to how biologists study living organisms). The closest to the scientist was the comparative method of the English anthropological school, of which James Frazer was the most prominent — the author of the famous "Golden Bough" (according to J. Frazer, the mental development of mankind went through the stages of magic, religion and science). According to A. van Gennep, in order to understand the essence of social existence, one must take into account man, not society. This thesis van Gennep adhered to a wide variety of ethnographic realities: the legends of the Australians, the songs of the Savoyards, the formation of the state system. At the first stage of his scientific activity, van Gennep paid tribute to the interest of specialists of that time in the so-called less civilized, exotic peoples. In the second stage, he focused on the customs, rituals, and folk art of rural residents of different provinces of France. He considered totemism as a necessary condition for the existence of a social group. Its community is supported by the belief in a kinship tie that unites a group of physical or social relatives, on the one hand, and an object, animal, plant, etc. on the other. The entire complex of beliefs and rituals associated with totemism has both positive aspects (inclusion in the group through certain ceremonies) and negative ones (prohibitions that weigh on members of the totemic group). Van Gennep pointed out the territorial rights of the totemic group. Hence his reasoning that any community (starting with a totemic group, including a tribe, an urban district, right up to a state) sets itself the same goal: to ensure the internal connection and life expectancy of a given community, despite the tendency toward separatism emanating from smaller groups - family, clan, caste, in other words, to balance the centrifugal and centripetal forces.

4. Discussion

Thus, van Gennep, true to his principles, arranges facts not on a chronological scale, but depending on the general meaning - strengthening the community as a whole and each of its divisions in particular. He does not deny the possibility of innovations, which can be viable only to the extent that they are able to integrate into the system. But the main thing that interests the scientist is the mechanisms that allow any community to live and develop.

The book "Rites of Passage" by A. van Gennep considered it the most important of his many works. "Rites of Passage" is part of my being, he said. The book opens with general considerations of van Gennep on Rites of Passage (Chapter I): he offers his own classification of rituals, identifies cultural oppositions: the profane world - the sacred world, positive (permissive) rituals - negative (prohibitory) rituals, direct actions - indirect actions, etc. Various techniques of magic are analyzed. It is worth paying attention to the introduction of Van Gennep's concept of "rotation" (pivotement of the letters, "full rotation around the axis"), i.e. the change of the sacred to the profane and vice versa, depending on the specific situation. This is also one of the types of transition, since each person during life turns out to be turned to the sacred side of being, then to the profane. The alternation of rituals, to which other researchers did not attach importance, is understood by van Gennep as a magical moment, important for the entire ritual complex.

Indeed, van Gennep managed to organize a mass of information from the lives of the most diverse peoples, subordinating them to a certain scheme. A separate cultural system is incomparable with another as a whole, but the facts and elements are subject to formal analysis and classification. Many of the rituals that van chose as the object of study Gennep, have been described and interpreted by other specialists. Their work should in no way be rejected. It is only important to emphasize that van Gennep, without claiming to formulate a theory, developed a system, using which it is possible to determine the internal connection between customs. Each rite, the researcher pointed out, consists of a chain of certain actions that must be performed in the established order. Only if this condition is met can one speak of a formalized and perfect rite. The essence of alternation lies in separation (excommunication, exclusion) from one state, in an intermediate state

and in inclusion (acceptance, aggregation) in a new state. This is the innovative idea of van Gennep.

5. Conclusion

Hence its popularity. The essence of numerous rites of passage is as follows: each person during his life goes through a series of stages - passes from one state to another. Such a sequence, formalized in a system of obligatory rituals, exists in all societies, regardless of their traditions and the degree of advancement in the development of economy and politics. The research method of van Gennep, which was used in the work on the book "Rites of Passage", the author called the "method of alternations" (méthode de séquences) and interpreted it as follows: "a rite, or social action, does not have a once and for all given meaning: the meaning changes depending on the actions that precede the rite and those that follow it. Consequently, one can conclude: in order to understand a rite, a social institution or a technological device, it cannot be arbitrarily torn out of the ritual, social or technological integrity. Each element of this integrity must be considered in its connections with its other elements." The requirement to find a logical place for each action or belief in the ritual totality became for van Gennep the main thing in his further research activities. Any person consistently passes from one age to another, and as a result of this, changes occur in his personal life, family, peer group, social group, social status, etc. In the culture of many peoples of Van Gennep discovered a system of rituals that confirmed these transitions. The ideas of Arnold van Gennep's ideas about the stages of rites of passage were further developed by Victor Turner, who explored the liminal periods of communities and collective states.

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