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LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT FORMULA: STUDIES OF ETHNICITY IN SERBIA

Abstract: This paper represents an attempt to briefly sketch out the history of the study of ethnicity and nationalism in Serbia, as well as to present and critically analyze the basic theoretical and methodological issues with which scholars researching these phenomena were faced. I will give a systematized overview of the different eras in this type of research and the basic analytical tools and theoretical frameworks which were used, and I will point out some of the various socio-political factors which influenced the research process.

Key words: Ethnicity, history, theories, methodology

Issues of ethnicity and nationalism have long been of interest to Serbian academia, but it can not be said that this interest has had the same weight or importance throughout this time, or that research has always gone in the same direction. A retrospective of these interests and studies must retrace a number of lines of inquiry. First, one must consider the simultaneous development of a number of social sciences that engaged in the study of ethnicity, each of them with different points of (specific) interests, different ideological backgrounds, and different methodologies, and the relationship between these disciplines or practitioners thereof, which developed under the influence of changing scholarly and non-scholarly factors. Secondly, a retrospective such as this must take into account methodological frameworks that were applied to this kind of research, frameworks that tended to change in accordance with the development of scientific or critical thought. Thirdly, one must take into account various issues within ethnicity studies; issues perceived and treated differently under different circumstances. In the following I will review the main issues and research interest in ethnicity studies within Serbian ethnology and anthropology, and the main phases of development in these studies.

There exists an initial a dilemma as to what a review of the study of ethnicity should encompass, especially since the very term ‘ethnicity’ is

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relatively new (it has only found broad use in the last 50 years) while ethnic groups and their interrelationships are much older. I have chosen to include here all studies that have dealt with larger or smaller ethnic communities in a more or less direct way, regardless of their methodology, approach or terminology. Hence, this review will show, side by side, uneven and varying approaches, and sometimes hardly commensurable studies. However, an approach such as this is needed if any insight into the development or transformation of ethnicity studies is to be achieved.

This article represents an attempt to showcase and analyze the frameworks, approaches and scope of the research on ethnicity in Serbia, without going too deep into the analysis of all the factors which influence and all the actors who take part in these studies. Because of this, this article isn't so much an overview of previous research, nor is it as informative as any retrospective article should be. The aim of this paper, first and foremost, is to acknowledge the basic methodological principles or research syndromes and complexes, which inform any research on ethnicity. Keeping this in mind, I did not focus my attention in this paper on precise descriptions and definitions of specific development phases in the different approaches, rather, I have tried to acknowledge, isolate and operationalize the general culturological orientations manifested in papers on ethnicity. It is a kind of diagnosis, rather than a history of the "disease". Hence, this paper will not be devoid of certain inconsistencies and inexhaustibilities, but it should not contain inaccuracies in the acknowledgement of basic issues. The mention of studies of nationalism, which is somewhat out of context, serves to further explain certain aspects of the study of ethnicity.

Disciplinary differences in the study of ethnicity

First attempts at studying ethnic groups in Serbia were made by historians. The first ethnologists, anthro-geographers, sociologists and psychologists would not join in until much later.² The work of these disciplines diverged wildly at first – in the data they used as well as research methods – which led to different results, and different social and political roles that the disciplines and the people who practiced them in turn played. Historians were (most) often nationally oriented, which meant defending the interests of their own nation by means of considering issues of ethnogenesis and the historical rights

² It can be argued that the ethnic identities of minorities in Serbia have social, geographical, cultural, political and legal aspects. The legal aspect has been somewhat neglected in anthropological research, but certain scholars of law have provided significant insights into these issues – see Žarevac 2007.

of a certain group to a certain territory (see Nedeljković 2007, 67-118). Sociologists and psychologists dealt primarily with contemporary topics and considered nationality in terms of attempts at building civil society (see, for example, Vuletić 1996). Some were nationalists while others espoused a more cosmopolitan view of the world, which meant becoming fierce critics of their own society and nation. Both of these groups (historians on the one hand and sociologists and social psychologists on the other) were very active socially and politically, which resulted in them being much more influential today than scholars who studied the cultural aspects of ethnicity. In the period from the turn of the twentieth century to the 1970s, ethnologists positioned themselves more proximate to historians, dealing with the past and interpreting things within a historical context, with a romantic enthusiasm toward the folk and national traditions of their own people. This situation was enabled and influenced by many different factors, socio-political circumstances and various cultural tendencies, among other things.

In time the differences between these disciplines then became less and less prominent with regard to their topic of study and their ideological orientation. They nevertheless remained determined by the nature of the data they used as well as the methods used to interpret them. Traditional historians still worked with written sources, which tend to be official documents. This means that they are inclined to study institutional aspects of ethnic and national identification, all the while essentializing ethnic groups and nations, approaching these phenomena in a thoroughly positivistic manner in their search for objective truths between real and invented traditions (see Eriksen 1993). Today, more and more historians in Serbia see themselves as historical anthropologists and tend to be less interested in the politics and histories of great events, and more interested in the history that is not written in official documents, but comes from personal narratives and memories. This history opens a different view on ethnic processes and identities than the history found in institutions or official documents. Thus, today it could be said that historians are better positioned to deconstruct the identity of their own people or nation and, in turn, redefine national identity.

In the past, sociologists, psychologists and/or social psychologists worked with representative samples of informants and a carefully chosen methodology, which meant that by asking targeted questions they got relatively reliable results that indicated the direction of development and tendencies in a given society or class (see Rot i Havelka 1973). The data gathered that way is also usable for day-to-day political purposes, however. Often the results of such studies were published as reports on the "state of the nation," because it is thought that they accurately revealed contemporary conditions in a certain area of social life. The downside to this kind of approach was to be found chiefly in the relatively small radius of research

topics, the relatively shallow grasp of the issues that were studied and the fact that it did not enable a deeper understanding of the issues or communities studied. In short, this research did not allow the informants room for deeper contemplation or expression, since they were asked only to verify the validity of scholarly hypotheses and not to propose their own models (see Golubović, Kuzmanović, Vasović 1995). Many sociologists have taken up this critique and, along with anthropologists, have begun looking for an adequate strategy, theory and methodology for dealing with issues of ethnicity and nationalism. Still, it seems that sociologists more so than members of other scientific disciplines have managed to understand and interpret contemporary processes in wider social contexts, which provides them the opportunity to connect political and cultural discourses, and view these processes both on national and global levels.

In the past, anthropologists, in a spirit of romanticism, tended to rely on dubious historical data and focused their research primarily on objective parameters of ethnic identity (language, religion, ethnonyms). This approach held on long after Frederik Barth's groundbreaking publication on the study of ethnicity. Today this traditional approach has been abandoned and is today unjustly and unjustifiably neglected completely. Serbian anthropology has shifted instead to an unreasonable degree toward virtual dimensions of ethnicity. Today the emphasis is on the process of constructing identities, and the basic methodological tool is the deconstruction of identity, with the implicit goal to show that primordialist and essentialist theoretical frameworks are completely unacceptable today. Even if I myself am a proponent of constructivist, interactionist, situationist, instrumentalist and simulationist approaches to the study of ethnicity and nationalism, it must be said that Serbian anthropologists are moving on thin ice: they no longer have their own data; they no longer have their own empirical space or a determined research framework. Thus they have retreated to the sphere of theoretical and methodological wanderings. One of the consequences, surely, is the dwindling interest in the primary object of research: ethnos, or, rather, ethnicity. Scholars who were once ethnologists in Serbia tend to refer to themselves as "anthropologists" today, because this sounds less traditional, more analytical and more Western. Still, there is some discord with regards to what such self-determination really means or ought to mean. Does the acceptance of such an emblem signal a shift toward contemporary and urban topics as opposed to traditional and rural ones dealt with traditionally? Does it signify a deeper analysis that considers primarily subjective parameters of identity? Or might it mean that Serbian anthropologists study other peoples? Or is it supposed to mean that anthropologists do not start off from ethnos as an analytical tool, and are more inclined to use different models for interpreting reality? In any case, ethnicities, even though implicitly contained

within the research interests of Serbian anthropologists, are not the main research topic or the main discourse in analysis and interpretation any more.

The phases of development of ethnicity studies in Serbian anthropology

The first phase of anthropological interest in ethnicity could be termed historical, synthetic and empirical. At the beginning of this period in the early twentieth century, valuable work was done first by Jovan Erdeljanović (see Erdeljanović 1911; also Erdeljanović 1925; also Erdeljanović 1930; also Erdeljanović 1988) . Its end was marked by, among others, Tatomir Vukanović in the 1980s (see Vukanović 1977; also Vukanović 1983). In this period, no research dealing with the theoretical aspects of ethnicity was done. The communities that were studied were both small ethnic communities (Roma, Bunjevci), as well as large ethnic groups (Slavs, South Slavs). The main goal was to determine the ethnogenesis of the studied groups, even if ethnicity was at times studied through material culture (national costumes, for example). Aside from studying ethnic groups, this period was also characterized by attempts at making regional monographs. The most important studies of ethnicity from the interwar period are those by Cvijic and Dvornikovic, even though most would not consider them studies of ethnicity in the strict sense (see Cvijić 1922; also Dvorniković 1939). Cvijic's book was published in 1922, in the same year that Max Weber's posthumous study "Economy and Society," which included a chapter on "ethnic groups," was first printed (see Veber 1976). Dvorniković's book was published almost two decades later. But when it comes to theory, both lagged behind Weber's effort. They nevertheless represent almost unbelievable undertakings of great value simply because of the sheer amount of empirical data collected in them. Their chief value is in understanding the importance of cultural areas, or, rather, understanding the problems that arise when writing monographs on specific communities. These two authors treated the Western Balkans as a whole, and, relying much on the ideas of ethnic/national mentality and character, hinted at the relationship between objective and subjective parameters of identity. Their studies are chiefly cultural, and a lot less political anthropological.

After a period of time in which ethnicity was treated mostly empirically and interpreted within historical discourses, the 1950s and 1960s brought the first inklings of a theoretical interest in the problem of ethnicity to Serbian anthropology, chiefly by shifting the position of ethnicity from the historical to the contemporary social context. Milenko Filipović took the first modest steps in that direction, even though he based his research purely on Soviet

methodology (see Filipović 1961).³ Petar Vlahović went furthest, and it can be said that in the 1970s and 1980s he laid the foundations of modern ethnicity studies in Serbian anthropology. His research was based completely in Soviet authors, making it uninspiring and, for the most part, unoriginal (see, for example, Vlahović 1991; also Vlahović 1992). But he nevertheless highlighted the importance of this issue and pointed out its great theoretical potential.⁴

The first attempts at a contemporary form of research in the field of ethnicity in Serbia and SFRY were made in the 1980s by a generation of Serbian anthropologists who were familiar with Western theoretical and methodological trends and tried to apply them to data collected in the field. The inspiration for such work was, at that time, found mostly in the works of anthropologist Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin from Zagreb, and the sociologist and anthropologist Zagorka Golubović from Belgrade (see Rihtman-Auguštin 1971; also Pešić-Golubović 1978). The enlightening mission of these two anthropologists was very influential, even though Zagorka Golubović would in the end influence the field of sociology more than that of anthropology. Besides, Golubović was not interested in ethnicity so much as in nationalism. The anthropologists Dušan Bandić, Radomir Rakić, Gordana Ljuboja, Mirjana Lukić-Krstanović, Mirjana Pavlović, Dušan Janjić, Edit Petrović, Ivan Čolović and others all contributed to a new approach to issues of ethnicity and nationalism that highlighted the importance of the subjective dimensions of ethnic and national identity, the relational nature of ethnicity and its circumstantial or situational usefulness. Until that point in time, Serbian anthropologists relied mainly on Soviet literature, which could offer no

³ It is often thought that there are a few traditions within the studies of ethnicity. One possible classification distinguishes between old and new theories, while some others consider that, at the time of the formation of ethnicity studies there were two main schools of thought: the Soviet and the Western. The first and most important representatives of these schools are Schirokogorow for the Soviet school of thought, and Weber for the Western approach. On the characteristics of these schools and the differences between them see Ljuboja 1988; also Petrović 1989.

⁴ A key characteristic of this period was that scholars were mainly interested in the Roma, Šokci and Bunjevci ethnic groups. While the Roma were considered exotic, Bunjevci and Šokci were obscure and/or ambiguous and hence a matter of dispute between Serbs and Croats. The origins of these groups lie in the pre-Slavic populations of the Balkans, populations that accepted the Slavic language (Serbian and/or Croatian) and Catholicism. On the other hand, it is worth noting that only a small number of ethnic Serb anthropologists showed interest in the ethnogenesis of Montenegrins. This issue was mainly dealt with by authors who were either Montenegrin or had Montenegrin origins. Aside from that, there were attempts to view the issue through the lens of physical anthropology – see, e.g. Vlahović 1992.

explanations for contemporary ethnic processes in multicultural societies. Aside from being inclined to interpreting issues of ethnicity in terms of biology and mechanics, the Soviet literature did not allow for the perspectives that were possible only in free, democratic, civil societies. Up until the end of the 1980s, the social sciences, or, rather, the social scientists in Serbia tended to be very careful when choosing research topics and formulated their conclusions so as not to provoke the socialist structures too much.

If the previous period brought with it concerns about research not clashing with the ideas and ideologies of the socialist establishment, the 1990s set entirely different challenges. In the new atmosphere of nationalistic zealotry, social scientists had to be careful not to cross spears with revitalized, traditionalist national forces, so they consciously avoided considering contemporary ethnic and national processes in Serbia. Those that were brave enough to tackle these issues in their writing had to be aware of the possible consequences.

New tendencies in ethnicity studies in Serbia can be traced in papers published at the beginning of the 1980s at the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The authors of these papers belonged to the generation of anthropologists born at the end of the 1930s, the most notable being Dušan Bandić and Radomir Rakić. The two of them were among the first to attempt an understanding of ethnos based on Western literature and contemporary theories. Even though it was not his primary area of interest, Bandić wrote a paper titled "Etnos", which shows exactly what state Serbian anthropology was in at that time, and is a paradigm of the relationship that Serbian scholarship had to and the state it was in compared to scholarship in Western countries (see Bandić 1982; also Bandić 1983; also Bandić 1997, 33-54). Very talented and intelligent, Bandić had only scraps of information about what was going on in this particular field in the West, so he used pure logic and common sense in his analysis, and tried to indicate the symbolic potential and nature of ethnic identity, indirectly critiquing all essentialist and primordialist approaches that had come before. Even though Bandić's work is hardly original or up to date when compared to leading European or American authors of the time, in a certain sense it was revolutionary for the Serbian academic community: It was the Serbian version of Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (see Barth 1969). The paper is brimming with systematic attempts at logical explanations of the virtuality and subjectivity of ethnicity, and Bandić's Durkheim-like writing style was accessible to a larger reading public, and it thus encouraged others to tackle traditional topics in innovative ways.

Somewhat later, the Serbian anthropological community began producing significant theoretical papers, mostly overviews, which were on par with similar such writings coming from Western scientific communities. In the late

1980s, Gordana Ljuboja conducted a comparative analysis of Western and Soviet theories of ethnos, practically highlighting where Serbian anthropology had thus far been and where it should be, at least pertaining to ethnicity studies (see Ljuboja 1988). The author noted the key characteristics of both Western and Soviet traditions and opened a new perspective on these studies. About that time, Dušan Janjić (a legal scholar) published *The Dictionary of a Nationalist*, in which he defined terms connected to ethnicity and nationalism (nationalism, ethnic group, nation, patriotism, cosmopolitanism) with regard to contemporary theories (see Janjić 1986). This book stirred discussions amongst the older generation of anthropologists and indicated to them that their approaches were outdated. The route paved by Janjić was later followed by Edit Petrović, Mladena Prelić and others who tried their hand at translating and analyzing the newest papers and approaches in this area (see Petrović 1989; also Prelić 1996).

The study of ethnicity vs. the study of nationalism⁵

In a purely methodological sense, the study of ethnicity needs to be separated from the study of national identity, even though those two discourses often overlap and intertwine. While the study of nationalism is present in all social sciences in Serbia the issue of ethnicity has primarily been tackled by scholars from the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, the Ethnographic Institute and the Institute for Balkan Studies of the SASA (Serbian Academy of Science and Art), and the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade.⁶

It seems that the center of ethnicity studies in Serbia today is located in the Ethnographic Institute of the SASA, which employs a large number of researchers who deal almost exclusively with the issue of ethnicity (see Prelić 2008). Such a state of affairs can only be understood when one considers that it is an "ethnographic" institute, positioning it, ideologically and methodologically in the area of classical ethnological studies, such as issues

⁵ Ethnicity and nationalism can not be equated, but, as suggested by Jenkins, they must be examined in the same analytical framework – see Jenkins 1997.

⁶ The work of Biljana Sikimić must also be considered. Even though she is a philologist, she and her associates continue working and publishing data that anthropologists have ignored as useless. Through linguistic research Sikimić has revealed remnants of forgotten inter-ethnic divisions, linguistic and cultural areas and dwindling ethnic communities, and brought to light interesting topics and issues that could be of use when dealing with contemporary ethnic processes – see, e.g., Sikimić 2005.

of minorities and minority rights. And this institution in fact nurtures the most consistent tradition of researching minority issues. While in the past this institute was known for its extensive knowledge of the field and an enviable amount of empirical data, over time it has also become one of the busiest nests of theoretical and methodological thought on ethnicity. Aside from one still active member of the 'old school', Dušan Drljača, the institute is home to a number of younger more active researchers in the field, like Mladena Prelić, Miroslava Lukić-Krstanović, Mirjana Pavlović, Aleksandar Krel, Sanja Zlatanović, and Gordana Blagojević.⁷ These scholars have been or are still studying issues concerning ethnic identity or minority communities. At the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Faculty of Philosophy, researchers who tackle issues of ethnicity include Bojan Žikić, Slobodan Naumović, Vesna Vučinić, Branko Ćupurdija, Saša Nedeljković and others (Žikić 2003; Naumović 1996; Vučinić 1996; Ćupurdija 1980; Nedeljković 2007). For most of them, ethnicity studies are just one of their fields of interest. Even though many valuable studies on the topic of ethnicity were written by sociologists, their input has mostly been theoretical and sporadic as of late.

Systematization of ethnicity studies in Serbia

Studies of ethnicity and nationalism in Serbia can be grouped thematically. Firstly, there are studies of the Serbian nation as a whole, or, rather, studies of the national identities of certain social classes within the nation. Due to its extent and complexity, this thematic group has to be viewed separately from the others. Secondly, there is research dealing with the Serbian diaspora (mainly in the United States, Canada, Greece and Austria) with an emphasis on populations that migrated for economic and political reasons during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thirdly, there are studies of Serbian minorities in neighboring countries (Romania, Hungary, and Kosovo), populations that for historical reasons live outside of the borders of the nation-state. Fourthly, there are studies of minority groups in Serbia (Egyptians, Roma, Germans, Vlachs, Torlaks, Bunjevci, Montenegrins, etc.). Here it is possible to differentiate between studies of those communities that have been traditionally acknowledged and recognized, communities that have their "own" nation-states and have been organized both politically and otherwise as minorities for a long time (Germans, Hungarians, Bulgarians, and

⁷ Citing one example each, even if some of them have a number of papers on this topic: Dušan Drljača 1988; Miroslava Lukić-Krstanović 1988; Mirjana Pavlović 1991; Aleksandar Krel 2006; Sanja Zlatanović 2008; Gordana Blagojević 2005.

Romanians), and communities that might be termed "hidden minorities" – communities that have only recently become aware of the economic and political potential of ethnic identification and ethnic solidarity. We can also observe the first modest steps toward studying minorities that have come into being after the collapse of socialist Yugoslavia. As far as I am aware, only the Montenegrin community has so far been systematically studied in this way. Then there are studies that do not have as their goal the study of ethnic communities but only one of cultural phenomenon that can reveal out more about the respective community (Ćupurdija 1981; Vučinić 2008; Nedeljković 2007). Finally, there are studies that use comparative analysis in order to deconstruct broader social processes in the region and on a global level (see Čolović 2006).

Recently, a growing number of studies on small ethnic groups written by educated members of these groups have been published. Every small group already has an expert educated in one of the social sciences, and these people are increasingly offering their own views of the identities of the groups to which they belong. These papers are, for the most part, overviews of historical theories about the particular group, such as the Tzintzars, Egyptians, Germans, or Torlaks (see Plasković 2003; Zemon 2001; Krel 2006; Krstić 2004). Beside their romantic tendencies, these studies reveal, with a few exceptions, a clear lack of theoretical background or critical thought. These studies can be divided into two kinds: those with the goal to lend semi-scientific credence to a political cause, usually written by people who have already been formed as political and cultural spokespersons or leaders; and those written by social scientists who have little or no ties to their own group and see this ethnic background merely as a useful resource to advance their career, describing their own community with different, scientifically trained eyes.

Studies of ethnicity in Serbia can also be classified according to publication for which they are written, i.e. whether the papers are published in local or foreign journals. It is notable that papers written for foreign publishers more often deal with contemporary issues, and have a critical, often innovative approach. However, endeavors at innovation and the following of current trends can harm objectivity and consistent analysis of the material. These papers are informative, but often superficial, with the intention of being interesting or shocking and, due of the limited space and the lack of background information among the readership often kept very general and superficial concerning the facts. There is a fair amount of indulgence for the stereotypical view of the Balkans and ongoing ethnical processes. On the other hand, papers published in Serbia are more traditional, with plenty of facts and careful analysis, but with no attempts at the application of new or modern analytical methods. Their primary goal is to be

accurate, and not to illicit too much of a reaction. It could be said, with certain reservations, that papers written for foreign markets are theoretically better, and that they deal with individual theoretical problems, with empirical material as mere decoration or as a supplement to the theoretical deliberation. In other words, the theoretical problem is the primary focus, while the empirical material is of secondary importance. Papers for domestic readers have greater empirical value, while the theoretical part receives only a modest amount of attention. While some authors write primarily for only one of these two markets, it is more often the case that they prepare their material in accordance with the needs of both, meaning that they evaluate what is considered desirable and then accommodate their presentation to the standards of that market.

One branch of ethnicity research stands out in terms of nature of its critical reflection. While in the study of national identity in general a very strong critical spirit and in-depth deconstruction of identity can be seen, the study of identity among the diaspora and minority groups is devoid of this critical aspect, it being replaced by a sort of sympathy or simplified ethnography without any analysis or interpretation. Constructionist and instrumental approaches are relatively poorly expressed and utilized, to be replaced by more commonly used descriptions and historical contextualization. Several reasons can be defined that might explain this difference. On the one hand, some scholars consider smaller communities more innocent and honest as compared to large communities, and their identity is seen natural aspect of belonging and recognition. Smaller communities are described in relatively simple terms, as mostly homogenous, and their identity is explained as if based on realistic and objective parameters. Other scholars clearly demonstrate a guilty conscience, reliving the tension and the moral dilemmas of diaspora and minority groups in a form of extreme loyalty to them, stressing their own personal experience and interests at the cost of their interests in scholarship. They stress the personal relationship with their informants, see themselves as dependent on their good will, and owing them gratitude for their hospitality. They feel a moral obligation, if not to campaign directly for the interests of their informants, then at least to depict them without criticism and deconstruction that might render them ridiculous in the eyes of a reader. A third group of scholars reveal in their monographs a badly disguised fight for national interests. It is possible to identify clear sympathies toward the diaspora. More often than not, these scholars are also members of ecclesiastical or national organizations that have taken it upon themselves to promote traditional Serbian culture.

While national structures in one's own country can relatively safely be criticized for not functioning properly, and might even be considered positive nationalism, every criticism of the diaspora is judged a priori as malicious and

unjust. Serbian emigrants are encouraged to continue their fight for traditional culture. Members of diaspora communities are considered fighters for traditional identity who lead the battle the enemy's territory and are consequently exposed to great pressure. On the other hand, when it comes to studying "the internal Other," ethnic groups and minority groups, it is believed that the smaller communities pose a threat neither to national identity (identity of the majority community) nor to the political system. On the contrary, they are considered a cultural treasure that should be cherished, both for the development of the country (tourism) and relations with the international community. This is why convincing attempts at applying modern theories are so rare in discussions of smaller communities in Serbia. Studies on such communities usually include a short theoretical part on identity with an overview of positions and practices of the members of the community, but they do not include consistent application of theoretical methods on the material itself. The relatively small number of studies on the larger minority groups in Serbia that are quite vocal about their human rights - among others, Hungarians, Bosnians, and Albanians - is also a result of this stance. The linguistic and religious distance prevents an outsider from studying such a community thoroughly, and makes the insiders suspicious. An increasing interest in the Chinese community can be seen, but here the distance is too great for any discussion that might lead to any significant results.

Modern studies of ethnicity lack both a deeper understanding of the political aspects of the process of constriction of ethnic identity, as well as the place of regional and local aspects and events in the global context. Also lacking are comparative studies that might better reveal the logic of processes of ethnifying social groups. Deficiencies in connecting or comparing economical, political, cultural and other aspects of ethnicity are also present. Much useful data that could be collected and applied for the purpose of revealing a fuller version of ethnic processes in Serbia are neglected or intentionally disregarded, because their perception, understanding and application require a better knowledge of the socio-political atmosphere, as well as consistent multidimensional contextualization. On the other hand, there is a fear - or at least a reservation - among scholars about being completely open and writing about one's own experiences and emotions. Anthropological fiction is non-existent in Serbian literature, depriving anthropologists of a broader public forum. The scholar usually remains in the shadows of the problem they is writing about, and very rarely do we discover anything about their personal motives or problems encountered during research.

Considering this list of shortcomings, it is nevertheless possible to anticipate future tendencies and directions of development for studies of ethnicity. Firstly, it is almost certain that the practice of writing monographs

on individual communities will have to come to an end since such monographs fail to meet the generally agreed upon goals of scholarly analysis: studying only one community prevents a deeper understanding of certain aspects of ethnicity and provides a superficial and inaccurate picture of a community. Another feature of scholarship on ethnicity to date is an unreasonable insistence on the deconstruction of identity formulas that implicitly create a duality of actual and invented traditions. That which is invented is criticized therein as something of lesser value overshadowing what has already been present in social practices for decades or centuries with origins undeterminable. Better theoretical and methodological knowledge could certainly lessen this effect. Thirdly, scholars of ethnicity will probably be forced to move beyond national or political boundaries, and start comparing the results of research in other environments with their own. Doubts also exist with respect to the relationship Serbian anthropologists will develop toward the empirical material. There is a growing tendency among younger scholars to deal less with empirical material, and more with the relations to certain phenomena, reducing the empirical material more and more into a reason and motive for research on internal, subjective processes. In addition, the transformation of empirical material into confessional anthropological prose, and the redefining of the relationships between subject and the object of research (the researcher and the problem being researched) is inevitable.

Like other nations, in the course of the twentieth century the Serbian nation has had to deal with redefinitions of its ethnic (political and cultural) space. The first studies of ethnicity were made in the Kingdom of Serbia. These underwent a transformation with the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and socialist Yugoslavia as well. Today such studies take place in a relatively cramped geographical space for which many scholars are not prepared. While in the past, Serbian authors could lay claim to parts of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro as constituting part of a Serbian cultural and political area, today these regions are not easily accessible, and dealing with them makes less and less sense. Serbian authors played a major role in the formation of the discipline of anthropology in Macedonia and Montenegro. Today, authors from these former Yugoslavian republics are successfully studying contemporary issues, and they are becoming less and less dependent on Serbian sources and literature. In addition, an increasing interest in the now independent Yugoslav republics is emerging on the part of Western scholars from Austria, Germany, and the United States, and Serbian authors are not always able to compete. But the scholarly cadres in these former Yugoslav republics are still few in number,

and Serbian anthropologists are ready and able to jump in and help Western anthropologists with analysis or interpretation.⁸

Studies that only deal indirectly with the problem of ethnicity and nationalism – primarily research on religion, language, speech and writing – pose a particular challenge to the study of ethnicity. Although many philologists and theologians do not immediately deal with ethnic identities, they can not ignore the impact of these cultural elements or phenomena on ethnic identities. Religion is very important for understanding Serbian national identity (see Nedeljković 2007), and religion is proving significant for discussing identities of some of the minorities. Ethnic minority communities in Serbia are often, by a trick of fate and complex social circumstances, becoming into double minorities. Members of many minority communities (Slovaks, Rusyns) belong to small religious communities, which complicates the problem of identification. In addition, members of the majority in Serbia who emancipate themselves religiously and often join sects face important identification problems and, if they have not defined themselves in a national discourse, constantly try to redefine their national status under the pressure of their new environment. Like religion, the language also represents a vast area in which many interesting, but also less visible, manifestations of ethnicity can be found. Anthropologists can not ignore the work of philologists who write about the very important interrelationship between linguistic and sociolinguistic problems.

Conclusion

Studies of ethnicity in Serbia are marked by various social, political and cultural factors. It is burdened by a socialist heritage but also by the nationalist euphoria of the 1990s. Nevertheless, ethnicity studies in Serbia are fairly well developed in comparison to similar fields in other countries. The scientific community in Serbia has managed to maintain critical distance and elevate its theoretical-methodological framework to the standards prevalent in Western countries. In reaching this standard the contributions of Serbs living and working in the West but who deal with ethnicity and nationalism in Serbia have been especially important (see Bakić-Hejden 2006; Živković 2001; Hayden 2000).

⁸ A few years ago I was asked to direct a project on the study of national identity in Montenegro in the period after World War II because there are so few Montenegrin anthropologists. The role I found myself in was a very complex identity situation in more ways than one, and I often felt like an intruder.

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**U POTRAZI ZA PRAVOM FORMULOM: IZUČAVANJA
ETNICITETA U SRBIJI**

Ovaj rad predstavlja pokušaj da se sistematizuju i analiziraju problemi dosadašnjih proučavanja etniciteta u Srbiji. U tu svrhu napravljena je selektivna retrospektiva dosadašnjih studija o etnicitetu, kroz upoređivanje pristupa koji su primenjivani u istoriografiji, sociologiji, etnologiji i antropologiji. Utvrđene su brojne razlike u teorijskom i metodološkom pristupu ovom problemu u raznim disciplinama, koje su povezane kako sa određenim disciplinarnim zahtevima ili uslovljenostima tako i sa raznim društveno-političkim faktorima. Takođe, posmatrane su i promene koje su tokom vremena nastale u okviru etnološke i antropološke discipline, u pogledu teorijsko-metodološkog pristupa proučavanju etničkih identiteta. Osim toga, date su perspektive ovih studija u budućnosti i predložena određena metodološka rešenja za specifične probleme u okviru ove teme.

Ključne reči: etnicitet, istorija, teorija, metodologija