DIGITAZING THE INTANGIBLE

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The aim of this article is to highlight some aspects concerning the digitalization of the archives of the Center for Albanian Studies with the main focus to the folkloric collection (prose and poetry archive) of the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies in Tirana.

Firstly, I will give a brief presentation of the Center for Albanian Studies, in Tirana (Albania,), its institutions and respective archives. The Center for Albanian Studies was created in 2008 from the merging of four research institutes of the Albanian Academy of Sciences, including the Institute of Archaeology, Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies, Institute of History, Institute of Linguistic and Literature. This center has an archival fund amongst the richest and the most valuable in Albanian culture in the fields of archeology, ethnology, folklore, history and linguistics. This fund was created with the foundation of these institutions in the second half of last century. It has mainly been enriched during the communist regime, in different ways and shapes, starting with the massive confiscation of material and monetary wealth of the upper social classes, continuing with the gathering of the treasures of tangible and intangible cultural heritage by means of scientific expeditions in the field and ending with periodic purchases and sometimes donations of important objects. **The archeological fund** contains hundreds of fifty thousand objects that belong to the primary fund and 90 thousand objects belonging to the provisional fund. The numismatic collection created during different periods enriches this fund.

The ethnographic fund carries a priceless value for the national and regional culture, due to the fact that the artifacts gathered are mostly unique objects.

The written archive fund and the library are as well very important in the research work of the institutes of this center. The written archive contains publication, different documents (original and unique manuscripts in the fields of linguistics, literature, folklore, ethnology, history and some administrative documents regarding the activities and projects of research institutes since their creation.

The Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies

The first notifications about the presence of our ancestor's culture appear from the antique authors like Strabo, Herod, Aristotle, Homer etc. the researches and publications about Albanian folklore and ethnography have a relatively late beginnings due to the circumstances that Albanian society has been through. The first folkloric registered testimonies dated back in 1635. Nevertheless, a more systematic work started in the second half of the 20th century, from foreign travelers and researchers as Johann Georg von Hahn, John Hobhouse, François Pouqueville, Franz Nopcsa, Theodor Anton Ippen etc. With the creation and consolidation of the Albanian independency, the interest on folklore and ethnography considerably grew, seen as two important components of the national identity. Many individual efforts to collect and publish were noticed to the end of WWII, a period where was as well created a comprehensive folkloric pedestal on the bases of Albanian reality. We can mention here the names of Faik Konitsa, Mithat Frasheri, Lef Nosi, Kasëm Taipi, Kolë Kamsi, Donat Kurti, Bernard Palaj, Eqrem Çabej, Zef Valentini etc. and many intellectuals, teachers, clerical etc who dealt with the collection and publication of Albanian ethno-culture .   A significant development was noticed with the creation of the Institute of Sciences. The first specialists, who had no qualification, were mainly specialized through their work in the terrain, whereas the scientific literature was very difficult to be found. Qemal Haxhihasani,. Zihni Sako, Gjergj Komnino in the field of folklore and Rrok Zojzi and Andromaqi Gjergji in ethnography, together with Kadri Halimi, Mark Krasniqi and Anton Cetta in Kosovo were the founders of work in this first research center. This center went under the authority of the University of Tirana in 1957 and its folklorists and ethnographers dealt with folkloric and ethnographic planned and systematic researches all over territory, to deepen the themes, motives, unknown types, finding similarities in regions where there were no researches at all and above all realizing scientific information on the folkloric and ethnographic situation in the periods where the expeditions were carried out.

In October 1960 the Institute of Folklore was created, with main sectors; folk prose and poetry and ethnomusicology and ethno-choreography, whereas, the sectors of ethnography, art and architecture were under the Institute of History. It was created, in November 1979, the Institute of Folk Culture, as a joint of the Institute of Folklore with the sector of Ethnography, as the only specialized center for the collection, preservation, regulation, publication and study of Albanian folklore and ethnography. Folk Culture consisted of four sectors; 1. The sector of prose and poetry. 2. The sector of ethnomusicology and ethno-choreograph 3. The sector of spiritual culture and 4. The sector of material culture.

Today the name of the institute is Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies under the Center for Albanian Studies. Now the institute has two departments; Department of Folklore and that of Ethnography. Each field of folklore and ethnography has its own archive or funds, as follows;

The ethnographic fund and archive contains about 33 thousand objects of different origin and mixed collections previously owned by aristocratic families and by different clergy communities. The typology of the material composure (marble, wood, silver, straw, cloth, craftsmanship, pottery, weapons, musical instruments etc) shows their quality, diversity and cultural value. **The photography archive** contains around 150 thousand negatives and around 20 thousand photographs and sketches, having as the main theme the Albanian habitat and architecture. The ethnographic written archive has about 10 thousand pages of ethnographic material.

The archive of folk prose and poetry contains around 2 million verses, about 10 thousand type scripted pages in folk prose and about 200000 proverbs. The archive of ethno-musicology and ethno-choreography is another important archive that contains about 30 thousand of folkloric registrations, mainly folkloric songs and melodies and about 350 hours of language and dialectic recordings. The data in this archive are conserved in 16mm celluloid films containing over two folkloric unit (dances, songs, melodies, ethnographic materials etc) accompanied by sound. The recordings date back to the 1920s and have been conserved in discs and magnetic types. The video archive mostly contains ethno-musicology and ethno-choreographic films gathered through expeditions and from different folkloric festivals (2 thousand units of folkloric dances).

In order to maximize the abovementioned archives, the Center for Albanian Studies, has followed a strategy which goes together with the full cataloging of the archival and library fund, as well as with the safeguarding of the written archive from further degradation through the digitalization.

Concerning the digitalization in the Institute of Cultural Anthropology, it has already began the scientific classification of folkloric archival fund. Firstly, the folklorists of this department aimed to achieve a classification scheme for all folkloric collection and as well have undertaken some steps considering the criteria for the creation of the database. Their intention is realizing this scheme in English language, aiming the intercommunication with researchers of other countries.

 The folkloric collection is divided, as a first level, into major groups; Prose (consisting of tales, legends, anecdotes and realist narration, wise words and riddles) 2. Poetry (epic, lyric, epic-lyric and lyric–epic

According to the folklorists the second level of classification has to do with the categorization within each of the above mentioned types. I will give you as an example the categorization of the " Poetry " group with its large groups epic, lyric, epic-lyric and lyric–epic

The songs of the folk epic are grouped into: legendary epic and historic epic as the first level of classification, then next the second level with a further categorization , such as according to the themes for the legendary epic and in relation to a chronological order about the events for the historic epic.

The popular traditional lyric is divided in two: The social lyric (work and old songs, love songs, migration and nizami songs) and the family lyric (lullabies, wedding songs, mourning songs).

Furthermore, there were carried out other classification such as follows; the lullabies may be divided into; songs for child birth and cradle songs. Songs about child birth may be divided into related practiced rites, while the songs of cradle are divided into songs for boys and for girls. The songs about circumcision may be classified according to the phases or moments of this ritual. The same criteria may be used with the wedding songs. According to the chronology of all wedding ceremonies this group of songs is divided into;

a) songs before the wedding ceremony (engagement),

b) during the week of the wedding ceremony and

c. after the wedding ceremony.

Then another classification is carried out according the importance and the place that rite covers in this ceremony. Thus they are divided into 2 large groups;

1. Songs related with the rite,

2. Songs related not directly with the rite.

The songs of love have as the main criteria of classification the motives of love, therefore concluding with a scheme for digitalization as follows;

1. according to motives and themes;

a. songs about girls' beauty

b. the love of boy for the girls

c. love of the girl for the boy

d. reciprocal love

e. unrealized love

2. classification according the emotional peculiarities

a. compositional structure with verses and refrains

b. songs with full rhyme, assonance and consonance

c. presence of comprehensive stylic figures (symbols, comparisons, epithets)

The main representative of the third group of poetry is ballad consisting of characteristics from both lyric and epic. In few words, this is an intermediate type where we notice both the narrative and the reflections of inner feelings, it is divided into: 1. Legendary ballads and Realistic and 2. Historic ballads.

The problems of classifying the folkloric material were discussed in the conference held in Tirana. Researchers presented their own schemes of classification according to the study fields they cover. During this conference were presented some other ideas achieving full catalogue of the classifying data and creating the passport for every folkloric creation. Although the definitions and classification schemes are not applicable to all folkloric types I will present the full scheme, approved by the department of Folklore as the database for the process of digitalization.

1. The serial number in the general register of the archive

2. The title

3. Project (expedition, ethnographic areas, noticing the features for each area,

4. The director of the project (name of the collector; researcher or amateur, his ability in knowing dialects)

5. Number of note books., number of verses, language written, illustrations

6. The narrator (date of birth, the education, profession, family tradition, Instrument used

7. The place and date of collection or registration

8. The preservation type(audio, audio-video, CD, DVD tape number, the number of film, published or unpublished, when and where; key words)

9. Copyright, the intellectual property

10. The name of the operator.

Folklore collections are valuable sources for study and research the cultural heritage of a society or a group of people. They refer to various aspects of every-day life, such as: customs, music, architecture, clothing, handicraft, folk tales and oral tradition and reflect the common way of thinking and living. The main goal is to preserve and popularize to all kinds of users the precious information regarding folkloric collection data. For this purpose this metadata model was developed to enable efficient navigation to all researchers. The digitalization in our Institutes was partly accomplished, the scientific classification was considered as the first step by the researchers of the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and the digitalization is supposed to take place in the second phase. In 2009, it was finished the cataloging and full digitalization of the audio archive thanks to the help provided by the phonogram archive of Vienna Academy of Sciences. Even though, the process is left apart, considering the rooms where these funds are preserved, the digitalization is the very urgent need. The Center for Albanian Study and the Institute of Cultural Anthropology are considering with priority the possibilities of inter institutional cooperation and financial support by third parties, with the aim of achieving full digitalization.

The issue of assessment, conservation and restoration of the above-mentioned funds requires not only immediate attention, but as well a serious involvement of the relevant governmental structures, responsible for the administration and conservation of the values of intangible culture heritage.

The intangible heritage, particularly in the times of social and rapid economic transformations, helps the communities to keep alive the essence of their existence and at the same time contribute to increase respect for other cultures and to foster intercultural dialogue. Keeping it alive and in the service of the communities is main duty and obligation.

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