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Ontology of the cultural influence: dance as a ritual

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the question of ritual psychological and ontological sense of Latin American social dances in modern Russia. The adaptive role of rituality in the present is claimed, it appears, much more than in the ancient times. The society which has departed from rituals of tradition, needs a holiday and carnality, in rest and a role-playing game. All these functions were actually incurred by mass culture. Notable to modern Russian culture, such mass movement, as social dances became the appreciable phenomenon of last decade. Thus, at all distinctions of mentality, there are certain deep ontological factors of social dances of the Latin American format distribution in Russia. Russian society which has appeared (literally speaking) on an existential threshold, can be in many aspects comparable to the Latin American condition of the culture suffering from ontologic incompleteness of cultural self-identification. Hence, experience of Latin America in the field of the ritually-celebratory statement of completeness of life can be of good use in process of harmonization of public relations and in modern Russia.

Keywords

Social dances, salsa, mass culture, ritual, ethnos.

Point

Ritual, undoubtedly, takes defining place in social practice of preliterate

cultures, in traditional societies. It forces a part of scientists and the overwhelming majority of nonspecialists to consider that in its pure form ritual is shown

only in cultures of this kind: the opinion that ritual is in protogenic, undisturbed kind there, is erroneous. Indeed, the division of the world on sacral and profane, the ritualization of each area of a life are more peculiar for these cultures; however, the revealed features of ritual confirm its universality, and, according to extending opinion, "ritual in a modern society plays not less important role, than in traditional cultures"¹.

The importance of ritual forms for modern culture is affirmed by many researchers of an essence of ceremonial actions, both foreign and domestic. So, K. Geertz, underlining the universal social importance of ritual, writes that "ritual is not only semantic model, but it is also a form of social interaction"². M. Wilson writes that in studying of ritual he can see the key to understanding of the main basic things in a structure of a human society³. V.D. Shinkarenko notices: "ritual is characteristic to all types of culture, and not just for lullaby-like ones

which weren't submitted to influence of the western civilization and remained in an invariable kind"⁴.

The adaptive role of rituality in the present is claimed, it appears, much more than in the ancient times. Unlike archaic communal societies, that were divided in social sense into the striations (castes) not liable to social mobility, a modern society appears as a multilayered combination of interpenetrating social groups (for example, a family, neighbors, study, work, etc.). As V.D. Shinkarenko remarks, "in each social group there is an internal behavior <...> and consequently to be "in the family", it is necessary to stick to such ritual behavior"⁵.

At the same time concerning the present we can accent extremely significant aspect of rituality as itself, allocated by K. Levi-Stross. Ritual is an attempt of a being out of the borders of definitions and structures, oppositions and the binary oppositions peculiar, in particular, to mythological thinking – and for a current state it is possible to take as an example both scientific thinking, and the ordinary attitude full of oppositions. Liminality making the central point of ritual regard-

1 Шинкаренко В.Д. Смысловая структура социокультурного пространства. Игра, ритуал, магия. – М.: URSS, 2009. – С. 101.

2 Гирц К. Интерпретация культур. – М.: Российская политическая энциклопедия, 2004. – С. 197.

3 Wilson M. Neakyusa Ritual and Symbolism // American Antropologist. – 1954. – Vol. 56. – № 2. – P. 241.

4 Шинкаренко В.Д. Смысловая структура социокультурного пространства. Игра, ритуал, магия. – М.: URSS, 2009. – С. 101.

5 Ibid.

ing to this is an attempt of exit in "out of"-condition, in the world of a magic continuity where borders spread before comprehension of ontological unity of the world. This condition of uncertainty is as uncharacteristic for the long periods of human life, as it is necessary at any change – of a social role, for example, or "reevaluation of values", or outlook change. An attempt to include possible variants of being (binary oppositions, for example) in a united picture of the world promotes creation of sensation of integrity as much as it can't be finished because of basic incompleteness of a discrete picture of the world, of the information new streams flow which are required to be included in it.

Most likely, if to take in the quantitative aspect, the most influential cultural tendency of the present is the mass culture. Book counters, trailers and TV programs show bright enough illustration of prevalence of mass culture in a modern society. In overwhelming majority critics refuse to investigate this layer (para-)culture because of it "low art value".

However, under M. Chernjak's fair remark, the attention to products of "second row" not only expands cultural horizon, but considerably changes ways of scientific research of this material as

"directive on mass consumption forces the literature to use specific means of, a special esthetic code which also demands studying"⁶. From the point of view of the culture-anthropological approach, the mass culture is the most valuable source of research of process of formation and development of ideology of society.

Concerning our subject, we will mark that the mass culture in the present has actually occupied niches of folklore and religious life: folk theater (mysteries) are replaced by a cinema and rock concerts; fairy tales and a hagiography – by novels: detective, love and fantasy; meditation is in an image of psychotherapeutic "self-instruction manuals", and so on, and so on. We will remind that it is a question not of universal influence of mass culture, but of it's essential prevalence.

Undoubtedly a voyage to the cinema (as well as one to the cafe), viewing of soaps, a disco are powerful tendencies of ritualized pastime caused by cathartic function of the art. What is the substantial message disappearing behind these forms of culture, the most corresponding to expectations of the consu-

6 Черняк М. А. Феномен массовой литературы XX века: проблемы генезиса и поэтики : автореф. дисс. ... докт. филол. н. – СПб., 2005. – С. 3.

mer of a cultural product (unlike "an inconvenient" art house)?

Mass culture (running forward, we will notice that unlike "high" culture and like a ritual action) has a dominant of repeatability, instead of novelty. In the popular literature this results from the fact that, "like a folklore fairy tale the entertaining narration for masses obtains success of efficiency in the constant reference to a collection of drama situations and to the reservoir of ready to the use narrative stereotypes"⁷. Thus, similarly to again and again reproducing action or again and again listening to fairy tale, mass culture genres appeal to deep archetypical layers of the person: a detective – to an archetype of the cultural hero fighting the evil, the love novel – to an archetype of sacred marriage after tests, an anecdote – to an archetype of trickster, etc. We will notice here that mass culture activization coincides with the periods of the heaviest epochs in social and economic relation: so, comics about the Superman became popular in America of 1930s, during the time of Great depression, and popular literature blossoming in Russia has had on the end of XX century, that was the time

of the reforms which have affected hard on a social, economic and psychological condition of society.

The society which has departed from rituals of tradition, needs a holiday and carnality, in rest and a role-playing game. All these functions were actually incurred by mass culture.

Example

Notable to modern Russian culture, such mass movement, as social dances became the appreciable phenomenon of last decade. Social dances are the "popular", "national" pair dances which purpose unlike the ball dance is not the victory in competitions or performances, but is a dialogue, acquaintances, sensation of a holiday. First of all they are the Latin American dances like salsa, bachata, meringue, cha-cha, salsa de rueda; reggaeton and similar ones; tango variations; hustle and swing.

Social dances admirers don't form the closed communities (which, like various alternative movements like of punks or gots, carry out clearly initiative function), their association it is rather club of the interests, uniting people not by a social or ideological sign, but on joint experience of a holiday – on regularly spent parties, festivals, seminars.

7 Козлов Е. В. К вопросу о повторяемых структурах в художественном тексте массовой коммуникации. [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/kozlov1.htm>

It is necessary to note that social dances, unlike many other phenomena of modern mass culture, have not North American, but mainly the Latin American origin: these are Caribbean, Cuban, Brazilian and similar rhythms connected implicitly with a revolutionary spirit (often reproduced in images of Che Guevara, Cuba) and traditions of a carnival, that is the celebratory ritual action having transcultural genesis.

It is thought, this Latin American stream in mass culture deserves the several analytical remarks, allowing to define its relation to ritualized practice of present days.

A long time ago researchers-culturologists have addressed to special characteristics of the Latin American holiday as the culture phenomenon. Creation of the Latin American holiday, according to J.G. Shemjakin, "symbolizes a classical situation of a birth of space from Chaos owing to that it reproduces in not so much degree (like archaic holidays) the sacrament of ritual of recreation, as it models real process of formation of new culture and itself acts as one of the brightest displays of this process"⁸. Thus the

8 Шемякин Я. Г. Латиноамериканский праздник как предмет цивилизационного исследования // *Iberica America: Праздник в ибероамериканской культуре*. – М., 2002. – С. 345.

concept of Chaos has accurately defined specific cultural connotations: the horror before chaos "is treated in Latin America as fear of collision of qualitatively various cultural traditions, generated by idea of negation of another's experience of the other human world"⁹. Such treatment of an image of Chaos (and of object of ritual overcoming) isn't casual. As known Latin American writer A. Carpentier noticed, "the land of America became the theater of the most sensational meeting of different ethnoses from all noted in the annals of world history: that was the meeting of the Indian, the Black and the European ... we were already original ... much earlier, than the idea of originality has appeared before us as our purpose"¹⁰. Historical memory has kept the interethnic conflict as the most terrible kind of aggression.

Thus, the implicit purpose of the Latin American holiday, or chaos overcoming, is peaceful co-existence of all cultural layers making a heritage of this original civilization. Such symbiosis demanding acceptance of mutually exclusive actions/beliefs/convictions (such,

9 Чистюхина А. П. Латиноамериканский праздник: игровая грань дионисийства // *Ночь: ритуалы, искусство, развлечения. Глубины темноты*. – М.: ЛЕНАНД, 2009. – С. 35.

10 Писатели Латинской Америки о литературе. – М.: Радуга, 1982. – С. 24.

say, as chastity of Catholicism and a mythologo-sexual image of the woman-female in American Indian culture; the sacrifice role in Christianity and culture of the Maya and Aztecs), is really reached most full in the Dionysian environment of the holiday, allowing oxymoron and inversions. "The whole thing ... isn't reduced to synthesis. The Latin American holiday shows a picture of an interlacing, opposition, symbiosis and synthesis"¹¹ – of cultures, traditions, rhythms, images and myths.

Complexity of ethnic/cultural self-determination becomes the factor of the existential dissatisfaction demanding the solution in celebratory action for the person of the given culture. Under the remark of the researcher, "Latin America concerns cultures where the requirement for a holiday becomes similar to requirement for other vital conditions"¹².

Only in a holiday which is "a pause in culture" (N. Khrenov), it is possible to overcome the ontological incom-

pleteness of culture feeling as there is a removal of interdictions, running out of control of doubts and self-restrictions. However if in other cultures Dionysian holiday forms can be defined as temporary deviations from Apollonic cultural compulsion, then the Latin American culture including a holiday in number of regular departures of social life, has a little specific motivations, including treatment of overcoming (in celebratory ritual) chaos in sociocultural sense.

The dance, one of quite Dionysian arts, became the integral line of the Latin American holiday. If the European tradition in general marking corporal as lowest, dance has been admitted only "on the square", but not in a cathedral, but in Inca traditions, for example, dance was in the ritual center, becoming in many cases the culmination of a holiday and the certificate of the higher service to divine forces¹³. We will cite, making more exhaustive comments on culturological essence of the Latin American dance: "Impulsive, rigid and simultaneously soft, smooth character of dances during many Latin American holidays confirms an intrinsic kernel of the given culture: mythoritual unity of Iberian, American Indian and Black cultures. Dance symbolically returns the Latin American to

11 Шемякин Я. Г. Латиноамериканский праздник как предмет цивилизационного исследования // *Iberica America: Праздник в ибероамериканской культуре*. – М., 2002. – С. 355.

12 Чистюхина А. П. Латиноамериканский праздник: игровая грань дионисийства // *Ночь: ритуалы, искусство, развлечения. Глубины темноты*. – М.: ЛЕНАНД, 2009. – С. 34.

13 Там же. – С. 38.

his sources, up to the time of a meeting of various ethnoses"¹⁴.

Being one of the most archaic forms of the ritually-symbolical, extra-verbal, corporally focused knowledge and expression of experience, dance is connected and with the statement of the sexuality that is suppressed in Christian culture. Thus if the European tradition opposes spiritual and corporal love then Latin American tradition unites them in mythological symbolism.

Mythology and utopianism, aspiration to sensation of surplus of life, immortality and omnipotence, or, speaking words of Nietzsche, disposal of burden of individual being – here are the main lines of the Latin American holiday as to the integral requirement of culture; all these purposes in implicit are presented and in dance of Latin America, including social dances getting the increasing popularity.

As to salsa dance and its social role we will result the representative citation of the musician and the expert on salsa К. Ipatov: "What I do like in salsa, is that it is clear both to people from cardboard boxes, and to people in brilliants and on cadillacs. This music unites all social classes in Latin America: without music they would kill each other long ago. Music holds a society in some kind

14 Там же.

of positive form, despite the negative moments of life"¹⁵. The thought of infringement of social borders on a dance floor, about the celebratory unity reached on a salsa-discos, varies in the most different responses about a salsa on the Russian-speaking Internet and mass-media.

Thus, at all distinctions of mentality, there are certain deep ontological factors of social dances of the Latin American format distribution in Russia. As to numerical indicators of wide spreading salsa it is possible to name following impressing figures: in 2001 in the south of Russia there was one salsa-club (Rostov-on-Don), today they have eleven of them functioning, from which four are in Rostov, five in Krasnodar territory and two in Volgograd¹⁶; the greatest quantity of dancing schools and parties can be found in both capitals which are a source of distribution of salsa (as well as other kinds of social dances).

Results

In the conditions of dramatic, and sometimes tragic conflict of cultures

15 Ахматова Л. Сальса. [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: http://www.idance.ru/show.php?id_a=161

16 Южнороссийская сальса. [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://www.coronel.ru/salsa/>

and cultural influences of a globalization century the mental space of the modern world is a place of fight, including the Russian society where the given conflicts are more aggravated through several decades with sweeping changes in social, economic, ideological aspects of life. We may consider that in such condition the Russian society which has appeared (literally speaking) on an existential threshold, can be in many aspects comparable to the Latin American condition of the culture suffering from ontologic incompleteness of cultural self-identification. Hence, experience of Latin America in the field of the ritually-celebratory statement of completeness of life can be of good use in process of harmonization of public relations and in modern Russia. Possibly, as a result this reason is a necessary explanation of modern youth's great interest for the social dances directly rooting in traditions of the Latin American holiday, a carnival.

As we may suppose, the following statement of the researcher can be treated in broad sense, in the relation not only to Latin American, but also other (ritually-celebratory) cultural traditions: "the holiday has appeared internally antinomian: on the one hand, it is coparticipant to the world of a utopia, an ideal, confirms a principle of harmony, on the other hand –

it fills a role of an important element of the existing mechanism of domination, acts as stabilizing factor of present system of the power"¹⁷. Y.G. Shemjakin accurately allocates a consolatory and political role of ritual, and, speaking more widely, harmonizing and transforming function of it. In a holiday – the organized, mass ritual action – the world becomes as it should be and even moreover, despite all burdensome spirits of the times and growing stock of existential cares.

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¹⁷ Шемякин Я. Г. Латиноамериканский праздник как предмет цивилизационного исследования // *Iberica America: Праздник в ибероамериканской культуре*. – М., 2002. – С. 347.

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Онтология культурных влияний: танец как ритуал

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена вопросам ритуально-психологического и онтологического содержания латиноамериканских социальных танцев в современной

России. Адаптивная роль ритуальности в современности востребована, думается, значительно больше, чем в древности. Общество, отошедшее от ритуалов традиции, нуждается в празднике и карнавальности, в отдыхе и ролевой игре. Все эти функции взяла на себя фактически массовая культура. Заметным явлением последнего десятилетия стало распространение в современной российской культуре такого массового движения, как социальные танцы. Российский социум, оказавшийся буквально на экзистенциальном пороге, может быть во многом сопоставим с латиноамериканским состоянием культуры, страдающей от онтологической неполноты культурной самоидентификации. Следовательно, опыт Латинской Америки в области ритуально-праздничного утверждения полноты бытия может сослужить хорошую службу в деле гармонизации общественного состояния и в современной России.

Ключевые слова

Социальные танцы, сальса, массовая культура, ритуал, этнос.

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