

UDC 930.85 (4—12)

YU ISSN 0350—7653

ACADEMIE SERBE DES SCIENCES ET DES ARTS

COMITE INTERACADEMIQUE DE BALKANOLOGIE
DU CONSEIL DES ACADEMIES DES SCIENCES ET DES ARTS
DE LA R.S.F.Y.

INSTITUT DES ETUDES BALKANIQUES

BALCANICA

ANNUAIRE DE L'INSTITUT DES ETUDES BALKANIQUES

XXII

Rédacteur

NIKOLA TASIC

Membre correspondant de l'Académie Serbe des Sciences et des Arts
Directeur de l'Institut des Etudes balkaniques

Secrétaire

ALEKSANDAR PALAVESTRA

Chercheur-assistant de l'Institut
des Etudes balkaniques

Membres de la Rédaction

De Yougoslavie: MILUTIN GARASANIN, ALOJZ BENAC,
RADOVAN SAMARDZIC, MILKA IVIC, CEDOMIR POPOV,
DRAGOSLAV ANTONIJEVIC, VESELIN ĐURETIC,
MIODRAG STOJANOVIC

De l'étranger: ANTHONY EMIL TACHIAOS (Thessalonique),
DIMITRIJE ĐORĐEVIC (Santa Barbara — Californie),
ALEKSANDAR FOL (Sofia), NIKOLAJ TOLSTOJ (Moscou)

BELGRADE

1991



Истакла бих богату литературу коју ауторка наводи на крају књиге, затим нотне белешке песама (Марија Киш, Лајош Киш, Тихомир Вујичић), илустрације (фотографије М. Киш, Имре Хе-Бија и других).

На крају да истакнемо: ова књига не да је само пажње достојна, него сматрам да би било

корисно да се преведе на наш језик, како би наши етнологзи могли да користе ову драгоцену грађу у својим компаративним истраживањима и студијама, те да имају могућности да прикажу, и са овога аспекта, за етнолошку науку значајне резултате.

Магдалена Веселиновић Шулиц

Dragoslav Antonijević, *THE RITUAL TRANCE*

Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Institute for Balkan Studies,
Special Editions No. 42, Belgrade 1990, 280 pp.

The author of this book, D. Antonijević, a renowned Yugoslav ethnologist and folklorist who has dedicated his scientific career to Balkan studies, is well-known for his keen interest in a wide variety of subjects, ranging from theoretical and methodological problems, the study of migrations, life styles and customs of Balkan shepherds, folk poetry, ethnomusicology and choreology, to the genesis of theatrical forms, magic, religion, and rituals. In his latest work, *The Ritual Trance*, its very subject matter being extremely complex, and encompassing most of the author's favorite topics in a single entity, enabled him to apply all his previously acquired knowledge and to approach the selected phenomenon integrally, which is, by all means, the only scientifically justifiable way. This alone, that is the attained transdisciplinary ideal of modern research, gives a special quality to the book and makes it quite unique among many others dealing with the problem of Balkan religion and rituals.

As always, the author, devoid of all unnecessary concern for the artificial, secondary political or any other kind of divisions in the Balkans, but highly aware of its diverse and specific ethnic, historical and sociocultural contexts, has decided to look for common cultural traits among its various

peoples, rather than for ethnic or local peculiarities. This time he focused his attention upon the phenomenon of trance experienced by individuals in ritual situations believed to have been possessed by supernatural, otherworldly, divine beings. D. Antonijević found these experiences at the very core of three different Balkan rituals: Anastenaria (Greece, Bulgaria), Russalia (Eastern Serbia) and Calusarii (Rumania, Bulgaria). It is important to mention that this is the first attempt ever made in Balkan studies to approach ritual trance experiences from a comparative perspective.

In the first, introductory chapter, *On Trance*, the author offers his own theoretical analysis of the phenomenon. In his endeavor to do so, he approaches the problem from various standpoints — ethnological, anthropological, psychoanalytical, theatrological... He defines trance as a particular state of mind experienced by otherwise mentally normal and healthy individuals while being "possessed" in strictly delineated and structured sacral, ritual settings. Moreover, the author considers ritual participants in trance as privileged members of the society for, while in that state, they possess special gifts, such as prophecy, clairvoyance, mediation of messages with the other world. Their ability to

establish the communication channel between the two worlds, the profane on the one side and the sacred on the other, the need of which will exist as long as there would be dual, religious perceptions of reality, is the source of their power and hence the elevated social statuses. For, while communicating with the supernatural, they are able to "heal" disturbances, to turn the asocial into social, to provide means for imaginary control and cooperation with the otherworldly. Thus, the author rightfully concludes that the ritual trance represents "an institutionalized cultural model", grounded in animistic conceptions of the world, which performs numerous social functions: psycho-therapeutic, magical, socio-integrative, creative and so on.

Thus, it is clear that the author, imbued, as every true scientist, with the urge to discover something new about man and his culture, situates the analyses of this polysemous and polyfunctional phenomenon in the contemporary communicational cultural and, specifically religious theory framework. In accord with the same train of theoretical thought, D. Antonijević analyzes also the role of music, dance and scenario, that is the course of the ritual drama, in enabling the trance occurrence. Thus, at the same time, he brings into focus one more important ritual component, besides those fulfilling cognitive, communicational, emotional and pragmatic goals, namely, the aesthetic one.

In the following chapters the author applies the described theoretical assumptions to the complex analyses of the empirical data, gathered through author's own field research and other from other sources, on the three mentioned Balkan rituals respectively. In each case the author studies both the total, structural model of a ritual and its constituent parts, metaphorical representations, actions and symbols in relation to its specific

sociocultural context. However, besides the synchronic analyses and his own "thick descriptions", D. Antonijević also ventures into the archaic past with an ambition to provide the diachronic perspective of the rituals as well. However, this particular quest for origins, endeavors to connect certain ritual elements, or ritual as a whole, to some specific ancient religious conceptions and practices, and speculative reconstruction of their genesis, are likely to raise most polemics with the author. The reason for this is of methodological nature. Namely, in this particular respect, unlike his analyses at the synchronic level, the author retreats to the classical method of establishing formal analogues, which leaves the door wide open to various kinds of speculations and disagreements of the same order, none of which actually have any perspective in determining true identity or similarity between phenomena from different time periods. More fruitful and meaningful disputes may raise about the author's distinctions between trance and shamanism on the one side and ecstasy on the other for many will find his argumentation not convincing enough.

Still, the book, beyond any doubt, represents an important contribution to our knowledge on Balkan cultures, past and present. It is intellectually highly provocative, brave and challenging. Author's explanations reveal not only the archaic layers of mystical rituals, but also the universal need of man, including the modern secular and rational one, to occasionally "play with fire", like Anastenaria, in search of catharsis and liberation from the burdens of everyday life. It also reminds us that man is the center of all events, that only when refracted through individuals occurrences derive their meaning and power.

Mirjana Prošić-Dvornić