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The Historical Anthropology of Intellectuals: The Initial Mapping Out of a Topic

Abstract: The history of intellectuals demands a special approach and methodology within historical anthropology. The objective of the research is thus an innovation in terms of both theme and methodology. The paper will examine the origins of the structures of thought which formed “intellectuals” as a separate group, as well as follow the development of socially and culturally productive narratives. The research is oriented toward aetiology and continuity, but has no ambition to offer a panorama or an overview of the historical features.

Key words: intellectuals, historical anthropology, gender, ideology, democracy

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Zgodovinska antropologija intelektualcev

Izveček: Za zgodovino intelektualcev sta potrebna poseben pristop in metodologija zgodovinske antropologije. Smoter raziskave je tematska in tudi metodološka inovacija. Članek preučuje izvor miselnih struktur, ki so oblikovale skupino intelektualcev, obenem pa spremlja tudi razvoj družbeno in kulturno produktivnih naracij. Raziskava se osredotoča na ajtiologijo in kontinuiteto, vendar nima namena, da bi ponudila panoramo ali pregled zgodovinskih značilnosti.

Ključne besede: intelektualci, zgodovinska antropologija, spol, ideologija, demokracija

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The historical anthropology of intellectuals is related to two socio-cultural formations which defined the group even before the founding of the first institutions serving intellectuals: to gender relations in a patriarchal community, and to democracy. The theoretical framework of the project originates from the recent theories of the body and gender. Connecting the historical anthropology of intellectuals to these theories means, on the one hand, stopping the non-argumentative appropriation of ancient cultures by modern European culture, and, on the other hand, thinking of possible approaches to a motivational reflection on the triangle gender/women – intellectuals – democracy, which challenges the standard description of intellectuals as characterised by curiosity, avoidance of the established rules, need for uncompromising research. The result of such an analysis shall be a model of cultural poetics, which can be verified by tracing the poetics inherent in the texts of a chosen group of authors. Thus the established model can serve as a basis for the central objective of the research, that is, a historical-anthropological interpretation of the intellectual population in the new, globalised Hellenistic world. The historical-anthropological analyses cover four thematic areas – polyglossia, urbanity/multiculturalism, institutions, and subculture/nomadism – which are examined in the context of the changes in gender relations and in political participation – that is, in the context of a clear division between the public and the private sphere. These changes are then traced in the politics of constructing the body and types of discourse, which display some key modifications. These modifications are organised into a system, confirmed by the comparative reading of synchronous texts, in order to determine the status and politics of the gaze in the period of Athenian democracy as opposed to the Hellenistic period of social change, the objective being to ascertain and follow the possible continuities up to the present. The project is expected to broaden the research horizons of the historical anthropology of gender and democracy; indeed, it is the relationship between gender and democracy that occupies the central place in reflecting on the position of intellectuals.

The resulting study will use the methodology of comparing texts and images and establishing diachronic-isochronic intersections, following the procedures proposed by the French school of the anthropology of ancient worlds.

The discipline of historical anthropology is still not widespread in the Slovene academe. It is admirably suited to research on the less representative groups in political history – or, for that matter, even on those absent from political history

– because it lends itself to tracing identitarian procedures, following the creation of important cultural formations, detecting the entangled levels of discourse, decoding the cultural poetics. The history of intellectuals, a group which has an ambivalent attitude to the dominant narratives and does not belong to a well-defined socio-cultural population, demands a special approach and methodology within historical anthropology, a combined intersectional analysis and diachronic perspective. The objective of the research is a thematic innovation, but also a methodological one. The research will examine the origins of the structures of thought which formed the group of intellectuals (the gender–democracy relationship), as well as follow the development of socially and culturally productive narratives, especially those enabling certain forms of continuity in constructing the identity of intellectuals. The limits of the research will be defined by cultural poetics as its key concept; the research is oriented toward aetiology and continuity, but has no ambition to offer a panorama or an overview with historical features.

Toward a historical anthropology of intellectuals: European gender relations and practices of democracy as the field in which the cultural poetics of intellectuals has been formed ever since the Hellenistic period.

Historical-linguistic prolegomena: the history of the term “intellectual” and of the semantic field of the notion of “intellectual” since antiquity. A contextual semantic analysis of the term in European languages, especially in those where it has an antagonistic connotation (English and French, for instance).

The historical anthropology of intellectuals is crucially connected with two socio-cultural formations which defined intellectuals well before the first institutions for intellectuals were founded: with gender relations in a patriarchal society, and with democracy.

The theoretical framework of the project originates from the recent theories of gender and the body (by Judith Butler, Elisabeth Grosz, Rosi Braidotti), which try to steer the decentralised body of the previous generation of theoreticians (Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray) back into the European streams of materialist deconstruction of stability, and to form an approach which presupposes the incessant change of all paradigms. Predictably, this theoretical orientation is accompanied by a new interest in ethics, especially in Spinoza. Approaching the historical anthropology of intellectuals from this perspective means, on the one hand, permanently suppressing the non-argumentative claims to continuities with ancient

cultures made by today's European culture, and, on the other hand, reconsidering intellectuals as the producers of such appropriation. The specific objective of the project is to propose a challenging and innovative approach to the origins of intellectuals, which are rearranged into the triangle intellectuals – gender/women – democracy, and linked to a motivational reflection on curiosity, denial of the rules, and uncompromising research, often presented as the basic features of intellectuals. One of the objectives of the project is certainly to deconstruct the European myth of the intellectual.

The Athenian democracy of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. serves as the representative and generic example both of European continuities and contemporary practices. Both of the above-mentioned formations (i.e. gender relations and democracy, ancient and contemporary) define the group of intellectuals as a liminal phenomenon, one that is realised and structured only when the formation is in the process of disintegration. A group of intellectuals who define themselves as being critical of – or even in conflict with – democracy may be recognised in the participants of Plato's *Symposium* (Socrates, Aristophanes, Agathon and others). These challenge the patriarchal gender relations by comparing the discourse of the latter to their own and other authors' texts, to secondary sources, to images. Thus a construction of gender difference as the dominant ideological text of the collective invention can be read in Thucydides' *History* (Pericles' speech for the Athenian citizens who perished in the Sicilian expedition), in Athenian epigraphs and images (monuments, tombs, vase paintings) from the period of democracy, in the fragments of the process against Neaera (Pseudo-Demosthenes), in texts of Athenian orators. The texts of tragic and comic poets (above all Aristophanes), Xenophon's memoirs of Socrates, and Plato's dialogues (Socrates' *Apology* and the *Republic*) reflect a change in both discourse-creating formations. Since we are dealing here with the formative texts of European cultural identity, the interpretations are not only extremely diverse but also radically antagonistic: Plato and Aristophanes, for instance, have been interpreted in European cultural history as enemies of democracy, pre-feminists, pro-aristocrats, and pre-communists. An understandable exaggeration of these European proto-intellectuals' position and the exploitation of their figures for various contemporary ideological objectives has even led to speculations about their responsibility for the fall of Athenian democracy, with the unlikely presupposition that they would have had the power to endanger it. One of the objec-

tives of the project is thus to delimit (and dispose of) the layers of European cultural “embedment”, as well as to define the elements of a historical-anthropological analysis based on linking texts and images in a synchronous context. This means inclusion of the recent research results concerning the history of women in antiquity (Eva Keuls, Roger Just, Florence Dupont, François Lissarrague, Stella Georgoudi, Véronique Dasen, Helen King, Froma Zeitlin), followed by an attempt at (re)constructing the cultural intimacy (Michael Herzfeld) of the group which we define as the first intellectuals to have emerged in the polis and in democracy, that is, as the first European intellectuals. Such an analysis should yield a model of cultural poetics, which could be verified by tracing the poetics inherent in the extant texts of this group of authors. Once established, the model could serve as a basis for the central research of the project, that is, for research into the anthropology of the intellectual population in the Hellenistic world of a new, global culture. Thus the introduction proposes a theoretical framework and methodological tools for researching the origins of the conceptualisation of intellectual practices, defining the main topic of the study as a “node” of conflicting relationships between gender and democracy.

The historical-anthropological frame of the introductory research for the project: the body of the citizen – isoccephaly or the democracy of war; the exclusion of women and traumatisation of men in Athenian democracy; woman’s body as a transfer of meaning – vessel, box, door, mirror, spinning, bathing, planting; sexual imaginary; woman’s body in the imaginary of democracy; transvestism/travesty as a genre of the democratic discourse; the taking over of women’s voices, excluded from the practices of Athenian democracy; transfer of sexual authority; equality/equity of the sexes in the domain of religion; the dynamics of sexual symbolism; the stealing of language, laughter and other forms of gender subversion as institutions of democracy; gender partnership against patriarchy; sexual metaphors in philosophy.

The preliminary research provides the basis for a historical-anthropological analysis of the institutionalisation of intellectuals in the Hellenistic Mediterranean basin. The theoretical framework of the analysis reflects the historiography of Hellenism, at the same time critically revising the tendency to draw analogies between the global cultures of today and of the Hellenistic period. This critical revision relies on post-colonial theories, on a critique of Eurocentrism, and on the concept of the “ancient worlds” instead of hegemonic identity constructions. Special

attention is given to the construction of Athenian democracy in the European collective memory (cultural authority, a call for justice, utopian past), which can certainly be attributed to the activities and influence of a new and visible socio-cultural group of intellectuals. From the standpoint of historical anthropology, the analysis is carried out in four thematic frameworks: polyglossia, urbanity/multiculturalism, institutions, and subculture/nomadism. All four frameworks are examined in the context of changed gender relations and changed practices of participation in politics, that is, the separation of the private and the public sphere – and, eventually, in the context of the changed status and authority of the gaze.

Polyglossia: In the period of late Hellenism, triglossia became the dominant communication model as opposed to the diglossia of early Hellenism. In both cases Greek is posited as the primary language, even when it was acquired subsequently. The “mother tongue” did not exist as a legitimate concept, nor were “barbarian” languages an object of research or preservation, although the concept was losing its negative connotation. The Greek language became the cultural space of the identity, communication and authority of intellectuals (teaching of Greek). The Latin language also had a distinctive position as a space of identity, even if it did not reach the importance of Greek, but it became the paradigm of “ours” for Roman intellectuals, including translation, terminological synchronisation, bilingual acrobatics, and even crypto-ludic authority. A special example is religious diglossia (Greek–Hebrew), in which the construction of a group of intellectuals coincided with the construction of a minority group and its political and ideological demands. These are the grounds on which anthropology defines the knowledge of languages as the fundamental authority-qualification of intellectuals. Translations (not only of texts but also of cultural models and mental images), neologisms, and cultural appropriation shall be analysed in the texts of authors such as Plutarch, Lucian, Athenaeus, Cicero, Catullus, Horace, Quintilian, Petronius, Aphthonius. Linguistic examples of translations/adaptations shall be compared with the “translations” of images, narrative sequences, mythological models. As a formative pattern of the intellectual group and of the cultural intimacy obtaining within it, the polyglot competence of the Hellenistic period influenced anthropological and social practices as well, for instance solidarity, the spreading of knowledge and information, or the praise of gender equality in the field of language competence.

Urbanity/multiculturalism: The expansion and democratisation of the citizen’s status, accompanied by a restriction on his participation in the public decision-

making, restructured the gender relations. The urban space brought into contact different forms of gender specifics and cooperation from the perspectives of various cultures, which called for comparison, observation, interaction, adaptation. Hellenistic urbanity means crucial new ways of evaluating the provincial, the non-central; it means a certain “utopisation” of imaginary Athenian cultural authority. While the male citizen’s authority diminished with the vanishing democratic practices, the woman’s authority increased at home, inside the family, in the intimate sphere. The “revolution of emotions” meant gender conflicts in new spaces, but also an adaptation of legislation to the new power distribution between the sexes. The system of inheritance instead of elections empowered heiresses and gave them political power, a process which was accompanied by a representative reconstruction of sexuality, by new images, new bodies, and a new gaze. The radical changes were reinforced by new genres, textual and visual: magnification (official, representative), miniaturisation (private), hybridisation, de-aesthetisation, advances in technology and science, mysticism, quotations, fashions. The thematic delimitations of a culture without democracy or critical institutions became political idealisation and everyday practices – but at the same time, the access to the cultural production was the same as, or even wider than, before. Among texts, the processes of the creation of new genres and their consequences for historical anthropology are exemplified by catalogues and descriptions (periphrases), and among images by the figure of Baubo (a hybrid body) and the Tanagrines, miniature, usually female terra-cotta figures mainly originating from Tanagra, a city in Boeotia (Central Greece). The catalogue and the description marked the field of philological procedure, which was to retain a crucial continuity in European scholarly practices, while Baubo and the Tanagrines likewise met with abundant – but little researched – European reception. In contrast to the catalogue, the description, and the figure of Baubo, which came from the same urban space – Alexandria – the Tanagrines represent a provincial cultural product: their European reception attests to a certain “spilling over” of the concept of urbanity in Hellenism. As shown at the great Louvre exhibition in 2003, the Tanagrines became an important element of the patriarchal mental picture of women in the Europe of the second half of the 19th century, within a cultural production which was obsessively subjecting women to reproduction, copy, and multiplication, all for the use and under the control of a voyeuristic male observer. The objective of this project is to define the reception horizons of the bourgeois

patriarchy, designed by intellectuals (John Ruskin, Oscar Wilde, Anatole France, Pierre Louÿs and others) with powerful references to the Hellenistic period. It forms a contrast to the Classical era – and to Christianity – with its clear ideological plan, in which “decadence” is aligned with atheism as the narrative ground, and a certain legitimisation of pleasure tends to promote diverse sexual practices. Even if the miniature female figure does bear all the marks of aggressive patriarchal intervention, representing a reaction to contemporary women’s movements (suffragettes), it nevertheless offers new models of sexual behaviour, the sexual utopia of a libertine intellectual population. The new evaluation of Hellenistic culture in the art circles reflects the evaluation of Hellenistic literature in the academic ones, which were treating antiquity with an interdisciplinary and multicultural approach. Through the contacts and polemics between two groups of European intellectuals (Nietzsche, Wilamowitz-Moellendorf), the space of communication between the artistic and the academic group remained open, later becoming the breeding ground of avant-garde movements in Europe. An exceptional example of this new cultural intimacy is the Slovene writer Fran Saleški Finžgar, with his invention of late antiquity/early Byzantium, which belongs to the same circle of intellectual interventions in the past.

The historical-anthropological framework for the central part of the research, part I: the male body and private spaces; changes of heterosexual relations; woman in the city, the street, the spectacle; socio-cultural substitutes for democracy – the distribution of food, euergesia; the gaze and the manipulation of huge and miniature bodies; images and hierarchies; the catalogue and mnemonics; acoustic identity, quotations, the accumulation of knowledge, archives; new maps of pleasure – reading, politically irrelevant discourse, dialogue between the sexes; everyday life and the new ethics.

Institutions: The Hellenistic monarchy as the dominant form of social organisation developed a number of services which facilitated the transfer of ideological texts and mechanisms of collective invention, including a new individualism. The production, preservation and revitalisation of narratives requires professionals capable of rhetoric, catalogisation, versification, as well as conversant with philology, literature, the sciences, sophistics – in a word, it requires intellectuals beside artists and performers. While Aristotle and his students had already been able to earn money by selling legislative documents, it was only in Hellenistic society that the intellectual became entirely dependent on the market, on offering and selling

his services, and at the same time on the goodwill or caprices of the powerful – the money providers, the master politicians and their interests. Competence thus became an ambivalent area in which intellectuals performed services while creating their own space of freedom, often concealed among the official requirements. A Hellenistic intellectual produced texts, but also preserved, copied, catalogued and interpreted the texts and works of art which were in the rulers' possession. Libraries, which sprang up all over the Hellenistic world even in the least expected places, were the model institutions whose activities symbolically preserved and reproduced power. In dealing with texts and objects, rulers and intellectuals were united by their different interests and objectives. A similar institution founded in the Hellenistic period was the Museum. Its objective was to serve the representative needs of a Hellenistic city, and its function of transfer, dissemination, creation and preservation was even more complex than that of the libraries. The object of all these procedures was dominant narratives, but they provided education as well. The official and the "grey" zone of competence were intertwined, and the emergence of the institutions was accompanied by a new socio-cultural type of intellectual, whose activities have remained well-nigh the same up to the present. The main component of intellectuals' cultural poetics became mediation, and this is where we read the gestures, bodies, techniques, strategies of discourse, the nodal complex of the historical anthropology of intellectuals. The crucial body-related change was the switch from loud to silent reading. When did this change occur? Was silent reading connected to the Christian techniques of communicating with God, or was it developed in the Hellenistic libraries and museums? A woman without a public voice, as envisaged by Athenian democracy, turned into a general symbolic figure of all those without power, men and women alike: the two sexes were now equal in terms of power, but while the male citizen's privileges in the public sphere were dwindling, the woman's competences and rights in the private sphere were growing (inheritance, divorce, participation in the public spectacles, the omnipresent figures of the rulers' daughters, mothers, wives). The male was a newcomer to the private sphere, where he had to establish his patriarchal authority, but he could also display solidarity, cooperation, intimacy. The mixing of competences in space and in the institutions demanded new gender relations. Hellenistic philosophers, for example Epicurus, had women students too, and some of them even bequeathed their schools to women teachers. Did the new arrangement of bodies in space and of voices form new gender atti-

tudes, and what part was played in this development by the intellectuals, especially by the education and research organised in the new institutions? The answer is expected to come through the methodological intervention of historical anthropology. The cultural poetics of intellectuals, accommodated to the power–institution relationship, had to reformulate the former ideas on gender equality – at least among philosophers – and make new alliances both inside and outside the institutions. The knowledge and the scientific results depended on the users and the use. The Hellenistic sources clearly indicate that the position of women changed radically: they frequented theatres, schools, art studios, libraries. The objective of the present project is therefore to explore all these changes, and to determine which of them are connected to institutions, for the anthropology of intellectuals has been related to the history of institutions ever since the Hellenistic period.

Subculture/nomadism: The association with institutions was marked by the uncertainty of such a relationship: intellectuals were on the market, sharing the position of all others who offered their services to the authorities. Some were not chosen and had to continue searching for finances, a benefactor, an institution. Some were constantly on the move, earning as they travelled. From the second half of the 2nd century B.C. onward, a point of attraction was Rome with its huge need for professionals – for teachers, bearers of knowledge. These were the harbingers of new élites, and objects of contempt to the old ones. Hellenistic authors, such as Dio Chrysostomus, vividly describe the predicament of a nomadic intellectual (sophist, teacher of rhetoric), who is harassed by the populace after being recognised by his looks, asked stupid questions, and threatened if his answers fail to correspond with his audience's desires. His situation is not very different from that of a hired soldier or cook – or, for that matter, hetaera – and often he has to compete. There opens a possibility of new discourses – of the critique, utopia, satire, solidarity, competition. Social organisation may assume new forms as well, for instance in the case of a couple with no need for reproduction or inheritance. Based on common interests and shared responsibility, this couple's relationship can hardly function in terms of exclusive male authority. Moreover, the communication networks of the subcultural groups which avoid the rulers and the rich, or are not accepted by them, are separated from the sedentary groups not only by their social position and mobility, but also by their language, using one to communicate with the outside world and another for

internal communication. Subculture and nomadism are elements of the historical-anthropological description of intellectuals, representing yet another line of continuity: let us mention only the history of universities, student culture, the relationship between intellectuals and power, European salons, or the role of intellectuals in producing narratives of social change.

The historical-anthropological framework for the central part of the research, part II: reading and the changed body, the mobility of the body, travelling, professional work; defining the usages of language; crypto- and ludic languages; images of the couple and solidarity.

The expected result of the project is a historical-anthropological study which will trace the main trends of the social and cultural changes in the Hellenistic period back to changes in the gender relations and in the practices of democracy, which were crucial to the formation of the group of intellectuals. The study shall analyse individual processes in order to find continuities with the present. The gender–democracy relationship shall thus occupy a central position in the reflection on the origins and continuity of intellectuals.

Methodology: The study is to be based on a comparison between texts and images, and on a diachronic-isochronic grid – that is, on a procedure similar to the one which is often used by the French school of the anthropology of ancient worlds, and has proved successful in establishing a continuity of argumentation (see the collection *Image, gaze, meaning*, ISH, Ljubljana, 2000, which brings representative contributions by the collaborators of the Paris Centre Louis Gernet in translation).

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