MEDIA AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF GORANCI CULTURE AND TRADITION*

Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja
Institute of Ethnography SASA, Belgrade
Date of submission: 15-03-2023

Abstract: The paper represents some of the results of research into the influence of the media on creating cultural representations about the Goranci community, their culture and tradition. One of the often-displayed cultural elements is confectionery which can be viewed from multiple angles. Another element of culture is viewed in parallel – traditional wrestling (the wrestlers are called pelivani). It is a sporting activity practiced within the Goranci community for a long period of time and is considered Ottoman heritage in Gora.

The research was conducted during 2022 and entailed reading and analysis of newspaper articles, and the contents of websites set up by members of the Goranci community, as well as keeping up with television documentaries filmed at the beginning of the 21st century. The objects of study were newspaper articles that were also published online as well as those that were available only in print, and were written in the early 21st century. The research did not focus on attitudes, but on social conceptions of the culture and tradition of Goranci people in the Republic of Serbia. The anthropological analysis is geared toward media content and media discourses with the intent of understanding their influence on creating cultural representations about the specifics of contemporary Goranci culture and tradition.

Keywords: Goranci community, Goranci culture, newspaper articles, cultural representations, confectioners, pastry shop

Introduction

The idea of dealing with the issue of creating cultural representations of the Goranci people, as well as their culture, arose from researching the pelivan wrestling competition in Gora.1 Research of the Goranci community, migration, and social and cultural practices of the Goranci people, which I carried out in Belgrade, Tutin and Gora in the first two decades of the 21st century, enabled the following:

---
* The text is the result of the work at the Institute of Ethnography of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which is financed by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, and based on the Agreement on the Implementation and Financing of Scientific Research Work of Scientific Research Institutions in 2023, number: 451-03-47/2023-01/200173, from 03.02.2023.
1 A part of the research results was published in the paper “‘Borbe pelivana’ – an example of a wrestling competition in Gora” (Đorđević Crnobrnja 2022: 233–248).
In one part, I was able to focus on and collect data about pelivan wrestling, and in connection with that, about confectionery as a type of occupation that the Goranci have been engaged in for decades (Đorđević Crnobrnja 2022: 234).

This research showed that the word *pelivan* is not only used for a wrestler, but also as a name for a patisserie, the owners of which are most often Goranci. In this context, I tried to find answers to the question: why is the word that was primarily used for a wrestler used as a name for a patisserie? While researching *pelivan* wrestling in Gora, I also consulted some newspaper texts, as well as some other media content. It turned out that the authors of those newspaper texts, dealing with the issue of the connection between confectionery and *pelivan* wrestling, were actually talking about the cultural and social practices of the Goranci in the past and present. Those findings encouraged me to think and research the influence of the media, primarily newspaper articles, on the formation of cultural representations of the Goranci, their community and traditions. The results of this research are partially presented in this paper.

**About the research methodology**

The focus of this paper is therefore a range of media content discussing confectionery among the Goranci. The research was directed towards the analysis of the media discourse with the intention of looking at its influence on the creation of cultural representations of the Goranci and their culture in contemporary Serbia. At the same time, I was guided by the idea that media

---

2 On this occasion, I would like to mention that the name “Pelivan” is also used by other confectioners for patisseries, not just the Goranci. However, in this research and work, I focused my attention only on those patisseries owned by Goranci, which is in the context of my research into the Goranci community and culture.

3 “Pelivan” is a word of Persian origin that is used in the Goranci community as a synonym for a wrestler who practices the traditional style of wrestling (see Bojović 1984; Đorđević Crnobrnja 2022: 236–237).

4 One part of the research results was presented at the international scientific conference “Tradition, mediums, digital world” which was held on 25 November, 2022 in Skopje, organised by the “Marko Cepenkov” Institute of Folklore in Skopje.

5 As this paper does not focus on the analysis of all newspaper texts that can be found in printed or online form in the present, I note that my statement refers to those newspaper texts that appeared in publications that represent the daily papers in the Republic of Serbia in the 21st century. There are many publications of this type, with the fact that articles about Goranci and certain features of their culture and tradition appear very rarely and can be read mainly in *Politika* and *Novosti*, i.e., the daily papers that have existed in Serbia since the early 20th century. Confectionery among the Goranci was not a subject of articles in those publications during the period that represents the chronological framework of the research.
content can influence the perception of one’s own community and culture, which is created by the Goranci themselves.

The research was carried out in 2022 and included the monitoring and reading of newspaper articles that are available online, as well as those that exist only in printed form, and were written in the beginning of this century. The subject of the research was the content published on Internet pages that were set up by members of the Goranci community, as well as the monitoring of television coverage from the early 21st century. At the same time, it must be emphasized that there was no possibility of choosing only specific newspapers, websites, or media channels, because the content that was the subject of the research is published sporadically and in newspapers that do not represent the daily papers. This is why it was necessary to focus on a range of media sources.

The Goranci community in the media discourse

The Goranci community and their culture have so far been only sporadically represented in newspaper articles in Serbia. A slow change in this has begun recently, and I attribute this primarily to the formation of the National Council of Goranci in the Republic of Serbia. In the context of the presence of the Goranci community and culture in the media, reports that present information about the celebration of Djuren (in Gorani dialect – Đuren) in Gora should be mentioned. In this paper, the issue of the impact of media content on the creation of cultural representations of Goranci culture and tradition is viewed only through the prism of confectionery among the Goranci.

I elected to research the media discourse primarily because information about confectionery among the Goranci, as well as about pelivan wrestling, is provided to us precisely through such content. An exception in this regard are publications by authors of Goranci origin (see Zejneli 2015; Šefit 2018;...

---

6 The Goranci National Council was formed on 13 November, 2022. See on the link: https://rb.gy/yrzap [accessed on 2 March, 2023]. Information about the work of the Goranci Council has recently been released to the public on certain TV stations that have a national frequency. Peculiarities of Goranci culture and tradition are also presented in a smaller part in the series Da nam nije, broadcast on the TV channel RTS2. See on the link: https://rb.gy/yrzap, news from 19 January, 2023 [Accessed 2 March, 2023].

7 This holiday is celebrated in Gora at the beginning of May every year, and has been in the focus of media interest for several years. In other words, no other single element of Goranci culture has been covered by the media in such a way as is the case with Djuren (Đuren). See on the link: https://rb.gy/lgq98 [Accessed 2 March, 2023]; https://rb.gy/ykr32 [Accessed 2 March, 2023]. Considering that, the celebration of this Goranci holiday can also be viewed from the aspect of creating cultural representations the Goranci people.
2022; Idrizi & Idrizi 2020). Even in these books about pelivan wrestling and confectionery, however, only basic information is given. I consider the books significant for several reasons, and particularly in the context of the topic of this work, because they demonstrate that the Goranci have successfully engaged in various occupations over an extended historical period. In other words, confectionery is not the only activity by which Goranci culture and tradition may be recognized, especially in the 21st century.8

To the best of my knowledge, there is no academic work on confectionery among the Goranci in Serbian ethnology and anthropology. At the same time, there is a lack of research on the impact of the media on the formation of cultural representations of the Goranci community and culture in Serbia.9 In this respect, this research, as well as the presentation of the results, contribute to the initiation of a new research topic within ethnology and anthropology in Serbia.

All of the above supports the selection of media content as the primary source for analysis and questioning of its impact on the formation of contemporary cultural representations of the Goranci community and culture.

**Analysis and conceptual apparatus**

The first keyword that should be clarified concerns the term “cultural representation”.

In my work, I start from the definition of the term “cultural representation” given by Bojan Žikić in the book *Pictures in the Window*, which reads:

> The term “cultural representation”, derived from the idea of culture not only as a subject of study, but also as a basic anthropological cognitive tool for understanding the world (Gačanović 2009: 34), refers to a more or less consistent set of ideas that a certain group of people has about some phenomenon, its symbolic references in the culture to which the given group belongs, discursive, normative or real connection with other cultural artifacts, symbols, phenomena, processes and the like (Жикић 2013: 19).

According to the aforementioned definition, the term cultural representation also includes “stereotypical views of a given phenomenon, based on its sociocultural treatment in reality”. In addition, I have in mind that:

---

8 In support of this statement, there is a TV report that was shown in January 2023 as part of the series *Da nam nije* [see https://rb.gy/rvpp2, accessed 2 March, 2023].

9 In this regard, it should be noted that media discourse research is not unknown in Serbian ethnology and anthropology. For writing this paper, the works of: Ljiljana Gavrilović (2005: 143–150), Ivan Kovačević (2006: 175–182), Bojan Žikić (2013) and Marija Brujić (2018, 2020) were important to me.