

SUMMARY

The volume presents the evolution of the Armenian festival cycle during the last century. The development of the festival took place in four phases, which differentiate by specific character of political and economic systems, trends in ethnic relations, attitude towards religion, estimation of traditional culture and other qualifiers stipulating the functioning of festivals.

The first phase (late 19th–early 20th centuries) could be characterized by the maximum spread of traditional festival patterns. During the second phase (the first Republic of Armenia, 1918-1920) traditional festivals were still widespread, but some new ones of secular nature were added to the festival cycle, which was in general patronized by the State. The third phase (the Soviet Armenia, 1920-1990) was a period, when the new Soviet festivals have been forming while traditional religious festivals have been degrading. The fourth phase (the third Republic of Armenia) is distinguishable by increase of nationally patronized traditional religious festivals and decline of the Soviet ones.

The study revealed the social spheres where the festivities are present and the main factors of their functioning, which cover almost all the areas of public life and culture. It also investigates the main ties between extension of festivities and social affiliations of their immediate participants. In this perspective were studied the sex-age and social-occupational groups of the participants including the festive behaviour of each group. The same phenomenon was described within the family-kindred environment, which forms an important condition for the maintenance and

enhancement of festivals. Traditional religious festivals are widespread just in the mentioned environment. Up to now this domain is prevailing in celebrations of the most important moments of individual life cycle, despite the fact that they are not limited solely by the traditional social structure. Thus it is mainly through festivals that an individual is being surrounded by permanent attention of the nearest people in decisive moments of his or her life – both merry and grievous ones. This is the clue to the survival of festivals in family-kindred circle even in periods of sudden decrease of life standards, psychological depression and other extreme situations. Today this function is mainly characteristic of traditional religious, while in recent past – of somewhat modified secular festivals and rites.

It is worth to note that our aim was not limited by simple registration of different spheres of festival extension; we rather tried to explore the trends towards decline or rise of festivals in a certain historical period. This task was completed by the study of different age groups with an emphasis on differences in festival behavior of different generations. The survey demonstrated that traditional religious festivals are mostly extended among the elder people, which fact might be explained by their more conservative and traditionalist character. This is especially characteristic of women.

A correlation was revealed between the extent to which the festivals are spread and the standards of occupation and education of their participants. The maximal and minimal areas of festival extension were outlined, which until the mid-1980s were in agreement with the educational standards of the populace. At the

same time, a correlation between festivals and their immediate participants was traced in wide historical perspective.

The next important issue of this study was investigation of the main functional aspects of contemporary Armenian festival system. In this direction, a complexity of economic, political, religious, ethnic, esthetical, psychological, and socio-normative factors were outlined which conditioned the functioning of festivals.

The religious factor is proved to play a significant role in maintaining the spread of the festivals. A general picture of correlation between the religious and mundane behaviour of the populace is outlined, on the one hand, and a true image of the Armenian-Christian, on the other hand. To the point, until recent times, the social layer of Armenian believers was mainly presented by people with low educational qualification who were occupied in physical labour. This is an additional evidence to our assumption that the faith of the Armenians is mainly manifested in ritual form. In the beginning of 1990s, the quantitative data in this field reflect rather the transformations in external value orientation, than cardinal modifications in the mode of life.

The transitional period is characterized by a sensitive rise of religious communities, especially of the Protestant faith. In this study, we don't pursue an aim to study the theological peculiarities or economic, political, psychological and other causes of the formation of such newly found communities (which have many similarities with analogous processes in the 19th century), but tried to find out their attitude towards ethnic traditions, including festivals and rites. This attitude, as our observation has shown, is negative and critical, so that one may prognosticate that the rise of such communities would result in gradual distancing of the part of the Armenian nation from its roots and national ideology.

In the list of the investigated factors, a specific position occupies the factor of "national rising." In contrast to the other factors, it has an occasional nature. In addition, it has an

immediate influence on the qualitative transitions in social-political life of the nation, resulting in identity changes through revaluation of national and non-national values. It is remarkable that the "national rising" is not simply a factor maintaining the functioning of festival life, but represents a specific ritual-festival microsystem of its own. This was clearly manifested in the ritual system of the Gharabagh Movement in 1988, which in fact had a "national rising" in its core. Thus the impact of the "national rising" in the modification of the festival system is essential, but its influence is mainly of emotional-psychological or ethnic-political nature and evaluates and hence predestines the future of separate elements of the festival system, rather than reflects the fundamental changes in the life mode, to realize which much longer period of time is necessary, sometimes even a few centuries.

And finally, the study demonstrates how significantly the extension of festivals is tied with the state and religious structures, which are imperative levers for their maintenance, elaboration and especially creation and elimination. We came to this conclusion by exploring the festival-ritual policy of these institutions, in particular during the 20th century, when their relations were often controversial.

In summary, the study pioneers the use of the ethnosociological data and certain historical parallels for presenting a complex of factors, which stipulate the functioning of festivals in the life of Armenians during the last century.