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THE STANDING GREETING RITUAL IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL MECHANISMS OF POWER

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In this article the concept of cultural mechanisms of power is applied to the analysis of standing greeting ritual. As a widespread and common practice, the standing greeting ritual is included in the processes of reproduction of status which is determined by the criteria of age, gender, official subordination, etc. The concept of cultural mechanisms of power allows to study culture-power relations and to recognise how power «works» for the reproduction of inequality. It is argued that the standing greeting ritual is a way of legitimating social status and status hierarchy.

Keywords: ritual, cultural mechanisms of power, standing greeting ritual.

Стаття посвящена аналізу ритуалу привітання стоя в контексті концепції культурних механізмів влади. Будучи широко розповсюдженою і звичною практикою, цей ритуал включений у процеси відтворення статусів за критеріями віку, статі, посадової субординації тощо. Концепція культурних механізмів влади дозволяє виявити вплив різних елементів культури, прежде всего символу, ритуалу і міфу, на процес відтворення нерівності і влади в суспільстві. Основною концептуалізацією є постструктуралістська трактовка влади М. Фуко, зокрема поняття дискурсивної влади. Серед культурних механізмів влади розглядаються номінація, легітимація та натуралізація. Аргументовано, що ритуал привітання стоя є засобом легітимації соціального статусу та статусної ієрархії. Емпіричною основою висновків статті стали дані, отримані із застосуванням методів аналізу документів та спостереження. Підкреслено, що осмислення ритуалу привітання стоя в таких сферах соціального життя, як освіта, судочинство, армія, а також у взаємодіях людей, які розрізняються за статтю, віком або посадовим статусом, має значну теоретичну та практичну релевантність, зокрема в перспективі демократизації стосунків у різних областях соціального життя.

Ключевые слова: ритуал, культурные механизмы власти, ритуал приветствия стоя.

Стаття присвячена аналізу ритуалу вітання стоячи у контексті концепції культурних механізмів влади. Будучи широко розповсюдженою та звичною практикою, цей ритуал включений у процеси відтворення статусів за критеріями віку, статі, посадової субординації тощо. Концепція культурних механізмів влади дозволяє виявити вплив різноманітних елементів культури, перш за все символу, ритуалу та міфу, на процес відтворення нерівності та влади в суспільстві. Основою концептуалізації є постструктуралістська трактовка влади М. Фуко, зокрема поняття дискурсивної влади. Серед культурних механізмів влади розглядаються номінація, легітимація та натуралізація. Аргументовано, що ритуал вітання стоячи є засобом легітимації соціального статусу та статусної ієрархії. Емпіричною основою висновків статті стали дані, отримані із застосуванням методів аналізу документів та спостереження. Підкреслено, що осмислення ритуалу вітання стоячи в таких сферах соціального життя, як освіта, судочинство, армія, а також у взаємодіях людей, які розрізняються за статтю, віком або посадовим статусом, має значну теоретичну та практичну релевантність, зокрема в перспективі демократизації стосунків у різних областях соціального життя.

Ключові слова: ритуал, культурні механізми влади, ритуал вітання стоячи

There are a lot of hierarchies in contemporary societies. Each person obtains his or her place in the hierarchy (status) through special procedures commonly referred to as rituals in social sciences. There are specific

rituals for ascribed and achieved statuses. Both traditional and modern societies have a world of rituals which produce ordered, clear, comprehensive and sustainable social reality.

Rituals can be recognised as traditional, eternal and natural by commonplace people. However, rituals are not neutral towards power in the society. On the contrary, they are involved in the reproduction of certain methods of distribution of power and social inequality. This view on ritual becomes possible in the post-structuralist methodological perspective which focuses on power relations as an important subject of sociological analysis. The sociocultural approach in sociology which emphasises continuity of social, individual and cultural aspects of social life makes it possible to reveal the cultural dimension of the reproduction of power in the society. The conceptualisation of this dimension is implemented in the notion of cultural mechanisms of power [13], with the help of which such elements of culture as symbol, myth and ritual can be analysed in terms of their involvement in the processes of power reproduction in the society.

Cultural mechanisms of power serve to maintain certain relations of inequality between groups in the society though creating or developing cultural meanings. These mechanisms reproduce them as everyday typifications and to endow these meanings with social power and as a result, establish links between cultural meanings and social structure [13]. This process forces groups to hold to their positions within the social hierarchy (for example, the privileged or the discriminated) according to current distribution of power in this particular society. Mechanisms (which literally means «transmission of motion») are defined here as multiform relations between culture and power. Among various cultural mechanisms of power one can single out nomination and classification (P. Bourdieu), normalisation (M. Foucault) and canonisation (L. Ionin), sacralisation (V. Burlachuk) and legitimation (M. Weber, P. Berger and T. Luckmann, Yu. Habermas, P. Bourdieu, V. Burlachuk), naturalisation (R. Barthes).

It is possible to divide all cultural mechanisms of power into groups according to those cultural elements (symbol, ritual or myth) which predominantly «work» in this particular mechanism. Thus, the nomination and classification are produced by symbol; legitimation and sacralisation are reproduced by ritual, and naturalisation is a product of myth. Certainly, this division is only analytical, because symbolic, ritual and mythological aspects of culture are closely intertwined between each other and in certain situations cannot be separated. However, this division is useful from the methodological point of view. It allows us to structure the topic on the initial stages of research and to direct our knowledge about the central elements of culture into the research of processes of cultural securing of inequality and power reproduction in the society.

The aim of this article is to explore one of the most common rituals of modern society, i.e. the standing greeting ritual, as a cultural mechanism of power and, more specifically its legitimation.

According to P. Berger and T. Luckmann, legitimation is second-order semantic objectification [2] which is created in order to explain and justify the institutional order. There are four levels of legitimation: statements at the pre-theoretical level «it is done like this»; moral maxims that are rooted in everyday thinking and embedded in proverbs and folklore; scientific and philosophical theories; symbolic universes as matrixes of vision and interpretation of objective and subjective events and phenomena [16]. The first three levels are mechanisms that support the symbolic universe.

Besides providing sociocultural explanations of historical phenomena, legitimation also helps to interpret numerous processes that emerge permanently in the society [16, p.131–160]. There are several classifications of legitimation. Thus, O. Shulga argues, for example, that legitimation can be either subject-object oriented manifesting itself in the vertical plane, or subject-subject oriented manifesting itself in the horizontal plane, or even more complex occurring with the help of educational institutions and mass media. This typology can be compared with M. Foucault's ideas about direct and indirect power and the roles of institutions in disciplining bodies.

This interpretation of legitimation gives a new perspective for exploring a vast variety of rituals, both modern and traditional ones. For example, a rite of passage legitimises the social structure of a society which includes all its members, both living and deceased [12]. Male rituals [10] legitimate gender division, while practices of motherhood [8] provide legitimation for patriarchal principles of division of labor and responsibilities. Commemoration rituals [15] legitimise the state system by means paying tribute to the memory of the heroes of the past, whereas the practice of watching TV [11] can be interpreted as legitimation of «the fourth power».

The standing greeting ritual is a means of legitimating social status and hierarchy. Considering the ritual from this perspective can help people to interpret it in a more adequate way and choose an appropriate model of behavior in different formal and informal situations. This explains the relevance of exploring the standing greeting ritual as a means of status hierarchy legitimating. In terms of sociological analysis, it appears very important to characterise the standing greeting practice first as a ritual and then – as a means of status hierarchy legitimating, and to define the levels of social hierarchy where it can manifest itself.

The common sense meaning explains the ritual as «a standard well-established sequence of actions of ceremonial nature» [5, p.166]. This interpretation deprives the ritual of its value reducing it to idle repetition of

meaningless actions. However, a person's life is rife with rituals. This way or another, the majority of social interactions are repetitive and standardized. That is why the definition of ritual requires clarification that would reveal its true sociological meaning.

The very fact that there are various definitions of ritual in social sciences reflects the complexity of the phenomenon and its importance in social life. According to M. Douglas, «rituals are certain types of activity, whose function is to express faith or commitment to certain symbolic systems» [5, p. 174]. V. Burlachuk believes that «a ritual is a concentrated symbolic expression of social processes» [3, p. 158]. R. Firth defines rituals as «certain specified actions that are performed in order to affect the reality, that have a symbolic non-empirical character and that are, as a rule, socially authorised» [5, p. 174].

These definitions somehow restrict the concept of ritual failing to reveal its full meaning. The sociological understanding of a ritual expands the boundaries of this phenomenon. The definition given by V. Fuchs describes a ritual is a «socially adjusted and collectively implemented sequence of actions that do not generate new objectivity or change the situation physically, but rather process symbols and lead to the symbolic transformation of the situation» [5, p. 175]. This definition gives the most accurate interpretation of ritual in the meaning it is considered in the present article.

Thus, a ritual is a set of specific actions that are not meaningless, but, on the contrary, perform important social functions. A ritual is realised through human actions or material things, but its meaning and significance are associated with a certain change in the world of symbols. Rituals of passage [5, p. 101], for example, are supposed to procure a new status for an individual, whereas others – including the standing greeting ritual - ensure confirmation and reproduction of status.

The simplest rituals of greeting are usually mastered at the level of pre-theoretical knowledge, i.e. as a set of specific rules of behaviour, moral principles and regulations that «everybody knows» [2, p. 45]. Such knowledge is transmitted from one generation to another, and its main objective is to transfer such models of behaviour that would maintain the existing system of social relations. Other greeting rituals are developed at later stages of socialisation, for example when exploring new social environments (school, work, etc.). Finally, some greeting rituals are secured by official documents, e.g. special regulations, laws, etc.

A greeting ritual can take many forms, both verbal and non-verbal. One of its non-verbal forms is a standing greeting. Apart from performing the function of establishing contact, this ritual also carries a certain meaning. As a rule, a standing greeting shows respectful and reverent attitude to someone or something, manifests the difference in social statuses, and recognises the superiority of the one who is greeted over the one who greets this way.

Hence, the standing greeting ritual is a way to legitimate social status and hierarchy. This assumption is confirmed by the tradition to use this form of greeting in various situations. For instance, the standing greeting ritual is observed even on the level of everyday etiquette. The rules of etiquette suggest that a man should always stand up when greeting both a woman and a man. If a man is sitting at the table, he should stand up for a moment to greet a woman, but if a woman comes up to him he must fully stand up from his seat. Having greeted a peer or a man who is younger, he can sit down immediately. However, having greeted a woman or a man who is older, he can sit down only after they take their seats or with their permission. When a woman is greeted, she does not have to stand up. The only exception is when a woman greets an elderly man. In this case she does need to stand up [17, p. 24].

The ritual when men should stand up to greet a woman emphasises her special social status, which is different from that of men. However, it should be noted that in the modern world this rule of etiquette is quite flexible due to the changing position of women in our society. The increasingly widespread gender equality leads to gradual elimination of those etiquette requirements that emphasise the special status of women.

Standing up to greet older people means recognising their higher status. This norm is necessary to transfer the age hierarchy into status. Observing this ritual fosters respectful attitude to the elderly.

A standing greeting is also used in modern rituals of hospitality. The norms of everyday etiquette require the owner or the master of the house to stand up welcoming the guests [17, p. 27]. In this case we are talking about granting the one who has come to someone's house a special social status, that of «a guest».

Now let us turn to business etiquette. L. Novikova, a consultant in business ethics and etiquette, states that executive officers are supposed to stand up only when greeting visitors. If regular employees enter their office, they do not have to stand up [9]. In her article «Etiquette of business relationships» M. Streletskaya argues that when a senior officer enters the room, both men and women should stand up to greet him. The same applies when an older man enters the room. A secretary should always stand up to greet visitors regardless of gender and age. [14]. M. Beldova in her article «Business Etiquette: Managers and Subordinates, Men and Women» says that situations when the boss enters the subordinates' office should not be all treated the same. Thus, you should definitely stand up when the boss enters for the first time on a given day, if he comes in accompanied with some guests or if the newly appointed executive officer comes to meet you. Besides, it is necessary to take into account the reason why the boss comes in. For example, if a female boss comes in to boast of her new blouse, there is no need to stand up [1].

Thus, the standing greeting ritual in business setting helps to establish subordination and emphasise the hierarchy in the system of relationships between the boss and the subordinates.

Greeting rituals are rather widespread in the sphere of education. In many educational institutions, the traditional ritual requires students to stand up when greeting the teacher (tutor, mentor, etc.). Even an online tutorial for first-graders describes this ritual when telling them about the rules of behaviour at school, «In order to greet the teacher, the pupils must stand up near their desks and nod their heads when the teacher says hello. You can only sit down when the teacher allows you to do so. Pupils should also stand up to greet any adult person who comes into the classroom» [4].

Moreover, this ritual can be secured in the form of special instructions, statutes, etc. adopted by educational institutions. For example, the labour safety instructions adopted in Nikopol Vocational School of the National Metallurgical Academy of Ukraine contain a chapter entitled as «General Rules and Etiquette of Students' Behaviour in Class and in their Free Time», where one can find the following paragraph: «2.5. Traditionally students should stand up from their seats in order to greet their teacher who enters the classroom at the beginning of the lesson» [6].

Thus, the standing greeting ritual is rather widespread in the sphere of education. This can be easily explained if we analyse the function it performs here. In fact, a normal educational process would be impossible without observing a clear hierarchy, especially in terms of «teacher-student» status relationships. This ritual legitimises the social status of the teacher and helps to support the teacher's authority. It would be impossible to ensure a normal educational process if students failed to recognise the teacher's higher status.

In some cases, the conditions and the form of the standing greeting ritual are secured at the legislative level, which makes them obligatory. One of the examples of this type of ritual is greeting a judge in the courtroom. The behaviour of those present in the courtroom is strictly regulated by the Criminal Procedural Code.

Thus, chapter 329 of the Criminal Procedural Code of Ukraine of 12.04.2012 No 4651-VI reads as follows, «Those present in the courtroom shall stand up every time the court members enter or leave the room. Persons engaged in court examination shall interrogate witnesses, submit petitions or voice protests while standing and only with the permission of the person who presides over the court session. Witnesses, experts and other specialists shall give their testimonies standing in the special place allocated for witnesses. Everybody present in the courtroom shall be standing when listening to the court decision. Deviations from these rules are allowed with the permission of the person presiding over the court session» [7]. Unlike all the previously described examples, this provision makes the standing greeting ritual mandatory and binding for all the participants of the trial.

Alongside with legislative and executive powers, the judicial power is an independent branch of government, which does not depend on other authorities. Therefore, a judge is a person who embodies the institution of justice (court) and holds one of the highest positions in the social hierarchy of a law-governed state. Greeting the members of the court by standing up legitimises the judge's social status. The very fact that any deviation from this rule is only possible with the permission of the judge, rather than due to objective criteria (e.g. health-related conditions), emphasises the judge's high status and leading role. All those present at the court session stand up to greet the court members, and in this way they legitimise the judge's right «to rule the destinies» of other people and confirm the validity of this right.

The standing greeting ritual is widely used in the field of social and political relations. This ritual can be one of the means of legitimising the social status of high-ranking public officials. In particular, there is a tradition to greet the president standing. What is more, this rule applies not only to welcoming the president by his fellow citizens, but also on the international level. The very status of president presupposes international legitimacy and global recognition. By standing up people pay homage to the status of president, which is why this ritual is not applicable to the leaders of unrecognised states.

The standing greeting ritual may serve as a means of legitimising the social status of other state officials as well. For example, it is a tradition to stand up to greet the Prime Minister in the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, much in the same way as MPs stand up to greet the chairman of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

A conclusion can be made that the standing greeting ritual can be one of the ways to legitimise social status and to manifest differences in age, gender, occupation, and position in the social hierarchy. In some cases this ritual symbolises the relationship of power and subordination. As a rule, the standing greeting ritual expresses respectful and reverent attitude to someone or something. The use of this ritual can be established and maintained on the level of traditions in everyday and business etiquette, as well as by all sorts of regulations (instructions, laws), etc. The symbolic charge of the standing greeting ritual is actualised in various spheres of personal and social life: at home, at work, in educational institutions, legal procedures, social and political contexts, etc.

The sociological research of the standing greeting ritual helps to identify ritualised status relations in the society. Any changes in these practices are vivid indications of changes happening in the socio-cultural field. The

presence of greeting rituals in various types of relations, including those discussed in the present paper, provides clear understanding of real status relations in a particular community. This knowledge should also prove necessary in the situations of active influence on the community, its practices and values, as well as its social structure.

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