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## SIMBOLIC CONNOTATIONS OF SEASONAL CUSTOMS IN BANJA

### SUMMARY

The most important of the seasonal customs and folklore ceremonies traditionally maintained among the inhabitants of Banja in the first half of the 20th century are described in this article. A distinct region in the southeastern section of central Croatia, Banja is marked by a nationally diverse population; according to the 1991 population census about 40% are Croats and 60% are Serbs.

The factographic part of the article is based on the manuscript collections of members from the former Institute for Folk Art who researched Banja folklore between 1953 and 1960. The data used most was from Nikola Bonifačić-Rožin. The content of the material was so archaic in its tenor that the author's attention in interpretation was drawn to recognizing the mythical-magical level of the Banja cultural entity.

The phenomena are described in the sequence of the seasons, and the subheadings designate the essential determinants. These are: the carnival - gleeful celebration at the end of winter; Easter - pious spring rites; St. George's Day (Jurjevo) - the vitality of the young vegetation; Filip-Jakov - the speech of symbols; Ascension Day

(Spasovo) - agrarian magic and de-Christianization; Midsummer (Ivanje) - dedication of the summer season; Čarojice - night entertainers (this is a masked procession held in December as a tradition in the Serbian population); Christmas - a family holiday.

The article was written as testimony to the life and traditional events of the Banija population, the majority of which had to leave its centuries-old home during the 1991-1992 war.

*(Translated by E. Elias-Bursać)*