

WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY IN SOUTH SLAVIC ZADRUGAS

TIHANA PETROVIĆ
Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Filozofski fakultet
Odsjek za etnologiju
41 000 Zagreb
Đure Salaja 3

UDK 396. 6
Izvorni znanstveni rad
Original scientific paper
Primljeno: 20. 06. 1990.

Within the south Slavonic zadruga individual property was permitted and was known under various names, the most widespread being osobac, which is also used in ethnological literature. Although men were allowed to own individual property, it was more typical of women. The female osobac usually consisted of money (her dowry), cattle or land which the woman brought into the zadruga on her marriage or acquired by working in the zadruga or outside it. In some zadrugas or in most zadrugas in one area the rules regarding the osobac were different. The reasons for these differences, which may have resulted from different traditions or external circumstances, should form the subject of separate studies.¹

The present study is concerned with the female osobac. We shall not consider the part of women's osobac that consisted of land, cattle or money, i. e. their dowry, but the special right of women in zadrugas, especially when it was their turn as the "orderly" (*reduša*), to collect and sell eggs and to sell fruit and vegetables. The personal property of women included the seed of flax and hemp, the land on which these crops were grown and the machines and tools for the processing of textile fibers as well as looms.

Our study covers the eastern part of Pannonian Croatia and Vojvodina: Slavonia, the Yugoslav part of Baranja, Bačka along the Danube and Srijem, including the area around Dobrica in Banat. Our sources include the unpublished manuscripts stored in the Ethnological Institute archives and published material, especially that published in *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena* (Collected papers on the Life and Customs of South Slavs): the monographs Otok and Varoš, the answers of Baltazar

¹ Milovan Gavazzi, *Sudbina obiteljskih zadruga jugoistočne Evrope, Vrela i sudbine narodnih tradicija kroz prostore, vremena i ljude*, Zagreb 1978, 80-94.

Bogišić and the report about travels in Slavonia by M. Piller and L. Mitterpacher.² However this material is incomplete and does not provide detailed information regarding the questions dealt with in this study.

The collecting of eggs

In the division of labour in *zadruga*, women had to look after the poultry, which was probably the reason for their right, while taking their turn as *reduša*, to collect eggs and sell them without reporting about it to the men folk or the head of the *zadruga*. *Redušas* were the women in the *zadruga* who took their turn at doing the work in the house and around it. As our sources show, the way in which eggs were collected, in terms of who collected them, how they were stored and used, differed from one *zadruga* to another.

In almost all *zadrugas* that have been described, eggs are collected by *redušas*, with the exception of only one *zadruga* where this was done by the elder's wife (the *gazdarica* or *domaćica*), although the *zadruga* in question also had *redušas*.³

In some cases poultry was kept in two places, in the courtyard of the house and *na stanu*, that is, in the yard on the outskirts of the village, where livestock was housed and some of the farm work was done. In this case *redušas* collected eggs at home and assistant *redušas* (called *poredušas*) did that *na stanu*. When the head of the *zadruga* was staying at this outlying yard, he also collected eggs. So far we have found only one instance of this practice.⁴

Most of the data relating to Slavonska Posavina, i. e. the part of Slavonia along the river Sava, indicate that each woman stored her share of eggs separately.⁵ According to mutual agreement and their competence, the women in the *zadruga* used eggs for cooking, making cakes and setting the hen. When older women in the *zadruga* were no longer taking their turns as *redušas*, younger women had to make sure they were given their share of eggs. It was only then that women could use the rest of the eggs as they wished either as additional food, most often for children, or for sale.

In some *zadrugas*, women deposited eggs in a pool and then divided among themselves either the eggs or the money.⁶ Evidence of this practice comes from three *zadrugas* in

2 Josip Lovrenčić, Otok, Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena, 2, 4, Zagreb, 1897, 1899.

Luka Lukić, Varoš, Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena, 24, 25, 26, Zagreb, 1919, 1924, 1926.

Baltazar Bogišić, Grada u odgovorima iz različitih krajeva slavenskog juga, Zagreb, 1874.

Tomo Matić, Narodni život i običaji u Požeškoj županiji krajem 18. vijeka, Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena, 35, Zagreb, 1951, 5-29.

When researching the material for the present study we read the manuscript material on *zadrugas* deposited in the archives of the Ethnological Institute. In order to make the article as succinct as possible, the names of the *zadrugas* have been given in the footnotes.

3 The Sklizović *zadruga*, Rakitovica (Donji Miholjac), Etnološki zavod Filozofskog fakulteta, Zagreb, manuscript material on *zadrugas*, inv. no. 199. Recorded by Tihana Petrović. Further in the text, the material on *zadrugas* will be referred to as EZ FFZ Z with the inventory number of the manuscript.

4 The Filipović *zadruga* - Acini, Strošinci (Županja), EZ FFZ Z 33. Recorded by Stjepan Janjić.

5 *Zadruga* in Slavonska Posavina, recorded by Sigismund Čajkovac, See: Sigismund Čajkovac, Seljačka *zadruga* u Slavonskoj Posavini, Zagreb, 1912, 88. EZ FFZ Z 1. Such cases are also found in B. Bogišić for the Gradiška and Brod regiments, Stara Pazova, Zemun, Srijem, Banat, Bačka and Dobrica and its environs in Banat. B. Bogišić op. cit. 84.

6 This custom was recorded in the Sklizović *zadruga* in Rakitovica EZ FFZ Z 199 (recorded by Tihana Petrović) and the Matošević *zadruga* in Ilabjanovci (Valpovo). EZ FFZ Z 167 (recorded by Žarko Španiček).

Slavonska Podravina (the part of Slavonia along the river Drava). It can be assumed here that dividing of eggs or money was done by the head (gazda) of the zadruga or, which is even more probable, his wife (gazdarica). Our informants in Podravina were wont to point out that eggs were abundantly used in cooking and only rarely sold.⁷

By contrast, there were zadrugas in which women sold most of the eggs for their own needs. There is only one zadruga in our material in which the eggs were used in the house for food and a part was sold for the house, i. e. for zadrugal needs.⁸

In most cases eggs were sold or exchanged by the women themselves - there is only one record of the head of the zadruga being in charge of it.⁹

All our data show that the women used their earnings from selling the eggs to buy some things they needed but which were not provided by the zadruga, such as yarn for weaving and embroidering, scarves, shoes and the like.

Fruit

Zadrugal women earned a considerable amount of maney by selling fruit. In most cases the women picked the fruit together, divided it among the families or according to the number of zadruga members, and then stored and sold it individually. In some zadrugas, as one case shows, each woman picked, stored and sold the fruit on her own.¹⁰ It should also be mentioned that grapes and plums in these parts were mostly used for the production of wine, brandy or jam. The question of how these fruit products were managed will not be discussed here, although there is evidence that this was done according to established rules.

Vegetables

In addition to eggs and fruit, zadrugal women often sold vegetables. This is confirmed by all the available data. As we have been able to ascertain, there were several traditional customs in the growing and division of vegetables. In some zadrugas women worked the common garden together and after having set aside the necessary quantities for the household, they sold the surplus and divided the money among themselves.¹¹ In two of the zadrugas in our material, women grew all the vegetables jointly except onions, which they grew individually and used when it was their turn to serve as *reduša*, a task which involved cooking.¹²

There is ample evidence of the land used for growing vegetables being divided into smaller gardens or *slogovi* (sing. *slog*), smaller plots of land on a larger common plot, worked by each family or woman separately.¹³ As Josip Lovretić reports in his

7 The information comes from P. E. Mosely, *Adaptation for Survival: The Varžić zadruga, the Slavonic and East European Review, American Series 2, Vol 21, No. 56, Menacha, 1943, 157*, and the Matošević zadruga in Habjanovci, EZ FFZ Z 167 (recorded by Ž. Španiček).

8 Recorded by T. Petrović for the Sklizović zadruga in Rakitovica. EZ FFZ Z 199.

9 The Filipović zadruga - Acini, Strošinci, EZ FFZ Z 33. (recorded by Stjepan Janjić) and the Matošević zadruga in Habjanovci, EZ FFZ Z 167 (recorded by Ž. Španiček).

10 The Martinović zadruga in Donja Motičina near Našice, EZ FFZ Z 152, recorded by T. Petrović.

11 This was the practice in the Filipović zadruga - Acini, Strošinci, EZ FFZ Z 33, and is also reported by J. Lovretić, op. cit. 57.

12 Onions were grown in particular in the Jerković - Jovičević zadrugas in Koška near Našice, EZ FFZ Z 150 (recorded by T. Petrović), and the same case is reported by S. Čajkovac for Slavonska Posavina (EZ FFZ Z 1).

13 The Pandžić zadruga in Donji Emovci near Slavonska Požega, EZ FFZ Z 130, (recorded by Milana Černelić), the Đurić zadruga in Ivanovci near Valpovo, EZ FFZ Z 195 (recorded by Ž. Španiček), and the zadruga at Bezdanski put, EZ FFZ Z 143 (recorded by M. Černelić; similar data are reported by Lukić for Varoš, op. cit. 163 and B. Bogišić for the zadrugas in the Gradiška and Brod regiments, op. cit. 109.

monograph on the village of Otok, there were cases of one and the same village or zadruga house with two traditional ways of dividing their vegetable plots. He recorded in the 19th century that vegetables were planted on common land and were grown jointly. However, he also describes the Blaškovi zadruga, in which the zadruga head divided the vegetable plots among the women, each of whom looked after her own plot. Lovretić dated the origin of the latter tradition to an indefinite time in the distant past, a *long time ago*; he also mentions that this way of dividing up the vegetable plots was already forgotten in Otok at the time he was writing the monograph, i. e. in the late 19th century.¹⁴

A subtype of traditional ways of dividing up vegetable plots is described by Luka Lukić in his monograph on the village of Varoš. There, the zadruga head sometimes gave more hardworking women an additional plot, which they could work for a year. Whether the woman would get use of the plot the following year or whether it would be given to another woman depended on her behaviour and the head's graciousness.¹⁵

All the available data indicate that the women in zadrugas stored their own vegetables and used them for cooking on the days when they served as *reduša*. Only two records have been found stating explicitly that the women were not allowed to sell vegetables.¹⁶

In the traditional division of labour in zadruga women were responsible for the family's clothes: they cultivated and processed textile crops, spun the yarn, wove the cloth and cut and sewed the garments. All the tools needed in these operations, especially the loom and distaff, later the spinning-wheel, were their property. How much cloth a woman was able to produce and use for her family or sell if there was a surplus depended on her skill and the organization of the zadruga, i. e. division of labour. Women could also weave and embroider for other women in their spare time.

Flax and hemp

Our material shows there were five ways in which zadrugas allotted the land for textile crops and divided labour involved in their cultivation.¹⁷

1) Flax and hemp were grown on undivided land and the crop was divided after the harvest.¹⁸ Evidence of this practice comes from two affirmative answers. At what stage of processing the dividing took place has, unfortunately, not been recorded.

2) There is documented evidence (one zadruga only) that flax seed was given by each woman separately and that the land was divided into equal plots, on which each woman cultivated her own crop.¹⁹

3) Flax was sown jointly, after which each woman tended her plot on her own. This was the practice in three zadrugas in our material.²⁰

¹⁴ J. Lovretić, op. cit. 57.

¹⁵ L. Lukić, op. cit. 107.

¹⁶ The Kovačević = Mitrova zadrugas in Koška near Našice, EZ FFZ Z 174 (recorded by T. Petrović) and the Štimac zadruga in Bapska in Srijem, EZ FFZ Z 192 (recorded by Josip Forjan).

¹⁷ Problems relating to the division of the land for the cultivation of flax and hemp and the division of the harvested flax were noted as early as 1860, as shown by the documents of the Croatian parliament printed in that year. See Dragutin Pavličević, *Hrvatske kućne zadruge I*, (up to 1881), Zagreb, 1989, 164.

¹⁸ The Mikić - Vrkić zadrugas in Vetovo near Slavonska Požega, EZ FFZ Z 128 (recorded by M. Čermelić) and the Prepunić zadruga in Gašinci near Đakovo, EZ FFZ Z 6 (rec. anon.).

¹⁹ The Filipović zadrugas - Acini, Strošinci, EZ FFZ Z 33. (recorded by S. Janjić)

²⁰ Recorded by S. Čajkovac for Slavonska Posavina, EZ FFZ Z 1, the same practice has been recorded in the Pandžić zadruga from Donji Emovci (EZ FFZ Z 130, M. Čermelić) and the Mitrović zadruga in Lukač (EZ FFZ Z 132, M. Čermelić), both of which are near Slavonska Požega

4) In the majority of the described zadrugas no information is given about who provided the seed. Flax and hemp were grown on zadrugal land but on separate plots. We do not know who looked after the seed - the women or the whole zadruga.²¹ It is interesting to note that M. Piller and L. Mitterpacher recorded in 1783 that flax was not grown jointly - each woman did it on her own on a plot allotted to her in accordance with her needs.²²

5) In some zadrugas, as one affirmative answer shows, each woman was allowed to sow as much flax as she was able to cultivate.²³

All the data related to the cultivation and processing of textile crops remains to be recorded and studied, in order to determine all the rules pertaining to the division of land and seed, the stage at which it was done, or possible regional traditions.

Some data in our material indicate that women were allowed to keep the money obtained by selling, most often, flax seed.²⁴

As shown by most of our material, women sold cloth and ready-made garments at fairs.

The fact that when marrying into a zadruga women brought into it looms and some other devices for the processing of textile crops (most often distaffs and spinning wheels) is indicated in almost all the studied records on zadrugas. However the material shows some interesting deviations. Only three records, all of them describing Bunjevci zadrugas in Bačka²⁵, do not fit the general picture according to which all the married women in the areas of Slavonia and Vojvodina covered by our study owned a loom. For example, Csaplović, reporting in the early 19th century, says that in every house there are almost as many looms as there are women²⁶. In the three zadrugas mentioned above, there is only one loom, which is part of the common zadrugal property. Weaving was the job of only one woman, usually the most skilled one.

The tradition of there being only one loom in the zadruga and of one woman producing linen and woolen cloth seems to have been characteristic of at least some parts of the Dinaric area.²⁷

21 This practice has been recorded by the following authors: S. Čajkovac for zadrugas in Slavenska Posavina, EZ FFZ Z 1; S. Janjić in the Purići zadruga in Vrbanja, EZ FFZ Z 12; M. Čemelić in three zadrugas near Slavenska Požega - Potočanac in Trenkovo, EZ FFZ Z 129, Mitrović in Lukač, EZ FFZ Z 132, and Grgić i Jaguplije, EZ FFZ Z 131; T. Petrović in the Abičić zadruga in Šapatinovci near Našice, EZ FFZ Z 154, and in the Poljarević zadruga in Punitovci near Đakovo, EZ FFZ Z 198; P. E. Moseley in The Varžić zadruga, op. cit. 157; Lukić in the Vroš zadruga, Op. cit. 167.

22 T. Matić, op. cit. 10.

23 Recorded in the Filipović - Acini zadrugas, EZ FFZ Z 33. by Stjepan Janjić.

24 Such data have been recorded by Mosely, op. cit. 157, and Bogišić for Slavonia, the Gradiška and Brod regiment, Stara Pazova (Srijem), Strošinci and Zemun, op. cit., 109, 111.

25 Recorded in the following zadrugas: Gabrić in Žednik, EZ FFZ Z 117, Dulić in Đurđin, EZ FFZ Z 118 and Matarić in Opštinar, EZ FFZ Z 138. Recorded by Milana Čemelić.

26 Johann von Csaplovics, Slavonien und zum Theil Croatien, I. Pesth (Hartleben's Verlag), 1819, 111.

27 See: M. S. Filipović, Visočka nahija, Srpski etnografski zbornik, 61, 1949, 88.

A. Jovičević, Riječka nahija u Cmoj Gori, Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena, 15, 1938.

Conclusion

Further studies should pay more attention to the highly interesting and complex question of the role of women in the zadrugal economy in general and the osobac in particular. New data and their comparative study may tell us more about regional traditions, their mutual contacts and influences and about the existence of two or more traditions within one village and even one zadruga, as has already been shown in several places in this study. Once the scope of the studies has been broadened to encompass all South Slavs, we may find new types of these phenomena. One aspect of these studies should concentrate on wool as the basic raw material in the production of cloth in the Dinaric region and the ways in which wool is distributed and used in zadrugas.

It is interesting to note that the question of women's individual property and its management was observed and discussed as early as 1874 by Baltazar Bogišić, which reaffirms him as a great authority on zadrugal problems.

The present study has no pretensions to being complete or definitive. We have used the available data with the aim of pointing out and classifying some of the most important facts of this phenomenon to the extent our material allowed us to do.

REFERENCES:

- Bogišić, Baltazar: *Grada u odgovorima iz različitih krajeva slavenskog juga*, Zagreb, 1874.
- Czaplovics von Johann: *Slavonien und zum Theil Croatien*, I, Pesth (Hartleben's Verlag), 1819.
- Filipović, M.S.: Visočka nahija, *Srpski etnografski zbornik*, 61, 1949.
- Gavazzi, Milovan: *Sudbina obiteljskih zadruga jugoistočne Evrope, Vrela i sudbine narodnih tradicija kroz prostor, vremena i ljude*, Zagreb, 1978.
- Jovičević, A.: Riječka nahija u Crnoj Gori, *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena*, 23, Zagreb 1918.
- Lovretić, Josip: Otok, *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena*, 2, 4, Zagreb, 1897, 1899.
- Lukić, Luka, Varoš, *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena*, 24, 25, 26, Zagreb, 1919, 1924, 1926.
- Matić, Tomo: Narodni život i običaji u Požeškoj županiji krajem 18. vijeka, *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena*, 35, Zagreb, 1951, 5 - 29.
- Mosely, Ph. E.: Adaptation for Survival; The Varžić zadruga, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, American Series 2, Vol. 21, No. 56, Menacha, 1943.
- Pavličević, Dragutin: *Hrvatske kućne zadruge*, I, (up to 1881), Zagreb, 1989.

ŽENSKO OSOBNO VLASNIŠTVO "OSOBAČ"

U JUŽNOSLAVENSKIM ZADRUGAMA

Sažetak

U prilogu su razmatrani načini stjecanja prihoda koji ostvaruju žene u zadruzi skupljanjem i prodajom jaja, voća i povrća. Razmatra se i osobna svojina žena nad sjemenom tekstilnih biljaka, lana i konoplje, zemlje na kojoj se te biljke uzgajaju, sprava i pomagala za obradu tekstilnih biljaka do niti, a zatim i tkalačkih stanova.

U istraživanju ovog problema ograničili smo se na područje Slavonije, hrvatskog dijela Baranje, podunavskog dijela Bačke i Srijema, uključujući i područje oko Dobrice u Banatu.

Kao građa poslužila je neobjavljena rukopisna građa koja je pohranjena u arhivi Etnološkog zavoda te ona objavljena, napose u Zbornicima za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena (Otok i Varoš). Važne podatke o ovim problemima donose Baltazar Bogišić, kao i M. Piller i L. Mitterpacher.

U radu su u svezi s ovim načinom ženskogA gospodarenja unutar zadruge uočene neke regionalne tradicije, kao i postojanje dviju i više tradicija u jednom selu, ili čak, u jednoj zadruzi. Za očekivati je da će biti još nekih tipova određenih pojava i njihovih varijanti, kada se takva istraživanja prošire na sve Južne Slavene.

Prevela na engeski jezik: Vera Andrassy
Lektorirala: Irena Naglić