

THE HOMEMADE TEXTILE CRAFT IN RASTOKE NEAR SLUNJ

SUMMARY

Home production of textiles was an integral part of the cultural tradition of the inhabitants of the village of Rastoke in times past. Rastoke is located below the Kordun town of Slunj, in central Croatia. Both settlements occupy unusual positions on the very mouth, the delta, of the Slunjčica where it flows into the Korana River. These positions enabled the inhabitants to engage in milling, and with activities complementary to milling, such as rolling of cloth.

At the end of the Second World War production of homespun textiles ceased. At the beginning of the Sixties, and particularly in the year 1969, the author carried out field research into this activity. The results of her research, augmented by data from other sources, is published in this paper. The technological and ergological aspects of the entire complex is described. Details are given on primary processing of the textile yarns from linen and hemp (by soaking, removal of woody remnants, and combing), as well as preparation of wool (by cleaning and combing out). This is followed by a description of spinning, bleaching and rewinding of the textile thread, as the preparatory phase of weaving. By use of basic and decorative weaving techniques and a combination of materials, mention is made of the entire range of textile goods which were produced, both by weaving and knitting. Woollen products from Rastoke were also submitted to an additional process in the so-called wet process, to make them more compact. This was carried out in separate installations, located by the mills. The damp cloth was rolled in throughs and compressed so that it became firmer and impermeable, while woollen blankets were softened and given a fuller texture by placing them in simple wooden vats with holes, and simply submitting them to water pressure.

When the complex of the textile craft in Rastoke is analysed as a segment in economics, and a phenomenon in the structure of social relations, it can be seen to be made up of two components. The basic one, production - from growing of the raw material to the creation of the ready fabrics - was women's work. It fell into handiwork activities, meeting the needs within the household in which production was being done. Finishing of the fabrics by rolling of the cloth was men's work, and fell into (semi)-craftman activities. It was intended for the needs of the inhabitants of a broader region, and, as a service activity, created profit in cash.

(Translated by Nina H. Antoljak)