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# Amici hereditatis – Civic Association in the Service of Museum

*Since there is no museum in the area of Otok Ivanić, the “Civic Association Prijatelji baštine – Amici hereditatis” was founded in 2005, with the main aim to raise awareness of the local community of the importance to protect local heritage and tradition. Another aim of the Association - to raise awareness of its own cultural identity is realised through different actions and manifestations. The heritage in the area of Ivanić-Grad has outstanding local importance, and the majority of the existing collections are privately owned and of ethnographic character thus creating the basis of a future museum. Registration of the material of a private ethnographic collection is under way in cooperation with the Croatian Ethnological Society and the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb.*

**Key words:** heritage, identity, Amici hereditatis, civic association, museum, Ivanić-Grad, Croatian Ethnological Society, Kezele collection

## Introduction – on heritage and identity

Cultural identity is undoubtedly one of the important elements of every society and every community. The amount of effort needed to raise awareness towards it in a small local community without a museum, but with a rich ethnographic and other heritage will be presented through the activity of the “Civic Association Prijatelji baštine – Amici hereditatis” in the area of the town of Ivanić-Grad.

There exist numerous definitions of heritage and they all include material heritage (buildings, monuments, artefacts, archaeological sites, etc.) and non-material heritage (customs, beliefs, traditions, languages, etc.) inherited from the past, in some forms,

tangible or intangible and documenting that past. When the so-called tangible and intangible expressions of heritage are placed locally, they result in cultural traditions characteristic for a certain local community, and are called local heritage.

The concrete definition of heritage objects by Maroević (1993: 120) states that “a heritage object is the object that by its material and form documents reality in which it was created, in which it lived and with which it entered the present. Heritage objects have rich layers of meaning by which they communicate messages of the past into the present and protect them for the future.” In this context, identity as a part of the message the heritage contains becomes an element of cognition of the existence, of one’s own historical roots and structures that are deep in us, and in that way, whether we want it or not, they determine our allegiance to the state, homeland, place, race, civilisation, culture, religion or any other form of shaped consciousness. In the ambiances of cultural heritage or among objects that represent heritage we come to know the similarities and differences determining thus our own identities. Because of that cultural identity, the creation of which enables the contact with heritage, is irreplaceable, for an individual as well as for the community as a whole (Maroević, 1993: 99). Accordingly, the “Civic Association Prijatelji baštine - Amici hereditatis” can be one of the factors that will affect the shaping of local identity of the area where it works.

## The heritage of Otok Ivanić

The area of Otok Ivanić<sup>1</sup> is rich in cultural heritage that dates back to the Middle Ages. Big mediaeval church centres, today Kloštar Ivanić and Križ, belonged to the Zagreb Bishopric from the very beginning, i.e. from its founding in the last decade of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Even today, in the foundations of sacral entities of these places and the surrounding cultural landscape, traces can be noticed of the oldest history that is still today not recognised enough. The current Ivanić-Grad, although it has probably existed as a settlement in the High Middle Ages, started developing intensively in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, to reach its full importance at the times of the Ottoman invasion at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when a classic fortification against the Ottomans was built, the material traces of which are not visible today. After the danger from the Ottomans disappeared two centuries later, the fortification still remains at a military base at the frontier with the Ottoman empire, and Ivanić gets new possibilities for economic and cultural development. Peaceful economic development within the frontiers enabled Ivanić to become a strong crafts’ and well-known trade centre. This definitely raised the level of living in comparison to the neighbouring settlements.

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<sup>1</sup> Otok Ivanić is the name used in several historical documents, and geographically it spans over the area defined by rivers Lonja, Glogovnica and Česma. The term geographically determines the western Moslavina. In the contemporary administrative sense these are the areas of the town of Ivanić-Grad, municipality of Kloštar Ivanić and Municipality of Križ.

Already at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century 20,000 pots and other earthenware, 3,000 ells of medium fine and 4,500 ells of rough linen were produced in Ivanić-Grad ((Bićanić, 1951: 44-45, 49). According to a register there was a great number of different craftsmen in Ivanić-Grad: 1 wagon-maker, 1 cooper, 2 carpenters, 2 joiners, 7 blacksmiths, 2 cutlers, 9 locksmiths, 1 weaver, 45 German tailors, 5 Slavonian button makers, 1 hat maker, 7 shoe-maker, 22 boot-makers, 1 harness-maker, 2 bakers, 1 pastry cook, 2 butchers, 1 chimney-sweeper, 2 glaziers, 9 potters, 3 barbers and wigmakers. In 1803, Ivanić had 127 craftsmen in 21 different crafts, while at the same time for instance Kostajnica had 108, Glina 81, Ogulin 54, Križevci 136 (Kruhek, 1978: 37-38).

Numerous buildings in its narrow area, that is in the historic centre, recognised by the Ministry of Culture prove the level of town development. Thirty-five buildings are listed as having cultural and historic value, and three buildings are listed in the Registry of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Croatia (Mavar, 2008). The rural areas around Ivanić-Grad, Kloštar Ivanić and Križ, as bigger centres, were always characterised by predominantly agricultural activities and rural way of life which left a truly rich and valuable movable ethnographic heritage, but also numerous rural, first of all traditional, wooden houses typical for this area, that are daily decreasing in number. In the middle of the last century the finding of oil and natural gas in the greater area of Ivanić-Grad brought great prosperity to the town itself and to the whole area. The first oil-well (Križ-1) in the area of the former Yugoslavia was in the wood Petica, not far from Ivanić-Grad, where up to several years ago there was an open space with an oil-well on display.<sup>2</sup> It is, no doubt, a symbol of progress and value of the local community from the sixties up to the present day, because a great number of people are employed in this industrial branch even today. The area of Otok Ivanić today has some thirty thousand inhabitants who still do not have an official museum that would, on the basis of other museum functions (collection, documentation and protection), present their heritage in a dignified way and thus raise the consciousness of the importance of cultural and historical heritage and make them more conscious of their own identity. Developed cultural identity is a trait of every developed society, especially of those to which we aspire and the part of which we are going to become when we officially join the European Union.

## Association and its activities

On the incentive of Vida Pust Škrgulja the “Civic Association Prijatelji baštine - Amici Hereditatis” was established on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005. It aims to perform some of the museum activities necessary to preserve the local heritage. There are 130 regular members of the Association today. All the members volunteer in creation and planning of activities and their execution. Everybody participates according to their abilities and

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<sup>2</sup> It mainly consisted of special vehicles and accompanying equipment for oil-wells. Unfortunately, the INA company decided to dismantle the majority of these old vehicles and took them to scrap depo.

knowledge, free time and their own ambitions to improve the community they live in. In addition to the modest resources granted from the town budget, the membership fees are invested in the realisation of the programme envisaged at the annual level. Participation in the activities of the Association is definitely an excellent way for the improvement of one's own knowledge in practice.

The basic activity of the Association is the improvement and promotion of the protection of natural, cultural and historical heritage of the homeland as a crucial factor of preservation of the recognisable identity of the area and its inhabitants. Data on local heritage are collected continuously and in an organised manner (interviewing old craftsmen, collection of old documents, photographs, objects, etc.) and stored in the Association's premises, given by the town, processed in accordance with the modern standards for data processing, maintaining at the same time the ethical principles. The Association also strives to actively participate in the processes of protection and revitalisation of tangible and intangible heritage. One of the basic goals of its activity is to establish a heritage museum in Ivanić-Grad, as modern cultural and educational centre that would communicate at different levels, in cooperation with other cultural and educational institutions and appropriately bring together and professionally lead all the activities.<sup>3</sup> Aspiration to found a museum, that would take over the responsibility to register, protect, collect and document valuable heritage of the greater Ivanić-Grad area is great, the more so, because regarding the style and way of the contemporary life the number of unique, but endangered movable and non-movable heritage is increasing by the day.

Since the Association operates on a voluntary basis and with limited financial resources, a great progress in popularisation of heritage among local inhabitants can still be visible. In addition to a couple of public lectures on the understanding of cultural heritage, the members participated at the 11<sup>th</sup> Croatian-Slovene Ethnological Parallels with the presentation on the topic of industrial cultural heritage – in order to raise the awareness of the inhabitants about the current issues of the local industrial heritage. In cooperation with the local association “Photo-video club 33 mm” from Križ organised are workshops “Heritage through a Lens” which are primarily aimed at attracting young population interested in photography and heritage. Every other Wednesday on the Radio Ivanić the members of the Association present to the listeners the local heritage and the current events and actions that the citizens can follow and participate in. In order to popularise local heritage and bring awareness to it, the Association has started a web page, and similar content, related to its work is available on, today very popular, social networks. The Association organised several very successful exhibitions: “*Carnival Tradition in Ivanić*” in 2006, “*Twelve Hours of the Town Museum in Ivanić-Grad*” in 2007 and especially “*Craftsmen of Old Ivanić*” that accompanied the Ivanić Craftsmen's Fair in June 2010. (Picture 1, Picture 2) The manifestation “*Museum Night*” has been organised regularly from 2009. Although there is no museum, this is the occasion for a high quality professionally prepared full-evening

<sup>3</sup> The aims of the Association were taken over from its Mision Statement (available at [www.prijatelji-baštine.hr](http://www.prijatelji-baštine.hr)).

programme on local heritage. During the last “*Museum Night*” organised was a walk through old Ivanić, with well-known historical personalities from Ivanić.

To raise awareness about heritage issues of the Otok Ivanić area in the greater professional community, the members of the Association gave presentations at several professional meetings. They are also planning to organise, in cooperation with the Croatian section of ECOVAST (the European Council for the Village and Small Town), an international professional meeting „Management Models of Restoration and Development Processes of Historic Towns – the Example of Ivanić-Grad: Possibilities of Revitalisation and Restoration of Old Ivanić”, to be held in Ivanić-Grad in November 2011.

In the year 2010 initiated was the action to collect old items, documents and photographs with the aim to create the basis for one of the future museum collections, because according to the *Law on Museums* (article 17), museum material and the associated museum documentation, space, equipment and professional staff must exist in order to establish a museum. The objects collected up to now are mainly ethnographic (jars, a loom, troughs, traditional wooden furniture, etc). On receipt, the objects are documented according to the currently valid museum documentation standards and then they are stored appropriately (on the already mentioned premises of the Association). Although there are several notable family collections in the town, the collection of old objects, documents and photographs was initiated because heritage, primarily ethnographic, was destroyed, most often due to owner’s ignorance of the value and importance of an object or their intention to clean up their living spaces of unnecessary things by throwing them in the rubbish. With the thought that it is better to protect for future generations than to destroy irretrievably, this action will go on till the establishment of the museum, one of the function of which is collection and documenting common values.

## Registering ethnographic collection of the Kezele family

In addition to organising different lectures and exhibitions, one of the great projects of the “Association Prijatelji baštine - Amici hereditatis” is the registration of exhibition material, i.e. objects from private collections. The biggest among them is ethnographic collection of the Kezele family, situated in several farm buildings and the restaurant on their property in Šumečani, in the vicinity of Ivanić-Grad. The aim of this registration is obtaining of the status of local and even regional collection. The registration of ethnographic collection started in the summer of 2010, and continued in autumn (Picture 3). Some two hundred objects belonging to shoemaking workshop and containers for milk processing were registered up to now. Five hundred jars make up the major part of the collection, thus making the greatest pottery corpus in a collection in the county, and probably in the whole of Croatia (Picture 4). The majority of objects in the collection are a family legacy or they were bought. The collection itself belongs to the region of Moslavina, i.e. almost all the objects were used in the region

of Moslavina, and this makes it especially important as the regional homeland heritage. In addition to pottery and wooden objects, objects of various metals, like parts of a blacksmith's shop and different metal containers also have to be singled out. In addition to objects that were part of any household, there is a lot of those that had a decorative function or were used for entertainment in free time.

Some members of the Association are students at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb so they were in charge of the registration of the material. Members of the Association sought help from the professional staff of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb which resulted in the cooperation with the curator Marija Živković who visited the collection and her professional aid was a great help during registration. Together with the "domestic" students, other graduate and postgraduate students of ethnology and cultural anthropology also participated in the registration. The aim of this work was to raise awareness about the importance of local heritage in students from all parts of Croatia and to perform field education (Picture 5).<sup>4</sup> First of all the students got acquainted with the region where the registration was performed and with the importance of the collection. After several discussions two field trips, in summer and autumn, each lasting a week, were devoted to registration. Students registered the material with the help of older colleagues from the Faculty. For better understanding and more systematic registration previous field work experiences were used as well as the manual *Instructions for the Protection of Ethnographic Collections* (Mlinar, Antoš, 2004: 7) No museum program for object registration (like M++) was used, but the data were entered into a Word document under ordinal numbers. The objects were photographed at the same time, respecting the data input protocol. Thus for instance, the inventory number was put in the least visible place on the object, and during photographing the number was brought out on the side on a neutral surface. This facilitated the linking of document and the object description into a unique document on a neutral basis. Objects that are on display in the Kezele restaurant will be registered in the end, and the utensils used in the household will be registered during the summer of 2011. The rate of the work is dictated by students' commitments. Namely, the Association included into this project the students who will become future professionals in this field as well students of history and history of art.

Ethnographic material in the Kezele family collection is very important for the greater area. Family's efforts gathered objects related to crafts of joiners, shoemakers, potters, meat baker, as well as the simplest household objects. Documentation is also very important, because professionals can easily find their way in the collection. Constantly cooperating with the Kezele family, the Association used a couple of objects from their ethnographic collection in the exhibition "*Craftsmen of Old Ivanić*". Since it does not have its own museum, the "Association Prijateljli baštine - Amici hereditatis" often

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<sup>4</sup> The first such project with the students of the „Bologna system“ in the city of Bakar from 30<sup>th</sup> July to 5<sup>th</sup> August was organised by the Croatian Ethnological Society and the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, under the professional guidance of prof. Branko Đaković, Ph.D., and by individual registrations followed later.

promotes the importance of the region and the area by presenting ethnographic collection of the Kezele family in Šumečani in exhibition programmes.

## Conclusion

The activity of the of the Association Prijatelji baštine - Amici hereditatis is by all means valuable, because it is one of the factors influencing the shaping of the identity of the local inhabitants, first of all through the care of tangible and intangible local heritage and its protection for future generations. A number of actions and events the Association organises speak to this. At the beginning, the Association directed its work towards informing the inhabitants about the importance of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. A number of exhibitions were realised through volunteer work of members in order to raise the awareness of the local heritage. The members of the Association initiated the registration and collection of traditional objects for the display in the emerging museum, with the help of the students of the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. Cooperation was also established with the Croatian section of ECOVAST and the Croatian Ethnological Society. Several members of the Association devoted their professional work to the heritage protection and presented in at international professional meetings.

*Translated by: Jasenka Zajec*