

FOLK POETRY FROM THE ISLAND OF BRAČ

Summary

The present study is intended to accompany a selection of 58 folk poems from the island of Brač (Central Dalmatia) recorded partly by the author himself in 1967 and partly by M. Bošković-Stulli, D. Rihtman — Šotrić and J. Bezić in 1969. The 58 poems are a selection from a much larger body of material collected on these two occasions. The author notes at the beginning that the early written records of oral folk poems from Brač date back to the eighteenth century. The first recorded poems were drinking songs and toasts and were characterized by a spirit of chivalry, like some other Croatian folk poems from earlier periods.

The most numerous recordings of oral poetry from Brač were made in the second half of the nineteenth century, thanks mainly to the efforts of Mate Ostojić, a minor poet but an assiduous and highly conscientious collector of folk art.

The present author analyzes the folk poetry in Ostojić's collection (1880 — 1883), the bulk of which is still in manuscript form (cf. manuscript MH 79 at the Ethnological Institute of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts). The collection includes some 450 pieces and quite a number of them are of an outstandingly high artistic quality. Particularly interesting are those poems that deal with the sea, or whose action takes place at the sea, and those in which Christians and Muslims appear together without displaying any mutual antagonism.

In the opinion of the present author, Ostojić's collection deserves to be better exploited, all the more so as only six poems from it have been published so

far: the Matica Hrvatska ten-volume series of Croatian folk poetry contains only four poems from Ostojić's collection in volume 5 and two poems in volume 6, which is quite inadequate.

In addition to Ostojić and the collectors listed at the beginning of this summary, the present author has also consulted the collections of other authors — Ludvig Kuba (a Czech collector), Martin Pletikosić, Vladoje Bersa, Fr. Antoin Zaninović, Ivo Barbarović, Jeronim Šetka (who was an indirect collector), Katica Baković, Miko Bonifačić Rožin, and Zorica Rajković (all of them from Croatia). Of the eight Croat collectors, two were from the island of Brač. They were Ivo Babarović and Katica Baković. Kuba and Pletikosić made their recordings in the late nineteenth century, while the other collectors have worked on the island in the twentieth century (some of them in the most recent period).

The great number of folk songs and poems recorded on the island in earlier and in the most recent period, together with their high artistic standard, means that Brač must be seen as a very important source of Croatian oral poetry — both lyric and epic poetry and the kind of poetry which falls between these two types.

Like in the rest of Dalmatia (and in most parts of Croatia), the most prolific narrators of folk poems in Brač were women, such as for instance the two women from whom Ostojić heard many of the songs and poems recorded by him and the three women who supplied most of the poems included in the present paper.

(Translated by Vladimir Ivir)