

FOLK DANCES FROM THE ISLAND OF BRAČ

Summary

The author visited the island of Brač in 1966 and recorded 32 folk dances there.

Like in the rest of Dalmatia, the main dancing season on Brač is the carnival period. Other dancing seasons are connected with certain church festivities, known as FESTE, DRNECI and FJERE. Apart from these occasions, dancing is also done at the time of Christmas, New Year, Easter, and at wedding parties.

In earlier times, people used to dance in large rooms in private homes or in village taverns, while more recently dancing is done in cooperative halls, reading rooms, and other public halls.

In the central and southeastern parts of the island, old reel dances accompanied by singing have been preserved, but modern dances, danced by couples, have also become widespread.

Dancing was not always practised in complete freedom. In the pre-First World War period and between the Two World Wars, fighting often broke out during dancing evenings organized by different political parties. Priests also opposed dancing, and on days of fasting and during the Lent no dancing or singing was allowed.

Dancing parties were usually organized by groups of young men led by head dancers known as KAPOBALOS or KAPOBALAS.

Four different kinds of dancing parties were known on Brač. The first kind was reel dancing in open spaces on the occasion of certain religious or public

holidays. The second type were social dancing parties organized by political, cultural, educational, fire-fighting, sports, and other organizations and clubs. The third type were the so-called SOCIETADE organized by groups of young men; the fourth type were the KAVALKINE in which everybody could take part who paid an admission fee. Admission was paid only by men, not by women and girls.

Old reel dances were danced to the accompaniment of beautiful old songs, while modern couple-dances were accompanied on the lyre at first, and later on the button-key accordion.

Connected with folk dances were also some popular beliefs known in other parts of Dalmatia too. Older people used to believe in fairy dances and were prepared to specify the locations at which such dancing took place and to supply various details in connection with it.

During the Second World War and in the immediate postwar period, Partisan reel dances were very popular. The most widespread dances today are those that young people dance throughout the world. Their penetration has been greatly aided by the expansion of the tourist trade on the island.

The second part of the present paper gives lists of localities at which recordings for this study have been made and the list of the informants. There is also a description of the most important dances and their variants, concluding remarks, and notes.

(Translated by Vladimir Ivir)