

Influences of Artistic Styles in the Croatian Folk Art

This article discusses the formats of the influences of European artistic styles which have left a trail in Croatian folk art. The term folk art used here was established in the beginning of the 20th century through the selection of ethnographic items according to urban aesthetical criteria, which presented the rural visual art opus. It starts by naming visual art elements included in the ethnographic material, which point to Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo style influences. Two different items are specially analyzed; the female folk costume from Pag, as an example of well-preserved Renaissance influences and the so-called Dalmatian chest (a sub-group of Adriatic type) as an example of the intertwining of different artistic styles and other cultural influences in the past.

Ključne riječi: Folk art, Croatian folk art, artistic styles, folk costume (Pag), chests (Dalmatia)

Introduction

When researching the influences of artistic styles in Croatian folk art, I start from several assumptions that are connected with the meaning of the term *folk art*, as well as from the understanding of style as a principle of historical classification.¹

I am using the term *Croatian folk art*, defined by Milovan Gavazzi (1895-1992), which he explained in 1944 in a synthesizing review of this topic, with photographs of the items mainly from the Ethnographic museum in Zagreb. Gavazzi clearly defined folk art as rural art, or a type of visual art expression that is tightly connected to the Croatian rural culture (Gavazzi 1944).

¹ On style in visual art from the point of view of the relationship between the history of arts and other humanities refer to Bialostocki, 1986.

At the end of the previous century, a similar term *folklore visual art expression* was used (Senjković 1998; Vojnović Traživuk 2001), but its relation to the old term wasn't precisely defined. The professional treatment of the museum ethnographic material and the supervision of recent phenomena made me think of the parallel use of the existing term *folk art* and the new term *visual art folklore*. The second term I regard as the more extensive one, covering the overall visual manifestations of traditional culture, with the emphasis on the recent remnants and traces of rural visual art opus from the past (Vojnović Traživuk 2006).

Croatian folk art therefore includes those visual art items that belong to the rural art of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and are today stored in museum ethnographic collections. They are followed by the researches of traditional handicrafts as specific skills that were being passed on through generations within rural communities.² The folk art is therefore a historical term connected to the already mentioned visual art opus, which was being evaluated by the Croatian urban citizens according to their own aesthetical criteria from the end of the 19th century onwards.³

I observe the artistic styles as the system of terms adequate to periods of historical development of the European visual art, which have a chronological character. Although historians polemicize over the question of style in art and are reserved when talking about style in that sense (Senjković 1994:125-126), that principle of historical classification has been regularly used in Croatian ethnological papers dealing with this topic.

Individual examples of stylistic influences

According to the ethnological bibliography about the Croatian folk arts to date, the greatest number of examples show Renaissance and Baroque influences, and the most frequently mentioned are the ones dealing with traditional clothing, especially with the female folk costume. Besides, in the overall folk visual art opus, there are also some other examples of medieval, especially Gothic and the later neo-Baroque and other historical influences of the 19th century.

Medieval influences can be seen on the chests made of hewed boards which are also categorized as chests of Romanesque style, as well as in the motives of six-pointed rosette ("pergelj") and star which are typical for the Romanesque and Gothic styles (Petrović-Prošić Dvornić 1983:34). Besides, the constructions of the table and benches from Hrvatsko Zagorje are recognized as elements from the Middle Ages, with the legs that are crossed in X-shape (Lazarević 1962:297). The shape of the wooden chair with a semi-circular back and seat, standing on three legs, is also considered to stem from a medieval source, named *tronožac* or *katriga* in Dalmatinska zagora at the beginning of the 20th century (Vojnović Traživuk 2008).

² Unlike this, the term *visual art folklore* refers to visual art phenomena from wider cultural, social, spatial and temporal fields, and it points out their typological character.

³ Process of the urban evaluation of folk arts was taking place in certain parts of Croatia, considering historical circumstances, earlier or later and in different ways.

Shaping the female headgear using a pad in pointed shapes, which is present in almost entire Croatia, is known to be a late medieval clothing form (Radauš Ribarić 1975). Besides, in the northern and central Dalmatia there are Gothic elements in the emphasized vertical version of the female clothing outfit, and in the composition of ornamental motives and multi-colored surface treatment (Petrović-Prošić Dvornić 1983:34).

Therefore, the influences of Romanesque and Gothic styles can be recognized as individual motives and forms of the traditional carpentry and textile handicrafts, and especially in the forms of female folk costumes. These are Gothic headgears with triangular and trapezoid-like contours formed with a stiffened pad, and the female folk costume of the so-called Dinaric type which are shaped as an elongated figure with a monotonous form (Gothic verticalism), with the aim of poly-chromic development of the surface dominated by ornament.

Renaissance influences can be seen in monochromous clothing items and in the inclination towards the achromatic textile ornament, which was most commonly realized as white embroidery on a white surface, lace or an interwoven thread. The most famous example is the sewn lace from the Pag island and the female folk costume from Pag. Renaissance style can be seen in a white ornament of the female folk costume from Slunj, which was interwoven or sewn with a needle on the yellow linen cloth. Monochromous embroidery used to decorate the female head cover called *poculica* (Jamnica village) also supports the influence of Renaissance fashion (Senjković 1998:229). Its presence in the clothes of women from Bednja is analyzed as Renaissance elements in the folk costumes of Hrvatsko zagorje, which were being taken over from the native nobility (Belaj 1962-1963).

Watching female folk costumes as a whole, we can see that the most significant change under the impact of Renaissance was tightening the clothes in the waist area, which changed the shape of the Gothic monotonous vertical line. That is how the skirt with a waistcoat developed (example *skirt with vest* from the island of Pag), whose shape is familiar as one of the two types of the Adriatic female costumes (Radauš Ribarić 1975). The shirt was present mainly along the central and northern Adriatic coast under the name *stomanja*, as a part of the male and female folk costumes, and is also considered to be a Renaissance clothing item.⁴

Undeniable Renaissance influence was recognized in most visual art elements of the female folk costume from the island of Pag, which will be further described. Here I am about to mention only the motifs of the Pag lace, which confirm the prevailing repertory of geometrical motifs on textile, as well as the aim towards monochromism and subordination of ornament to a plain surface.

On the Adriatic chests with a flat cover we witness an influence of Renaissance style chests. The cover is a little bigger so that on the front side it looks like an architrave and the low legs are shaped as stylized lion paws. This style feature can be seen in the carved motifs of the vase with flowers, flower tendrils, birds and cypresses, as well as in their symmetrical composition on the front side of the chest (Vojnović Traživuk 2010).

⁴ It was tightened around the neck and in the wrist area around the sleeves.

Baroque influences are particularly present in our folk art, so they can be recognized on a number of examples of textile handicrafts and generally in traditional clothing, as well as in products of craftsmen and rural construction.

Baroque motifs of the heart and the Christ's monogram (IHS) are present on various items. The appearance of the heart motif in northern Croatia marked the beginning of the waxwork and gingerbread crafts. Baroque shapes, ornaments and colors were used by potters, carpenters, wax candle makers, gingerbread makers and other craftsmen. In rural construction some other ornamental motifs and elements were used as well: garlands, hearts and volutes on the foreparts, wide arches, cornices, dual-colored facades, and also patterned wall painting (Senjković 1998:229).

Baroque fashion influenced weaving techniques, embroidery techniques and ornaments, as well as the shape of clothes and the selection of ornaments. The ornament in ceremonious female folk costumes in Slavonia and other areas of the Pannonian cultural area became particularly prominent. Slavonian girls decorated their hair with flowers and feathers, colorful golden and silver ornaments. The neck and cleavage of women was covered with strings of golden coins, and little mirrors were sewn on their woven slippers and fleece-lined waistcoats, while on the shirt sleeves they would sew wide lines of lace. Embroidered flowery motives and garlands also belong to the Baroque repertory, as well as the application of silk cloth, and pink, yellow and white-brown colors of the cloth (Senjković 1998:229).

Researching the phenomenon of the so-called rural Baroque in northern Croatia, Reana Senjković named elements in which Baroque influenced the appearance of Banovina and Slavonia and Baranja textile handicrafts. A number of examples were summarized in basic groups: plurality of flowery motives, golden embroidery and tailored parts of the folk costume modeled in the fashion of the 17th and 18th century (Senjković 1994:128-130).

It is also important to point out the Baroque change in contours of the female figure, which was directly connected to formation of the outfit of traditional clothes. Now it took on the shape of the sand-clock that was created by tightening in the waist area, with a complete division of clothes into the parts above and below the waist, as well as highlighting the hips by gathering the wide sleeves into folds. Stiffening the cloth and using a number of underskirts, this basic shape was modeled in big folds of cloth with deep gussets. This clothing item is most common in the female folk costume of the Pannonian area, especially in Posavina (for example the female folk costume from Sunja), but it can also be seen in some costumes from the Adriatic coastal area. We can find the upper part of the costume, formed in a Baroque style in which the waistcoat becomes a real corset and the lap extends in big folds, in the folk costume from the island of Krk and the neighboring mainland around Vinodol (Radauš Ribarić 1975). Rich folds and flounces are the characteristics of the female clothes from Split recorded on the lithographic print from 1871 (Ludwig Salvator 1998:288, picture 170).

Rococo also influenced some ornaments in folk costumes from Slavonia. The ornamental details that show the same stylistic origin are used in ceremonious female folk costume from Baranja, together with aprons made of silk. Moreover, the term *rococo* remained in use for the machine-made silk lace and for a narrow coat made of velvet (Radauš Ribarić 1975).

There is one more example of this stylistic impact in the Adriatic area of Croatia. The ceremonious female folk costume from Orebić on the Pelješac peninsula shows stylistic influences which were recognized as rococo from the second half of the 18th century. This influence is demonstrated in a little dress with narrow sleeves, and a couple of tiny clothing elements. It clings to the body, being made of silk and brocade cloth in pastel colors, and decorated with straps, fringes and lace. The ceremonious headgear is characteristic, consisting of a wide-brimmed hat with a decoration of bird's feathers and ornamental straps,⁵ which was very established in European fashion in the 70s and 80s of the 18th century (Ivančić 1995/96:40-41).

Apart from the items mentioned above, there are some influences of the Spanish Baroque on the mainland and islands of the northern Adriatic, present in dark and black colors of the clothes, which started to dominate in the 18th century (Senjković 1998:230). There is also the appearance of black embroidery with silk on the shirts in Dubrovnik known as the "Spanish fashion" embroidery (Petrović – Prošić Dvornić 1984:46). This influence became prominent much later after its first stylistic affirmation, and in its long presence on the Adriatic area it was sometimes refreshed by the neo-Baroque influences. It led to the formation of some female folk costumes in Adriatic Dalmatia on which black or very dark colors prevailed (for example in Zadar, Trogir, Kaštela, Split). These were extremely ceremonious clothing outfits which remained in use until the beginning of the 20th century. They were often decorated with textile ornaments in golden color as well as a number of pieces of golden and gold-plated jewelry.

A number of earrings from the Adriatic area made in the techniques of filigree and granulation also belong to the Baroque style contours, as well as the hairpin needles (*tremanat*) worn by the women from Split, Kaštela and their surroundings. Baroque motives of the heart, the cross and the Christ's monogram, which were more commonly used in northern Croatia in different materials and techniques, were mostly used on the Adriatic in the design of jewelry. In Dalmatia, the continuity of the craftsmanship in the manufacture of golden and silver items, which were being made for the plebeians in general up to the 20th century (Lentić 1992:91-92), influenced the appearance of the individual jewelry items towards the heartland, especially in Sinj and its surroundings.

Baroque elements were noticed in the furniture as well (Lazarević 1962). Some chests of the Adriatic type in Dalmatia have painted vases with luxurious bouquets on the inside cover with a mirror in the center of the surface (Vojnović Traživuk 2011).

Numerous examples of Baroque influences preserved in Croatian folk art in different interpretations point to different possibilities of the reception of style. This indicates that certain visual art elements were present in a definite time and space, where they were formed in special circumstances. Although they sometimes disappeared in the change of the context, they usually adapted to new circumstances. They continued their long existence interpreted in that way.⁶ Therefore we can rarely discuss one "pure" stylistic influence.

⁵ See the illustration in Ludwig Salvator 1998:295, picture 199.

⁶ It can also be noticed in other phenomena of traditional culture. For the Croatian folk art Gavazzi was the first to point out a parallel development of old and acquired elements, the new and the newest ones, as its important feature (Gavazzi 1944).

Stylistic influences in formative entities

Analyzing visual art elements of the ceremonious female folk costume from the island of Pag (Fig. 1) and the so-called Dalmatian chest with carved and painted ornament (Fig. 2), I will try to show the variety of possibilities of the absorption of stylistic influences. The first example is a very rare stylistic influence from the past which has been very well preserved to this day, while the other one is the example of extreme intertwining of different influences and stylistic parallelism.

The female folk costume from Pag has been singled out as an excellent example of the well-preserved and sophisticated style form from the 15th century (Radauš 1975). According to the pattern and colors of the skirt, which is the dominant clothing element, as well as the headgear and the lace ornament, in terms of style it can be defined as the late Gothic – Renaissance clothing outfit.

Renaissance formation can be seen in the pattern of the skirt with a waistcoat (*skirt with vest*) which is joined together in the waist area. The lower part is made of several straight halves of fine painted home-made cloth which is joined on the brim and lined into thick vertical folds. The waistcoat of the same material is sewn onto it and it clings to the breast area. The skirt with a waistcoat is an early Renaissance phenomenon of emphasizing the female waist which stylistically followed the earlier untailed skirt of the shoulder-strap type. (Ivančić 1995/1996:38) Although the cloth is still formed in vertical folds, in a vertical line which continues to the waistcoat shoulder-strap, it is balanced by horizontal lines of a coloristically emphasized skirt rim, belt and the rimline of the triangular headgear.

In the female folk costume from Pag, color is an individual element of the visual composition. It is realized with coloristic interaction of pure monochromous surfaces, without ornament. The whole skirt is made in the same, monotonous color. By observing a number of these clothing items we can see that the skirts differed from each other in color (blue, red, yellow, green, black), in shade or tone, in which a certain echo of individualism can be recognized. It is noticeable that the color variability abrogates the medieval graphics of the folds and emphasizes the individuality as a characteristic of the Renaissance Humanism (Ivančić 1995/1996:39). On the monochromous skirt with a waistcoat, coloristic accents are the narrow hem made of fabric in contrastive color and an apron (*traversa*), which was usually made in a complementary color in relation to the surface.

The female folk costume from Pag is stylistically determined by the headgear which is made of a white long-shaped kercief ornamented with lace at the ends, which was being fastened on the head in a special way. By its triangular shape (tip turned downwards) it belongs to a type of medieval headgear worn by married women, but the way of arranging it, without a stiffened pad and decorated with white lace on a white base, is typically Renaissance-like. The headgear differs from the medieval pattern by the fact that it is worn by both girls and married women, that is to say by the disappearance of its role as a sign of status.

On the lunette of the doorway of the parish church of Mary the Protector in Pag, there is a relief from the 16th century, which shows the portrayal of Mary enfolding the gathering of the people from Pag. In the right corner there are women presented in the position of

adoration, wearing headgears on their heads made by wrapping the kercief⁷. This variety of a soft shape was probably more used in the past, while the one of a triangular shape made of stiffened cloth was popularized during the 20th century as ceremonious headgear.

The long head scarf is most commonly decorated with lace on the narrow sides, which also adorns the chest part of the shirt. The well-known Pag lace (*paški teg*), with its realization still connected with the cloth base as well as with the visual art, has preserved the image of the early Renaissance lace of a geometrical “report” (Gušić 1955:101). Geometrical ornament is composed of the motifs of a circle, square and rhomboid, or of their segments made with radial and diagonal divisions, which create the much stylized floral and star-like shapes. Among these is a late-Gothic motif of a four-leaf clover with a middle circle radially divided into four identical parts,⁸ which is usually the central part of a more complex motif.

At first sight a similarity can be seen comparing details of the Pag lace, as the component of a female folk costume, and some elements of Gothic-Renaissance architecture of this part of the Adriatic. It refers to sculpturally shaped architectural elements, for example the ethereal rosette on the doorways of churches, but also some other architectural shapes of the so-called ornamented Gothic. Their similarity comes from a stylistic connection, from belonging to the late-Gothic and early-Renaissance style typical for Dalmatia in the second halves of the 15th and 16th century. This was one of the first observations by Croatian ethnologists about the Pag textile handicrafts as a cultural heritage which was interpreted through economic and political circumstances:

„... the antique Pag costume points to stylistic formation in the period when the existence of medieval clothing on the Mediterranean had already come to an end and when there was still no sign of the counter-reformation mourning black fashion. That is a folk costume from the time when our people, in unison with other peoples from the Mediterranean, participated in the general development of the European cultural commonwealth. This had all been happening before the onset of Ottoman invasions from one side and the Venetian exploitation from the other, which imposed a difficult fight for survival on our people. Therefore the folk costume from Pag confirms the rule of the folklore creation according to which cultural wealth gained at the time of economic growth becomes the ownership of a wider circle and remains in use even when the same society declines politically and economically. At the time of cultural and economic collapse and impoverishment, the heritage created earlier becomes a traditional constant, getting into the local folklore content. The antique Pag costume preserved its stylistic beauty of an early Renaissance form, preserving the cultural heritage of the age when, in the 15th century, Juraj Dalmatin offered an urban solution to, at that time, a new town called Pag...In the later centuries of constant and quiet decline, architectural unity of this town was preserved.

⁷ The same shape of the headgear was worn by women from Pag, on the lithography from Ludvig Salvator's edition from 1876 (1998:285, pict.150), as well as some candidates of the lace-making course in Pag, on the photograph taken by the Archduchess Mary Josephine at the beginning of the 20th century (Bruck Auffenberg 1912:19).

⁸ Identical to this is a four-leaf ground-plan of the Šibenik baptistery designed by Juraj Dalmatinac (beginning of the 15th century – 1473). He also participated in urbanistic planning and designing of the most prominent buildings in Pag in the middle of the 15th century (Kečkemet 1964:125-126).

In the same way, in silence, on the edge of the world events, pure values of the antique female clothing were preserved as well..." (Gušić 1955:100).

The folk costume from Pag has therefore been preserved to this day, with some elements added later (black *kamižola*, wide *traversa* etc.) Along with the changes in proportions and harmony of the clothing items, the ceremonious female folk costume still presents a relatively clear Renaissance influence from one direction. A different example of the relation towards artistic styles is seen in the wooden chests of the Adriatic type,⁹ especially those with the inside cover painted.

Adriatic chests with painted cover have been found mostly in Dalmatia, and date back to the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. Apart from the carved foreside with the usual motifs (flowers in a vase, flowery branch with leaves, cypresses, birds), they are also ornamentally painted. The rectangular surface of the inside cover has an accentuated center in which there is a dent for the mirror. It is usually square-shaped with an accentuated frame which is carved and colored, and only rarely painted. The frame is a bigger square with curved sides in the middle, and in these extensions there is a carved shell or a bird. On the side of this central motif there are also tufted bulging vases with luxurious multi-colored bouquets made of different flowers and leafy branches with songbirds.

Following the historical development of the chest in a wide area, Verena Han pointed out that the so-called littoral chests (from the 17th until the 19th century) do not have an analogy in the general typology of the European chest. Therefore their decoration cannot be placed into any of the stylistic categories of European furniture. She pointed out that stylistic bivalences caused by the Turkish invasions on one side and the impacts from the west manifested themselves in the development of this special chest type to which the most significant contribution was given by the masters from the Adriatic Sea (Han 1960/1961:35-38).

A typical motif of the vase with floral bouquet and birds painted on the inside cover and carved on the front side, points to the stylistic influences of the western European art. They are also present in other ornamental motifs as the elements of older stylistic chests from the northern and middle Italy. For example, a carved motif of the four-leaf cluster in the corner of the front side is considered to be from the late Gothic, and the opposing volutes connected with a clasp, are considered to be a Renaissance element, as well as the leaf ornament. On some items the cover and the back side are connected with a couple of late Gothic clasps with perforated rosettes, modeled on the Alpine-Lombardian chests. The edge of the chest body to which the cover leans can be stamp-engraved, so that a line of rhomboids and star-like motives is engraved on it. It is connected with the stamp-engraved basis of the carpentry of the front side, which was very common in Renaissance chests. A sawtooth-like engraved motif, used as a frame of the front side, and legs in the form of stylized lion paws are also considered to be Renaissance elements (Han 1960/1961:30-36).

⁹ Chests of the Adriatic type have sides connected with cogs in the angles, an even cover, short legs, metal clasps which join the upper rim of the back side with the cover, metal handles on sides and the lock on the top of the front side. They are mostly made of several types of wood, usually in a combination of a front side made of walnut, and other sides made of pine or fir. The front side is decorated in a relief technique in carpentry or linear engraving of stylized plant motives. (Vojnović Traživuk 2010:16).

While the construction and the carved ornament of the front side of the Adriatic chest are considered to be influenced by Renaissance style, two luxurious bouquets of various flowers with curving branches and leaves on the inside of the cover are painted in Baroque style, with the emphasis on flamboyance and picturesqueness. The painted ornament of some chests in northern Croatia is also an evidence of Baroque influences,¹⁰ while the floral motives on front sides of the chests in the wider Pannonian area are most commonly composed in two ornamental fields.

The motif of the vase with a flower bouquet was mostly painted on the folk-furniture from the end of the 18th and in the 19th century in central Europe. This is how a Renaissance-Baroque motif of a vase with flowers became popular in folk-interpretation and became a typical motif of the folk furniture in almost all of Europe in the 19th century. According to some authors, flower bowls as motifs on painted home items used the vases of Rococo and the style of Louis XVI as a model. A folk artist involuntarily copied the patterns depending on the occasion, without venturing into the deeper meaning of ornamentation. (Ilijanić 1971:369).

Unlike the chests with painted figural illustrations in southern Croatia, which belonged to the wealthier social class, those with painted vases with flowers on the inside of the cover were a popular variety of the chest used for dowry, meant for the wider public. It seems that with the disappearance of the painted stylistic chests which were replaced by new furniture elements, the production of simple home-made varieties grew.

According to the painting and carving tradition in Dalmatia, as well as the manner of realization, these chests were presumably the work of native masters who had been familiar with the recent home painting on wood in northern Croatia.¹¹ The extreme similarity of the composition of motifs and their mirror symmetry point to the existence of patterns, and therefore the differences in details were created by the final painting as a way of individual final processing. Over time, the chest ornament became so popular that it encouraged production according to one's own taste. Such a well-processed pattern could occasionally get enriched with an element from some other area. It isn't surprising if we remind ourselves that we are talking about folk creativity, or about folk art. It is in its essence liable to heterogeneous influences, which are gradually being restored and adjusted to its own spatial and temporal circumstances.

Therefore, on this sub-type of the Adriatic chest we can notice different stylistic influences: late-Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and neo-Baroque, which are intertwined in the folk production. Besides this, the domicile carpentry and painting tradition met with the imported influences from the south-east and the north. The former influences were related to the carpentry from Albania, Kosovo, Greece and Macedonia. They had already absorbed some late-Gothic and Renaissance elements from the Adriatic. The latter ones were

¹⁰ The surfaces are painted in stylised flowers flourishing in exuberant Baroque colors, reminiscing of the Alpine and northern European furniture (Lazarević 1962:298-300).

¹¹ Luxurious flower arrangements in picturesque vases were very common motifs of wall painting of Ivan Ranger and his followers in the first half of the 18th century. In the wooden chapel of St. Barbara in Velika Mlaka, which had been painted by unknown masters from 1710 until 1759, tabulat with cassettes was painted in plant motives, and decorations and bouquets of flowers in vases were painted next to the characters of saints on the wooden paneling inside.

related to the painting influences from central Europe, realized through the influence of folk furniture. Stylistic elements gradually entered folk production and were later remade and refashioned many times. For example, the process of the reception of Baroque was long, so it was in a way continued by the refreshment of certain elements with historic impulses. In addition, the appearance of the Dalmatian chest confirms the observation about the merging of Oriental and Baroque motives, as an important factor in creating the Croatian rural Baroque.¹²

Due to all these reasons a single influence from a single direction cannot be singled out in any historical moment, and neither the influence of any single artistic style. The impact of Italian Renaissance on the appearance of the home-made chests was only initial (Gavazzi 1944:VII), and the production which followed reformed it extensively and created a special variety through the assimilation of different cultural elements. Therefore, the Adriatic chest with a painted cover in Dalmatia can be observed as a kind of a stylistic hybrid.

Style as a culturological category

Gavazzi pointed out the complexity of the reception process in Croatian folk art, which took place through interactions of the older core and the new additions, noticing the irregular rhythm of long processes:

„There are actually two tracks that the development of the Croatian folk art followed: one of them is the way of the inherited (the oldest) and the adopted (newer) treasure of the basic figures, ornaments and some of their more or less fixed compositions. It was a kind of *fundus instructus*, which develops, multiplies or diminishes slowly. The other one is the flow of the incalculable number of independent, individual changes, usually smaller ones, less noticeable, but constant, very numerous, which slowly construct and decompose, add to and take away from something which had been received from the ancestors as heritage, and which served as a pattern” (Gavazzi 1944:XXII).

The long duration of very old visual art elements which can be recognized in newer works made some authors think about the ahistoricity of the folk art. Kus Nikolajev holds that it is timeless, without style or chronology, which completely separates it from so-called cultural art. This is proved by its comparison to Neolithic art and the farming culture, i.e. the process of geometrization of forms, common to Neolithic and rural visual art expression (Kus Nikolajev 1940).¹³

On the other hand, it was precisely the mixing of stylistic forms that was taken as an indicator of the so-called timeless character of the folk art. The retardation of stylistic elements of the official art experiencing changes in adaptation to new, more modest circumstances

¹² This was discussed by Kus Nikolajev explaining the appearance of folk Baroque in some parts of northern Croatia (Kus Nikolajev 1929:68).

¹³ Therefore, Neolithic motives are the basis of the folk art. For Gavazzi it was the Old Croatian ornamentation that assimilated some Illyrian-Celtic and even older Balkan-Pannonian traditions.

contributes to this view. These stylistic elements last in a time which does not match the chronology of the stylistic urbanized art (Kus Nikolajev 1940).

Starting from the Wölfflin's understanding of the stylistic features of Renaissance and Baroque in western European (high) art, Senjković pointed to the possibilities of the use of the adjective form of the word Baroque when analyzing the ethnographic material. She pointed out that the differentiation of the periodizational and „ahistorical” (typological) use of the term Baroque can help in recognizing some other elements which could be brought under the common denominator. It can also help in thinking about the justification of the use of the term style, as well as the possibilities of the interpretation it opens (Senjković 1994:136). Naturally, this observation, coming from the reconsideration of Kus Nikolajev's term *rural Baroque*, encompasses the possibilities of its application on some other stylistic terms.

All of this speaks about the unsustainability of the understanding of style as the standardised chronological category in the analysis of the folk art opus. The long duration of certain elements and style pluralism in formative units points to the necessity of consideration of the influence of style in Croatian folk art as a culturological phenomenon. We are actually considering the influences of western European culture which left a trail in the visual art opus of relatively isolated traditional areas. They were accepted indirectly through processes of reinterpretation, depending on local circumstances which had been influenced by occasional contacts with the dominant culture. In that sense, we might talk about the impacts of Humanism and Renaissance or the Baroque (Catholic) Counter-Reformation, about the echoes of Rococo or various historicist reanimations of the past, all the way to the urban interpretations of visual art folklore at the beginning of the 20th century. All of them were a part of the European cultural and visual art currents, so the research of the folk art needs to include the question of relationship between tradition and modernity in a certain period of history, with the emphasis on its regional and local features.

Translated by: Tomislav Redep

4.01 Žene s otoka Paga.

Fotografirao Nedeljko Čaće,
objavljeno 1975. godine
(Narodne nošnje Hrvatske,
Jelka Radauš Ribarić)



4.02 Škrinja

(Etnografski muzej
Split),
Jesenice kod Dugog
Rata, 18. stoljeće.
Fotografirao
Branko Bralić
2010. godine

