

## Experiences, problems and considerations of applied ethnology: modern meanings and manifestations of *national costumes*<sup>1</sup>

- The meaning of concepts *traditional culture* and *national costume*, and the public perception and place of ethnology and cultural anthropology in modern society, are analysed in terms of some selected examples of modern cultural practices involving expert ethnologists (evaluation of folklore creativity, primarily cultural-art amateurism, and variously defined shows and competitions in national costumes). The examples also highlight the interdependence of science/profession and the mentioned cultural practices.

Key words: traditional culture, national costume, folklore performances, applied ethnology

By virtue of the knowledge and experience which they acquire and put to practice in cultural, scientific and/or educational institutions, ethnologists are often engaged as experts<sup>2</sup> evaluating different achievements in the field

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1 For the meaning of the concept *national costume* and its evaluation after the end of the 19th century see in greater detail: Rihtman Auguštin (1976), Kristić (2002/2003), Muraj (2006).

2 Various terms are used for ethnologists, ethnochoreologists, ethnomusicologists or music professors following and evaluating then appearances of folklore groups at folklore festival, or ethnologists following and selecting winners in different categories at national costume festivals – appraisal commission, professional panel, professional commission, professional jury (cf. Rihtman Auguštin 1979: 12). Since they all have a similar meaning – i.e., working body consisting of several persons, experts, specially selected or appointed to perform a job (acc. to <http://hip.novi-liber.hr/index.php?show=search>), I shall mainly use hereinafter the term “panel”. The composition of such bodies and their role will be discussed in greater detail later.

of folklore creativity: folklore performances, national costume shows and similar competitive events, show window and yard arrangements at manifestations of traditional culture, traditional song competitions, folk theatre performances, etc.

In line with identical or similar practices of expert evaluation of art, craft and other achievements and products in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>3</sup> such an involvement is still not only anticipated and demanded in public but also necessary; on the other hand, it raises, among the experts themselves, a number of question regarding the perception, significance and position of ethnology and cultural anthropology in modern society, i.e., the interdependence of science and the mentioned cultural practices.

### **BETWEEN PUBLIC ANTICIPATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT OF ONE'S OWN DISCIPLINE**

Experience acquired over ten years of work in the Ethnographic Museum and, consequently, a somewhat shorter experience in the evaluation of visual art components, i.e., stage application of national costumes at numerous folklore festivals, and participation in the work of panels at various national costume selections and shows, necessarily resulted in an enhanced “interest in the modern life of the constructions of one’s scientific discipline”, as Dunja Rihtman Auguštin so aptly determined and called it (2001: 285)<sup>4</sup>. That is, the practical questions raised daily by users of the Museum, the offers and ways of evaluating donated objects and objects offered for sale, numerous talks with the leaders and members of amateur folklore groups, the noting of the specific ways of their activity and, in line with that, their final presentation along with various other factors, have necessarily raised many issues, offered

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3 In accordance with the prevailing requirements for the purity and authenticity of folk expression, experts - curators of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb issued, as early on as in the nineteen-thirties, certificates for local handicraft, artisan and art products (including *applied handicrafts* and replicas), confirming that they were produced “in line with the patterns and techniques used by peasant women” (e.g., letter of 25 Feb. 1939), so that they could be sold in markets throughout the Municipality of Zagreb as “folk handicrafts”. Even today, for example, some curators are members of the commission for the award of the “traditional craft” or the “applied craft” mark in the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts. Many authors have described the role and significance of ethnographers, folklorists and music experts at folk culture festival organised by Seljačka Sloga [Peasant Union] (cf. Zebec 2002: 93).

4 Tvrtko Zebec highlighted the same thought (2002: 93).

complete or partial answers, or no answers at all, encouraged talks with colleagues, considerations of modern folklore creativity, of the place of cultural-artistic amateurism, of the perception (concept) of *traditional culture* in the general public...

On the other hand, in spite of many political, economic and social changes during the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, traditional culture is still largely perceived in the Croatian public as a static, immutable category, petrified on some relatively fixed area and in a relatively determined time (cf. Rihtman Auguštin 1976a: 11). Following Antun Radić's hypothesis about two cultures – the culture of the people (peasants) and the culture of the upper classes<sup>5</sup> (Rihtman Auguštin. 1997: 35), divided by tradition as the basic determinant (Muraj 1984: 32), and owing to the subsequent development of ethnological thought and practice in Croatia throughout the greater part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the general public traditional culture was always almost exclusively identified with the culture, i.e., way of life of the Croatian countryside, mainly in the period between the two world wars. In the process it was often defined by the following components: customs, songs and dances, national costume, gastronomy and, possibly, architectural forms and dwelling ways. In the background one may discern the patterns of national, sub-national, regional or local identification, and their modern presentation, the quest for one's roots (*that's how our old folks lived*), the wish for a return to nature and healthy life (*eco-ethno*), often including tourist services, small entrepreneurship, family farms etc. Therefore, Dunja Rihtman Auguštin's claim of the late nineteen-seventies that "traditional cultural values and their objectivisations of symbolisations still play an active role in our dynamic society" (1979: 17), still holds water. And today's ethnologist should endeavour to note, record, understand and present these very "objectivisations and symbolisations".

Interest in folk culture and folklore developed alongside with dynamic socio-political circumstances in the turbulent 19<sup>th</sup> century – the development of

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5 In her analysis of Radić's texts, Jasna Čapo Žmegač compared his theoretical and methodological postulates with modern ethnological research. Radić defined ethnology, she emphasises, as a "science of culture", and notes that he used the concept "people" implying a multiple meaning – nationally (having in mind all the people, the nation as a community to which the individual is committed) and as a cultural category – peasantry (1997: 20). Nevertheless, for him "people" still largely means "peasantry", the only persons who have preserved the authentic and pure, old Croatian culture – and that one should therefore speak about peasant culture (1997: 16). However, certain points in Radić's *Foundation*, as well as some other, later texts, show that he did not consistently observe this culture in isolation from social changes.

national ideas in many European states, accelerated economic development, industrialisation and urbanisation brought about significant changes not only in the life of urban communities but also in rural ones. Material on *folk life* began to be collected and recorded, *folk museums* were established, sciences dealing with the research of folk culture and folklore (ethnology, folkloristics) began to develop. A good and in many respects progressive (in his own time and today) foundation of ethnological thought in Croatia was provided by Antun Radić in his *Foundation for the Acquisition and Study of Material on Folk Life* (1879) and attendant methodological notes, calling for the study of cultural aspects in their broadest context in order to gain knowledge on overall life.<sup>6</sup> However, as Jasna Čapo Žmegač (1997) and Dunja Rihtman Auguštin (1997) showed in their work, national ethnological thought and ethnographic practices took a different direction and shaped – over several decades of even state-of-the-art activity – a very specific and relatively warped public perception of our scientific discipline and profession. That is, after Radić’s demanding an integrated account of culture, post-Radić ethnography remained and became an “ethnography of things” (Čapo Žmegač 1997: 18)<sup>7</sup>, within the scope of which “the description of specific aspects of culture isolated from coherent life, especially tangible culture, present in the work of later ethnologists, became an end in itself” (Ibid.) and was not positioned in a specific theoretical framework. Comparing Radić’s theoretical and methodological postulates with modern ethnological research, Čapo Žmegač claimed that “Croatian researchers, specialists and non-specialists alike, did not link the recording of material with theoretical study; the results of field research are published as detailed compilations of the aspects of life in specific places without a unifying interpretational hypothesis (historical, functionalistic, structuralistic or another” (1997: 10-11).

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6 Radić believed that folk life material had to be recorded by persons with a higher degree of education and literacy belonging to the described and studied culture, and such practices were implemented. The material collected through the exhaustive questions listed in the *Foundation* gained its full significance only after the integrally published monographs on folk life of specific localities (Otok, Samobor, Poljica and others). Later nonspecialist ethnographers were replaced by specialist ethnographers, ethnologists, but the theoretical framework in the acquisition and especially in the interpretation of material is still missing (cf. Čapo-Žmegač 1997: 14).

7 The author refers to Radić’s dual influence on Croatian ethnography. On the positive side, this regards modern methodological demands for an integrated presentation of culture; on the negative side, this refers to the very detailed and exhaustive questions resulting subsequently in partial acquisition and presentation of material (Čapo Žmegač 1997: 18).

Such practices were also frequently reflected in acquisition policies, and the permanent and occasional displays of museums at different levels,<sup>8</sup> where the visitors, with no clear indication that the (professional) selection was carried out according to defined criteria, presented mainly representative elements of specific objects or phenomena, models of sorts “gaining over time the significance of reputable, petrified models” (Rihtman Auguštin 1979: 10). These very models, part of the cultural-historical method and practice, influenced the development of a general social understanding of the static and invariable folk, peasant culture and art during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; in some cases the same patterns are also present today. This is why Dunja Rihtman Auguštin spoke about the “constructions of one’s own discipline” (2001: 285) and asked, already in the late nineteen-seventies, in her consideration of the relation between science and cultural practices in the context of changed socio-historical circumstances of the second half of the century, how the profession would respond to these challenges (1979: 9-19).<sup>9</sup> The same challenges are “calling” today, too. Along with experts, acquired material is still described to a considerable extent by amateurs, participants in the described culture, lovers of regional culture, senior staff of local amateur associations; papers are published in journals, local tourist guides and books, local TV and radio stations broadcast *ethno* and folklore programmes... At an ever increasing rate, the same protagonists collect materials in line with their own affinities and criteria, prepare exhibitions in their own facilities, organise folklore performances of different kinds. In the process cooperation with experts – ethnologists and folklorists – in the “field” is sometimes desirable, and sometimes undesirable. The Homeland War and post-war development have given particular impetus to such highlighting and presentation of regional folk traditions, usually from the oldest accessible layer. The return to the native region, to the areas destroyed by war, the symbols of survival and identity, revived first of all the amateur folklore societies (cf. Forjan 2009: 187), and along with them the *customs, songs, dances and costumes* of specific areas. These folklore motifs and models are still understood and presented as outstanding symbols of national,

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8 This problem was discussed at some length in the Ethnographic Museum in 2013 within the scope of the planning of the new permanent display. That is, it is not always easy to present the variability of different cultural manifestations; the average visitor often finds the “reading” of the exhibits difficult with no accompanying interpretations of a curator and without explanatory legends positioning the object in the context of space, time and significance.

9 It was Dunja Rihtman Auguštin that challenged most the value systems, objects, and the methodology and the results of our scientific discipline.

regional and/or local identity, i.e., heritage inherited from the ancestors, a value to be preserved for future generations, a cultural capital which will hopefully make us identifiable in the present-day European network, as something that will make us different and our own in the modern “global village”.

The object of part of the research interest of ethnology and cultural anthropology should be precisely these phenomena, processes, constructions and meanings determining individuals and groups in a specific field and within the context of given, modern socio-political, economic and other conditions. However, in accordance with the assumed public perception of traditional culture and its typical components, the public sometimes has very concrete and – to say the least – interesting expectations of the “ethnologic profession”, and the “expert” is torn between these demands and present-day theoretical achievements in his scientific discipline. That is, what ethnologists ironically call the “curse of the profession” is the prevailing public opinion that *ethnology* and *folklore* are something everybody knows and something that is taken for granted – because all the stakeholders/participants in present-day culture have a direct, acquired or even learned stake in that “story”. On the other hand, when a void appears in the thus imagined ensemble of accepted phenomena and models, assistance is usually sought from the profession. In the process it is expected to produce detailed knowledge of all the aspects and components of traditional culture in all its countless variants – therefore, a singular reconstruction of the all-inclusive former life based on the preserved fragmentary manifestations of the tangible and intangible culture of the Croatian countryside from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Such expectations and demands of the public on the one hand, and, on the other, the desirable and necessary social involvement of experts, especially those active in public scientific and cultural institutions and obliged to be at the disposal of the citizens, as mentioned in the introduction, raise a number of questions about the interdependence of these factors, and about the possible (or actual) role and influence of experts in present-day cultural practices considering their educational background, research affinities and consideration of culture. The fact that the expert is conscious of that is certainly positive, in my view, although that may make the mentioned social commitment more difficult.

In the following chapters I shall present several examples of the social commitment of expert ethnologist in the field of current amateur folklore creativity, based on my own experience.

## CURRENT CULTURAL PRACTICES – WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE APPLICATION OF NATIONAL COSTUMES

### NATIONAL COSTUME AND THE RESPECTIVE MEANINGS

The term *national costume* today refers equally to older and more recent garments worn by the rural population in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, generally, up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. According to some typological and stylistic variants this refers to “everyday” (traditional) garments, occasional, festive (recent) garments, and, finally, to a dress combination of special significance and symbolism applied – throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as today – for folklore-artistic, tourist purposes and/or in the media.<sup>10</sup>

National costume (*traditional garments*) referred primarily to garments produced in rural areas, mainly by cottage industry, from raw materials also produced domestically (hemp, flax, wool, silk). This usually implies the complete complex process of cultivation and processing of textile raw materials, fabric production, sewing and, finally, the adornment of specific clothing items. The numerous technological, ornamental and chromatic varieties visible on national costumes and utility fabrics are due to the fact that the production of fabrics remained largely at the handicraft/cottage industry level up to the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that this primarily “women’s job” in the making of daily and festive clothing for the members of the family allowed the satisfaction of personal creative stimuli.

In terms of the specific features in the production and use of materials, over the past one hundred and fifty years for which more accurate visual data are available the clothing of the local rural population in this part of the world can be divided into an older and a more recent type.<sup>11</sup>

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10 In considering the relation between “national costume” and fashion, Rihtman Auguštin says: “When we say ‘national costume’, we have in mind the clothing, costumes or garments worn by the people” (1976: 114). However, she concludes, the concept “people” was still inadequately/unclearly defined in the beginnings of modern Croatian ethnology; but she also concludes that the difference between urban and rural clothing at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was so obvious that “maybe even because of it they carelessly neglected the multiple meaning of the concept “people” and its inadequacy in defining an object” (Ibid.).

11 At this point due consideration needs to be taken of a fact stressed by Čapo Žmegač, i.e., that the study of the Hungarian rural culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century showed that rural culture, “in the form we have knowledge of from ethnographic descriptions from the early 220<sup>th</sup> century, stabilised as late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (1997: 25).

Traditional clothing (the older type) belongs for the greater part to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is distinguished by the use of clothing items produced almost exclusively by cottage industry, with visible older influences and greater regional similarity. Concurrently with the cessation of the use of traditional garments and the beginning of clothing patterned on the urban population, a new type of clothing began to develop in rural settings. It was shaped by the new socio-economic circumstances (disintegration of the rural family cooperatives, penetration of foreign capital) from the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, greater urban influences manifested in the partial adoption of urban, Central European clothing styles, artisan-made clothing and growing use of industrial fabrics (silk, brocade, velvet, cashmere etc.) in the making of garments, and a variety of haberdashery items (fabric and metal bands, braids, buttons, wires, sequins, etc.) in the adornment of clothing. The rural population adapted the new materials to its own requirements and taste and that, according to some contemporary interpretations, brought about a specific aesthetic degradation of garments or, at any rate, led to a greater differentiation of local clothing variants, largely still present and recognisable as national costumes of a specific locality.

Garments of later date were worn only of festive occasions – church holidays, important dates in one’s annual and lifelong cycle, occasions marking historic events, political feasts, etc. In spite of the “more modern” influences, attacked in writing by many contemporary admirers of authentic folk culture, these garments retained the former customary, unwritten clothing patterns; moreover, owing to the growing diversity of materials and ornaments, rural people developed new rules standardised by the community.<sup>12</sup>

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12 Thus, publications of the Peasants’ Union (Seljačka sloga) stressed the importance of working, everyday clothes over festive dress made also of industrial fabrics; they criticised inwoven or embroidered larger floral motifs on costumes from Posavina and the Zagreb environs, the urban design of girls’ hair (curling irons) etc. (cf. Kristić 2002/2003); on the other hand, the examples mentioned today were quite acceptable and desirable as a style variant. At this point I would also like to highlight an essential fact: in the instructions for the Festival in 1926 the choirs were requested “to wear festive folk garments *such as worn at home on Sunday and on major holidays; in areas where national costume was not longer fashionable, the singers had to borrow it from old male and female peasants who had kept it as a cherished memory and stored it in their chests. If, on the other hand, folk garments were no longer worn in the village, the singers from that village had to sew costumes such as worn in that area (drawing upon the memory of older people). They could also wear costumes from a neighbouring area if they had kept their pure, Croatian folk features*”. (Kristić 2002/2003: 102 acc. to Matz 1929: 104). This shows not only that there were no longer “folk clothes” in some area (which is well known) but also that specific garment reconstructions were requested



In its primary function the national costume was an indicator of the social, age, property, family and/or momentary life status of its wearer. This referred in particular to girls and married women whose clothing, especially the colours and adornment, hairdo or intricate headgear, reflected the actual life situation and stressed all the subsequent changes (girlhood, marriage age, status of young married women, childbirth, mourning etc.).

Owing to the complex socio-political changes in the area over the past one hundred and fifty years national costume – being one of the most visible aspects of tangible culture – was continuously understood, worn and presented, both by the political and cultural elites (“top down”) and the people (“bottom up”) as an outstanding symbol of national (or regional) identity. In spite of the many changes to which it was inevitably exposed over the said period (and in spite of all ideas about its invariability!), national costume still carries the fundamental features of national, Croatian culture, as a determinant of identity, or as the authentic, old-time, local product of the Croatian countryside, the heritage of our ancestors or a kind of cultural capital which will hopefully make us recognisable on the present-day European scale. It is in the context of the foregoing that one needs to regard, evaluate and interpret the current use of national costumes in different occasions of public nature (folklore stage application, events) as well as of private nature (clothing worn in specific events in life, e.g., baptism, wedding, funeral etc.), and in terms of its different possible functions (related to identity, art, politics, entertainment, tourism).

### **THE ETHNOLOGIST AND ETHNOLOGY IN PRACTICE**

Along with the primary museum activities focused on the research, acquisition, processing and presentation of material and related to the collections of objects entrusted to him, the ethnologist employed in a museum also comes across, in his work, to various questions of the museum users. Since my responsibilities include four textile collections – two of them devoted to national costume<sup>13</sup> - questions are most frequently related to that segment, and

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at the time; the reconstructions may have resulted in the later accepted national costume models. Present-day experts would hardly agree to the “borrowing” of clothing from a neighbouring area.

13 Collection of national costumes of Eastern Croatia (Slavonia, Western Sirmium and Baranja); collection of the folk costumes of the Croatian diaspora; collection of mats and covers; and collection of bags. The collections comprise a total of almost 8,000 objects.

regard, for instance, the following:

- general possibilities, selection and possible “rules” in the reconstruction of specific types of clothing or clothing elements in the field;
- possibilities and conditions in the use of museum objects for reconstruction purposes;
- possibilities of purchasing specific textile raw materials and establishment of contacts with the field, i.e., with individuals who currently control the (traditional) textile skills in producing and adorning costumes, making parts of girls’ hairdos and headgear, jewellery, footwear etc;
- value of specific parts of clothing;<sup>14</sup> purchasing offers to the Museum;
- completion of typologically and stylistically balanced clothing and jewellery combinations for onstage folklore application
- “traditional make-up”, stage make-up etc.

Most of the user demands are met up to high standards and successfully, in accordance with the *Museum Act (Official Gazette 142/98, 65/09)* and the *Regulations regarding the conditions and the way of gaining insight into the museum material and documentation (Official Gazette, 115/01)*, as confirmed by later contacts, presentations and field reflections, or year-long continuous cooperation. In line with a somewhat warped understanding of the ethnological science/profession, inquiries were received, for instance, on *the garb worn by the Croats at the time of their settlement in the area in the 7<sup>th</sup> century*. Demands also involved specific confirmation of authenticity or exclusiveness of given objects in a given area or locality. From the mentioned examples of founded and unfounded, differently formulated questions and user demands, the ethnologist notes specific patterns and symbolic value systems formed dependently on certain circumstances, such as the place and specific, local socio-political conditions, educational background and functions of given persons, the significance of cultural-artistic amateurism in a given area, etc.

Other examples include the implementation of the science/profession in everyday cultural practices: the evaluation of folklore art, primarily of cultural-artistic amateurism, and differently defined national costume shows and competitions.

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14 As a rule, curators do not provide appraisals of the market value of specific objects, unless their purchase for the holdings is involved.

## 1. FESTIVALS OF AMATEUR FOLKLORE CREATIVITY

In accordance with their knowledge and personal affinities, and specific specialisation within the profession, some ethnologists/museum experts are specially involved in the system evaluating the performance and achievement of amateur folklore societies at differently ranked folklore festivals.

While the scientific understanding of folklore also implies, for instance, present-day social dynamics and communication through symbol systems (and one could speak, e.g., about actual political folklore), in line with the prevailing perception of the value of traditional culture, the public understands folklore and folklore creativity in terms of more or less artistically stylised achievements adapted to the stage, of performances of songs and dances, and presentation of customs in appropriate national costumes.<sup>15</sup> The same framework regards the present-day activity of folklore societies throughout Croatia and beyond.

Many distinguished Croatian experts – ethnologists, ethnochoreologists, ethnomusicologists, folklorists (cf. Zebec 2002: 94)<sup>16</sup> have discussed the system, development, significance and influence of festivals, the roots of which can be found in the already mentioned festivals of peasant culture organised by the *Peasant Unity* in the nineteen-twenties and –thirties, followed by major regional festivals founded mainly in the late nineteen-sixties and, finally, the International Folklore Festival in Zagreb, the highest recognition of the value of the participating societies (in terms of the valid concept of authenticity). Therefore, I shall consider folklore and folklorism in greater detail. Let me just draw attention to the fact that, in line with the foregoing considerations, these festivals established the “top down” and accepted the “bottom up” principle, and set in a model of presentation of older regional tradition, “demanding” in particular the authenticity and representative character of expression to be appraised by the appointed expert panels. In discussing the modern challenges of applied folkloristics and ethnology Tvrtko Zebec considers,

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15 See, for example, [http://www.zbornica.com/index.php?option=com\\_zoo&task=item\\_id=421](http://www.zbornica.com/index.php?option=com_zoo&task=item_id=421) (19 Oct. 2014); an interesting example of the romantic understanding of folklore, of folk creativity and, along the same line, the task of the “folklore science”; <http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folklor> (19.10.2014.).

16 E.g., under the influence of the German folklorist Hermann Bausinger, Stjepan Sremac,, Dunja Rihtman Auguštin, Grozdana Marošević, Naila Ceribašić, Tvrtko Zebec and others; Dunja Rihtman Auguštin and Maja Bošković Stulli analysed the relation between folklore and folklorism particularly intensively in the nineteen-seventies.

generally and referring to specific examples, the very question of authenticity, without a clear definition and consensus about its significance of all the protagonists, and analyses the possible evaluation of artistic achievements attained on the basis of some recent phenomena and with a new authenticity of its kind, reached by the “force of empathy” (Rittig 1970: 21) – which could open up an avenue to the practical application of science (Zebec 2002: 98, 101-103).

Modern folklore art is defined by the specific development of folklore cultural-artistic creativity in Croatia, by the possible functions of folklore (identity-wise, artistic, ludic/dance, entertainment, socialisation, travel, psychological, political, commercial-tourist), and by the different levels and possibilities of action and presentation. Its protagonists are equally, for example, a major Zagreb folklore ensemble (which performs *choreographed folklore*, consists mainly of younger members, has professional and art leaders for specific components of its shows, enjoys not only a substantial annual budget but also an extensive supply of its own, authentic or reconstructed national costumes, and regularly prepares new numbers) and a smaller cultural and performing society at the fringe of Croatia (it performs *authentic folklore* with minimum interventions by its leader; it consists of villagers of varying age which provides for a direct and natural transfer of the “traditions” to the younger generations; it is funded from the budget of the local self-government and receives several thousand *kuna* for its overall activity; the national costumes in which they appear are mainly private property, and new clothing items are often made independently and paid from their own pockets; they mainly appear in their village and in the region, and occasionally at major regional festivals in Croatia or – as they always proudly point out when talking about the history of their society – at the International Folklore Festival in Zagreb). In both cases there are common and distinctive elements regarding significance and activity in cultural-artistic creativity. Similarly, one also has to bear in mind the great number of vocal and instrumental ensembles which are also active in folklore art, i.e., cultural-artistic amateurism, by performing traditional or modern versions of songs and compositions. The question is how ethnologists, ethnomusicologists, ethnochoreologists, with their already mentioned different views and positions, relate to their activity bearing in mind the foregoing considerations and the fact that it is precisely *folklore* that is the most widespread form of amateur cultural-artistic creativity and citizen involvement.

Dance, choreography and music (artistic interpretations or adaptations, vocal and/or instrumental performance), and the ways national costumes are used (choice, regularity and visual effects created by such choice, visual character), as equal components of the folklore number/performance, each in its own way and to a specific extent (depending on the creator, the author), contribute to the artistic stage effect; this is why since the nineteen-nineties performances at local and county festivals are monitored by three members – for dance (ethnochoreologists from the Institute of Ethnology and Folkloristics), music (ethnomusicologists from the Institute of Ethnology and Folkloristics) and costume (ethnologists from the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, local regional or town museums, the Rental Workshop of National Costumes).<sup>17</sup> Immediately after the festival/concert the members of the panel have to comment every performance and, if necessary, give the present leaders guidelines for future work. These discussions, usually called “round tables”, and important for many reasons: two-way communication also provides new knowledge to the representatives of society and experts alike, knowledge not only of practical nature but also a full symbolic system of significance and values in the background of the activity of a community.

National costume (whether authentic, several decades old, or newly made) and stage costume, “stage clothing” (stylised clothing for specific types of performances: professional and urban dances, modern dances inspired by the folk dance heritage), are a component and equivalent part of the complete performance). Just as a choreographer is “provided for” for choreographic requirements, a musical associate and/or singing coach should (especially with new numbers) devote equal attention to the selection of appropriate and high quality solution for the clothing component. Since specific localities, especially more limited areas, Croatian (micro)regions are researched/studied at an ever increasing rate, without initially considering the clothing segment, generalised clothing variants are becoming more and more common, covering larger areas, i.e., they are not specifically the costumes of a defined locality. The thorough completion of the clothing of a given type, including all its components, certainly requires a lot of effort and, most of all, adequate funding, and most societies cannot afford the venture. However, just as realistic frameworks are taken into account in the selection of numbers and programme drafting, e.g., the number and proportion of female and male members, age structure, quality of the singers for solo passages,

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<sup>17</sup> For more see: Zebec 2002: 97.

due attention also has to be paid to the (in)existence of appropriate clothing, (im)possibility of completing/making the required costumes, and the need to provide additional clothing and adornment items. Although the necessary clothing can possibly be borrowed from a specific institution or workshop,<sup>18</sup> another society or private persons, additional effort is required in considering and completing the costume represented by the number. This also reflects the knowledge, skill and artistic consideration of the choreographer, leader or costume designer, especially in the use of the visual component in the composition of specific stage scenes of a folklore show.

Bearing in mind the equally valuable authentic and choreographed folklore, evaluation takes into account the tidiness and completeness of the presented clothing, its typological and stylistic homogeneity, the variety of the presented variants and their possible use in the design of specific stage scenes. Depending on these factors, the comments of the member of the panel covers a broad range of points, from, e.g., criticism because of untidy clothing to praise for the skilful use of national costumes in certain stage scenes and the overall visual stage impression. In the process the evaluator tries to avoid acting as “folklore police” (as a colleague said with a dose of irony); instead, he must take into account all the realistic and symbolic circumstances of every performance, i.e., observe every group in accordance with its specific situation. Because of that the member of the panel sometimes considers in greater detail the working conditions, costume ownership and background value systems (in this regard he will certainly be assisted by the previous experience of the members of an urban cultural and performing society). Occasionally, for example, a society may have considered completing the national costume for a performance but lacked the necessary funding, which is why it used a particular type of clothing for the show; there are also positive examples of reconstruction and production of parts of costumes or even whole sets by the members of the society.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned, such an open approach has turned out to be mutually benefi-

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18 Complete costume sets or single items can be rented from the Rental Workshop of National Costumes in Zagreb, an institution specialised for acquiring, renting, making (restructuring), professional protection (restoration) of folklore costumes and traditional textile products used for folklore shows, stage performances and other applications. The Rental Workshop was set up in 1948 and today its collection includes more than 23,000 items (for more see <http://www.pirn.hr/hr>). Tomislav Miličević's *Kolovrat Workshop* in Velika Gorica also makes and rents costumes.

19 For more on the revitalisation of traditional textile skills see. Forjan 2009: 187-191).

cial and acceptable; it resulted in a greater involvement of museum experts and frequent use of museum exhibits as models for costume reconstruction.<sup>20</sup> This opens up possibilities for completing and presenting different clothing combinations and for gradual departure from clothing models established as the only authentic and unchangeable, sometimes even very unified and uniform models.<sup>21</sup> However, the users are not forced to accept given solutions; instead, other options are suggested. Some examples are described below.

The members of the expert panel for the musical, dance and visual performance components regularly highlight to the leaders of children's groups the need to prepare "small" performances with small performers (to put it picturously, "for children by children"), and clothe them accordingly. Regarding the use of national costume, great effort and dedication are obviously called for by the leaders, parents and other adult members of the group to secure a good visual impression of the children's group on the stage. It is of no importance if the costumes are borrowed from institutions, completed/borrowed from several local heritage societies or, in a stylised form, (un)skilfully made for the small performers. Whatever the variant used in preparing and choosing costumes, the individual parts of the costume still need to be adapted to the height and age of the performers. In the absence of authentic footwear, decent modern footwear or ballet slippers will fully meet the stage requirements. As recommended, the small performers, children, should increasingly be given traditional toys, flutes and other objects used daily by their ancestors.

Since almost uniform traditional clothing has been present on the stage for quite a few years (smaller children in one-piece, longer or shorter linen shirts; bigger children in clothing worn by adults), new solutions keep coming up – good and bad ones alike. It is known that for the greater part of the 20<sup>th</sup>

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20 In some parts of Slavonia national costumes are continuously made for the younger members of the family, especially those who are members of folklore groups, and such examples could be considered in more precise terms as present-day making of national costumes.

21 For example, Ivan Ivančan's well-known choreography for the "Ražanac wheel dance", developed originally for the "*Joža Vlahović*" cultural and performing society and an exclusively female ensemble, became and remained the constant source/object of copying in terms of its choreographic, performance and visual expression. Considering the complex socio-historical circumstances of the studied period and the study itself, it is obvious that Ivančan chose for this number somewhat more recent clothing sewn from industrial fabrics of dark colours – such as worn, at any rate, by older peasant women in the period under consideration. All the later and even the current performances are characterised by the use of identical clothing; there are even examples of its recent "reconstruction".

century children wore urban (so-called civil) clothes every day; therefore, leaders and other people working with children's groups need to consider also the use of such clothing on stage. Admittedly, it does not present many typological differences such as the national costumes of Croatian regions and – in addition to easier wearing and the presentation of something different and new on the stage – it would satisfy the economic category, i.e., it would be applicable to different performances. Of course, all that is not focused on displacing national costumes off the stage – especially if the performance includes games, pageants, songs and dances from areas amply “covered” by authentic specimens of national costumes (parts of central, north-western and lowland Croatia) where they are still made. Recent civil clothing is a more appropriate solution than certain existing “variations on the theme of adult clothing” in areas where traditional clothing disappeared from daily use a long time ago; what is worn as “national costume” of later date was not used every day but it was almost exclusively festive dress and/or clothing used for folklore stage presentations. At any rate, ethnologists – primarily museum experts capable of providing insight into authentic specimens – need to be consulted when preparing and making such clothing.

The area of Slavonia, with quite a number of typological, stylistic and local costume variants, is most frequently presented with a general selection of songs and dances performed in traditional type garments typical of Eastern Brodsko Posavlje (often irregularly complete) even when vocal-instrumental and dance elements originate from another area. In such cases, clothing should be balanced with the performed repertoire bearing in mind micro-regional, local variants of dress and adornment.

Folklore groups of ethnic minorities, especially Czechs and Slovaks, appear in a variant of attractive stage costumes which can be traced to the dress created in their ethnic motherland during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century owing to the considerable influence of the Russian folklore school, substantially altered and simplified but not, unfortunately, following the true traditional dress of the ethnic motherland or of their Croatian abode. The use of materials with the same pattern enhances the impression of uniformity and under-individuality of the wearer. The same solution is favoured by almost every folklore group of ethnic minorities in Croatia; therefore, as a rule, what is advised – considering the repertoire – is the use of traditional dress such as worn in their ethnic motherland or, even better, the dress worn by the members of the community in Croatia during the latest phase of its everyday use.



As opposed to this, obviously, the original work of the choreographer is the entity reflecting his artistic signature. As a rule, the many choreographies created during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century followed the rather uniform national costumes and hairdos/headgear with an identical quantity of jewellery. Modern creativity understands the visual component as broad space for the application of the leader's knowledge and creativity – resulting in interesting solutions and stage images offering the audience an insight into different clothing variants in Croatia.

With these selected examples I have tried to point out different practices in the consideration and use of national dress and stage costumes within the scope of amateur cultural and performing creativity, and the potential advisory role of the expert ethnologist monitoring and evaluating the visual component of the performance.

## 2. NATIONAL COSTUME COMPETITIONS: VALUE SYSTEM AND PRESENTATION

From the very beginning the programmes of the major folklore festival - *Vinkovačke Jeseni* in Vinkovci, *Đakovački Vezovi* in Đakovo, *Šokačko Sijelo* in Županja, *Brodsko Kolo* in Slavonski Brod – have include elections of girls, married women and/or young men in national costumes.<sup>22</sup> They have always been of a competitive character: panels of varying composition usually awarded prizes to three male or female participants.

The best account of the origins of such programmes was published by the first Slavonian ethnologist Zdenka Lechner<sup>23</sup> In the case of Đakovo, says Lechner, the idea derived from the local tourist workers. Prompted by the *Miss* competitions, and trying to justify their proposal by referring to the “interest of foreign visitors” (Lechner 2010: 57) and the awards won by the Đakovo costume at top level international competitions, they suggested the “election of beautiful girls in national costumes (Ibid.) and presented the ethnologist with an

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22 Such competitions are particularly popular in Slavonia.

23 The article was published as far back as 1981 in the Proceedings of the 23rd Congress of the Folklorist Federation of Yugoslavia (Slavonski Brod 1976; Zagreb 1981); I have used the reprint published in 2010 in the *Yearbook* of the Croatian Cultural Society (*Matica Hrvatska*), Vinkovci Branch, 27: 57-62.

accomplished fact” (Ibid.)<sup>24</sup> The last claim, and her entire text written as far back in 1981, suggests disagreement with the concept of such performances. Thus, as Lechner points out, in the first year of elections for the most beautiful Slavonian girl in national costume, there was only one ethnologist among the five members of the panel, and he “tried to pinpoint the acceptable sense and purpose of the event” (2010: 59). Since the national costume was initially only one of the appraisal criteria, while equal importance was attributed to the beauty of the face and the well-proportioned body, gracious movement and the general impression, Lechner eventually found an acceptable sense and purpose of the event in the increasingly important role of the ethnologist, who became the chairman of the panel, corrected certain irregularities (typologically and stylistically uniform dress, disorderly headgear, i.e., *modern hairdos*, lack of knowledge regarding the fundamental characteristics of the costume etc.) and interviewed the competitors. Lechner even found a positive example at the *Slavonian Youth and Beauty Contest* at Stari Mikanovci,<sup>25</sup> where the competitors were sent questions, a few days before the event, related to knowledge of the different parts of national costumes, appropriate headgear and footwear, and generally traditional textile handiwork.<sup>26</sup> Pointing out that over time the election of beauties “was replaced by the awareness that the contestants need to be groomed the way people were dressed and trimmed while national costume was worn all the time, or matching the represented character and function”, Lechner concludes that “the two Slavonian folklore festivals are geared to tradition.”

Since such events were originally envisaged as elections of the most beautiful girls in national costumes, the term *belles* became established even later when the costume became the dominant and decisive appraisal criterion.

The observation of current practices easily shows that there are no major changes or shifts: elections are still in similar circumstances and with the same value system, they attract considerable attention of the public (audiences and the media), and are associated with speculations about the results before and

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24 Also according to Lechner, a similar proposal by the organisers of *Vinkovačke Jeseni* failed because of the opposition of the shocked expert ethnologists (2010: 58)

25 The event was organised in the winter period during carnival, but under the aegis of *Vinkovačke Jeseni*.

26 E.g.: “list the types of traditional cotton embroidered clothes in terms of handiwork”; “list the name of various patterns”; “list the kinds of weave used for working and festive skirts”; “what do you know about silkworm breeding and the obtaining of silk thread?” (Lechner 2010: 62)

after the contest. Since I have been involved during the past few years in the *Šokački Cvit* contest,<sup>27</sup> part of the *Šokačko Sijelo* event in Županja,<sup>28</sup> I shall analyse several segments of the contest which also reflect the public perception of the ethnological profession and its social involvement.

Generally speaking, this event is one of the most interesting parts of *Šokačko Sijelo* and, because of the specific characteristics of the programme – the election of the most beautiful girl / *Šokica* in national costume – attracts the great interest of audiences and the media. The contest was held during several decades within the scope of the popular show called *Froline Večeri*,<sup>29</sup> then as an independent event, or as part of the opening ceremony of *Šokačko Sijelo* – the last depending on available funding.

Owing to the lack of clear contest propositions, the current and often varied criteria reflect the affinities of the current programme coordinator.<sup>30</sup> Whereas

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27 At the invitation of the organisers I accepted along with some dedicated friends to participate in the preparation of the event and in the contest in order to contribute to the quality of the programme and the actual contest as ethnologist, curator of the Ethnological Museum in Zagreb. I must also mention the fact that I was born in Županja and was a member of the cultural and performing society “*Kristal-Sladorana*”.

28 *Šokačko Sijelo* [*Šokci – Croatian ethnic group in Slavonia, Baranja and Sirmium*] is an event dedicated to the traditional culture of Bosanska Posavina held in Županja continuously since 1968, with a varying number of performances, during the carnival. The promoters and the organisers of the event wanted, to put it picturesquely, to evoke and present the experience of *Šokadija* (the land of the *Šokci*), in “Slavonian-Šokci garb and spirit”. Initially, only folklore events were held with performances by cultural and performing societies from the Municipality of Županja, and, occasionally, guest groups from different parts of Yugoslavia. However, owing to ever greater interest the programme of *Šokačko Sijelo* began to include new events. They included the election of the most beautiful girl, *Šokica* and the most handsome young man, *Šokac*, in traditional (national) costume, which soon developed into a separate event called *Šokački Cvit* (in recent years only the most beautiful girl in national costume has been elected). In the nineteen-seventies the programme of *Sijelo* was extended to ethnographic and economic exhibitions which promoted in specific ways the evaluation of the *Šokci* written and spoken word (*Malo Literarno Sijelo*, *Sijelo pučkih pisaca*), theatre and amusement (theatrical performances, fancy dress balls, *Seljačka Zabava*), and stage presentations of events/chores from peasant life of the *Šokci* (*Carnival Ride*, *Pig Butchering*, *Brandy Making*, *Horsemen’s Fire*).

29 A gala dinner party with interesting numbers (*belle* contest, tombola [raffle] etc.) organised and compèred by the popular *Florijan Frola Traktorista* [alias the painter Ivan Herman], MC of the very popular comedy show “*Tud, vud, nud – vam, nam tam*” broadcast by the local radio station.

30 During the past several years the event has been prepared and coordinated by Ivan Zlatić, wardrobe master of the Cultural and Performing Society “*Kristal-Sladorana*”, who endeavours to

at similar contests – along with the achieved general impression – the fundamental evaluation criterion are the presented national costumes, that was not for a long time the case in this instance – the view that the “Belle of *Sijelo*” be elected prevailed. Owing to this, the contestants also included girls wearing typologically and stylistically uneven clothing combinations and new clothing variants, hardly resembling, in some cases, a general stylised Slavonian national costume. Moreover, the practice of presenting exclusively the most festive variant became the standard, especially with regard to the region of Županjska Posavina. Similarly, most of the contestants were from the town of Županja, fewer from the surrounding villages, and even fewer from other parts of Slavonia. In line with this, most of the awards (the winner, awarded the title of *Šokački Cvit* plus two runners-up) went to the girls from Županja, and this increasingly put off other participants from, e.g., Vinkovci, Slavon-ski Brod or Đakovo, and reduced the presentation of less festive, working or recent clothing.

The body in charge of the election in Županja is also interesting. Occasionally the winner(s) were decided by the audience in the hall or at the dinner, and they voted on slips; sometimes the panel consisted of members of different professional or other backgrounds and, therefore, competences (e.g., an ethnologist,<sup>31</sup> last year’s winner, sponsor representatives, prominent politicians or businessmen, representatives of the two cultural and performing societies in Županja, a spectator picked at random, etc.). In this way the organiser endeavoured to meet specific entertainment demands and, primarily commitments to the sponsors.<sup>32</sup> Formed in this way, the panel could hardly agree the appraisal and final election criteria; thus, after the addition of points, in most cases in terms of the *costume-girl’s appearance-overall impression* categories, the winner in some cases did not wear complete, well-arranged and representative clothing. The view that the most beautiful girl is being elected prevails in part of the public, and that poses no problem.<sup>33</sup> However, the reaction of the more knowledgeable, of the better connoisseurs

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present, at the contest, girls in properly completed variants of traditional costumes in Županja and the greater area.

31 A woman ethnologist from the Stjepan Gruber Regional Museum and/or the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb.

32 The events is mainly funded by sponsors.

33 The problem arises after the awards because everybody finds his/her choice to be “the most beautiful”.

of national costume, was sometimes very severe. Moreover, the host always expects a “local” winner or at least one runner-up – which is also the practice at other contests. An additional problem is the name of the mixed panel, called “expert” (even reporters call it that way), and part of the public expects “expert ethnological support” failing to note that the ethnologist is only one of the several members of the panel. Since I was for several years the chairman of the panel, I used to receive a number of questions and criticisms such as: “You call this expert!?”; “Where did you look?”; “How could she win with braids worn by little girls?” Therefore, part of the informed public expected the expert ethnologist a correction of the election such as described as far back as the nineteen-eighties by Zdenka Lechner and as present at other Slavonian elections.<sup>34</sup>

In 2011 and 2012 the panel included experts (two ethnologists and one student of ethnology and cultural anthropology), and relied in its judgment mainly on the presented traditional costume.<sup>35</sup> In 2012, when the *Šokački Cvit* title was awarded to a girl wearing traditional garb, the embroidered skirt (*vezena skuta*) from the Sirmian village of Bapska, the audience remained speechless for a moment because the victory of a traditional clothing type was not expected at such a contest. The members of the panel based their decision on the value of the costume and its share in the region, as well as

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34 I believe that it would be important to describe the case of a similar contest of young women and men in national costumes held at the *Đakovački Vezovi* festival. Namely, obviously trying to avoid the possible negative connotations of the election of “belles and beaux”, and emphasising the significance of costumes, at one moment the organisers gave the event the awkward, still actual name of “Best worn traditional costume”. Also interestingly, the decision of the three-member expert ethnologist panel based on interviews with the applicants/participants held the whole afternoon is outshone, at the ceremonial show *Slavonijo zemljo plemenita (Noble Slavonian Land)* which includes the election, by the decision of the Đakovo mayor to elect the *Miss of Đakovački Vezovi* from among the participating girls. She then gets the informal title of the most beautiful girl of Slavonia, Baranja and Sirmium, and wins greater media attention. This can be explained as the domination of the entertainment element or a kind of political use of the event for populist purposes. At the same time, awards could be given to more girls.

35 Evaluation criteria included the typological and stylistic uniformity of the traditional costume, share of specific regional and/or local clothing variants, orderliness and knowledge of the traditional garb worn (that has never been taken as decisive as some girls fear public appearance and are insecure), and appearance and bearing on the stage, i.e., “general impression”. Likewise, ethnologists did not award points in terms of specific categories but, rather, “short listed” a few contestants during informal interviews. Interestingly, the expert views were as a rule almost completely uniform and only the order of the contestants was agreed.

on the promotion of subsequent participation of girls from different parts of Šokadija, and positive evaluation of the presentation of different, less typical but “traditionally correct” clothing variants. The joint dedication of the organisers, coordinators and expert ethnologists eventually prevailed, partly, over the image of “uniformed” festive clothing, especially in the Županja region, and the completion and presentation of traditional garb have progressed considerably in recent years.<sup>36</sup> The purpose of such programmes still partly matches Zdenka Lechner’s idea of thirty years ago: stimulate local population, especially younger generations, evaluate and properly reconstruct traditional clothing, and present it on stage in its original form. In this regard, it was suggested to the organiser to introduce another award – for a girl deserving particular praise, focused on rewarding, for instance, the oldest clothing, top quality reconstructions (e.g., parts of clothing, footwear, hairdo, jewellery), other clothing types (e.g., the traditional *vezenka*, embroidered skirt; variants of mourning clothes or other customary clothing). The introduction of independent presentation of costumes on stage (the girls explain the occasion on which the clothing is worn, describe the costume parts and hairdo, and possible accessories), as practiced at similar contests, indicated not only the wealth of local, folk names for individual clothing elements, materials and techniques in making and adorning traditional garb, but also the diversity of the local and regional idiom spoken by the Šokci. It also contributed to the dynamism and attractiveness of the event, making it more likable to the audience and promoting a good mood among the contestants. In this way the *Šokački Cvit* contest establishes a successful balance of the expected expert, ethnological, educational and entertainment components of an event of this type.

### 3. REVIEW OF RECONSTRUCTED NATIONAL COSTUMES – POSITIVE EXAMPLES AND PRACTICES

The “Reconstructing Heritage” (*Obnavljamo baštinu*) event – a review of reconstructed national costumes of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, initiated by the International Centre for Services in Culture, the Zagreb Rental and Costume Workshop, realised in late 2011 in cooperation with the “Lovor” Cultural and Performing Society from Trnjeni, was the first contest devoted

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<sup>36</sup> More precisely, the responsible individuals in Županja only had to be prompted to present other clothing variants.

exclusively to the wearers of traditional textile skills, i.e., individuals, groups and/or associations involved in the amateur making of national costumes. The objective was the presentation of past successful achievements – new/reconstructed sets or parts of national costumes, attendant jewellery and headgear – and the stimulation of modern textile handwork and the making of clothes in line with traditional patterns (cf. Bušić 2013: 36). The programme and the review were designed by Josip Forjan, manager of the Rental Workshop of National Costumes.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia has recognised and financially supported the importance of this event with clearly, expertly defined contest propositions; it evaluates and rewards the best and most valuable reconstructions or new productions of parts of clothing, and not, as is usually the case at many shows and events throughout lowland Croatia, the *most beautiful* costume wearer (girl, married woman or young man).

Thanks to the symbolic significance and value national costumes enjoy in our people, in many Slavonian, Baranja and Sirmian villages and towns textile handwork and the making of national costumes have survived to the present day and were not interrupted even during the Homeland War and exile. The revival of traditional textile skills was initiated already among the exiled and displaced population, and partly supported and expertly guided by some museum and similar institutions. It intensified especially in post-war years when people returned to their homes and to the areas affected by war. It was initiated for practical and economic reasons (lack of dresses/costumes for folklore events; additional funding sources), and soon spread to areas in which the skills of making and adorning garb had died out during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The phenomenon soon became a specific cultural movement focused on the renovation of national costumes as a symbol of identity and survival. New generations successfully build and preserve tradition on such foundations. Of course, the present-day manufacture of textiles, and the making and reconstruction of national costumes is conditioned by and adjusted to their new uses – primarily to folklore, stage applications (cf. Forjan 2009: 187-188).

The past accomplishment in the reconstruction, and the making and adornment of national costumes, were presented within the scope of the *Reconstructing Heritage* at the first Review of Reconstructed Costumes of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium Other Croatian regions, and expatriate Croats in other countries, also showed enhanced interest in participating in the pro-

ject, and after two years the review was no longer limited to Eastern Croatia.

The organisers laid down specific and precise propositions for the event:

- only persons, groups or associations dealing on an amateur basis with the making of national costumes are eligible to enter the contest;
- the contestant can apply only one costume combination, completed exclusively from reconstructed, newly-made parts of costumes and adornments (exceptionally, footwear, jewellery, handbags and men's head-dress can be handcrafted);

So far four reviews have been held. As a rule, they are monitored by a three-member expert panel consisting of women ethnologists (from the Đakovština Museum, Đakovo, the Rental Workshop of National Costumes and the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb). On the basis of the evaluated quality and authenticity<sup>37</sup> in the making and adornment, they decide the awards to the applied individuals, groups or associations participating in the making of the costumes.

Finally, as a particular value of the *Obnavljamo Baštinu* event one should enhance the positive, singular *non-competitive* attitude of all the applicants. Owing to the long-standing interest in traditional textile skills and concrete work in the making and adorning of costumes, most participants know one another well, consult one another, exchange tools and raw materials, and even cooperate in joint programmes. Accordingly, they are more than aware of the value and quality of the applied “handworks”, invested time, effort, patience and motivation.

At this point the importance of positive evaluation of past accomplishments needs to be emphasised once again. The reconstructions of national costumes must be encouraged, and local folklore groups and dedicated individuals stimulated to preserve and re-evaluate the traditional dress of their region and its original presentation on the stage. This implies a high standard of cooperation between specialised institutions, ethnologists (in interpretation, evaluation and presentation) and all stakeholders “in the field” (in terms of performance, use, significance, presentation).

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37 In this context *authenticity* can imply the most faithful replica of the original on which the new object is based. In most cases new specimens are made from original ones (damaged by use or sometimes inadequate, usually privately owned). It also implies the use of new patterns and motifs which do not depart too much from the given typological and stylistic features of older specimens (in the “traditional spirit”).



## CONCLUSION

The described examples of folklore art – the festivals of amateur cultural and performing activities, and national costume contests – have highlighted the current spectrum of activity and the demanded and anticipated dedication of expert ethnologists demanded by the public.

Aware that certain manifestations of tangible and intangible culture (mainly presented at such performances and cultivated as *authentic and inalterable* national costumes, customs, songs, dances, music) are partly the models/products of the development of his scientific discipline, well accepted by the people and *necessarily exposed to changes*, owing to his primary interest in the culture and life of modern man the expert cannot tolerate any neglect of the existence, number and influence of such factors. Professional dedication contributes to the better perception of the matter but also raises a number of question about the expert's possible and allowable influences on a specific cultural practice. By participating (observing, suggesting, interpreting) experts still necessarily influence (modern) cultural processes/practices to a certain extent. The presented examples clearly show that the expert's role, however "professional", is not always unequivocal, and that it is in turn conditioned by general circumstances of social involvement (festivals, reviews, private inquiries) and the problems/requirements of the users. Thus, the evaluation of folklore creativity at different events recognises the realistic possibilities regarding the activity and presentation of performers/groups (festival context; funding; the need to complete the making or complementing costumes for several members; private or public costume ownership; conditions in war-affected areas). In the process, one endeavours to suggest what could improve their future work in given circumstances. On the other hand, individual, targeted demands for professional help and/or evaluation of reconstructed costumes (without temporal, financial or quantitative constraints; with a studious approach to costume making in accordance with the authentic traditional model, etc.) open up possibilities for a more precise, more studious approach, i.e., influence of the profession and, along the same line, for final evaluation. At elections of *belles* in national costume the expert still finds a niche for his role, and puts it to practice, in circumstances that have hardly changed since the start of such performances in the late nineteen-sixties.

The examples of cultural practices have been selected and presented on the basis of personal experience with the objective to illustrate the different modern "representative" contexts involving the participation and influence of ex-

perts. Since the theoretical, methodological concept has not been generally determined within the profession, the expert's experience and views, and a number of objective and subjective factors will determine whether the expert will intervene, and how and to what extent he will do it. Endeavouring to be responsible to themselves and to the profession, and to meet the demands of the users/public, concurrently aware that their scope and influence will depend on the contexts within which they operate, experts seek and offer solutions and answers which they consider best. The future will show the future position of folkloristics, ethnology and cultural anthropology with respect to the issues under consideration.

TRANSLATED BY: JANKO PARAVIĆ

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