

Janja Kovač. My People of Međimurje, You Have Treasure and Wealth – the Intangible Heritage of Međimurje. Čakovec: Museum of Međimurje Čakovec, 2017, p. 130

Catalogue Review

”My People of Međimurje, You Have Treasure and Wealth – the Intangible Heritage of Međimurje” is the catalogue of the eponymous exhibition, held in Museum of Međimurje Čakovec in Čakovec in December 2017 and January 2018. The author of the exhibition and the catalogue is a curator of the Ethnographic Department of Museum of Međimurje Čakovec, Janja Kovač. Through the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue, the author encompassed fifteen pieces of *intangible cultural heritage* from the region of Međimurje, protected both at the national and the international level, including their specific significance both in the past and in modern-day for the people from Međimurje.

In the introductory part of the catalogue, the author introduced the readers to the discussion held among the professionals concerning the notion of *intangible cultural heritage*, primarily within the bodies of the UNESCO. She also addressed the issue of the processes of protection of *intangible cultural heritage* at the national level and the activities of the Čakovec Museum of Međimurje in connection with research, documentation and presentation of *intangible culture* of Međimurje, starting from the foundation of the Museum in the mid 20th century to the modern-day.

Out of fifteen pieces of *intangible cultural heritage* from Međimurje, included in the Registry of Cultural Property of the Republic of Croatia (List of Cultural Goods), three heritage pieces are also included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of the UNESCO (traditional manufacturing of children’s toys from Northwest Croatia, gingerbread craft from Northwest Croatia and *međimurska popevka*, folk songs from Međimurje region). In accordance with the definition of *intangible cultural heritage* provided by the UNESCO, pieces of protected *intangible cultural heritage* from Međimurje region have been divided by the author into several groups: “Traditional Crafts”, “Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events”, “Oral Traditions and Expressions, Including Language as a Vehicle of *Intangible Cultural Heritage*” and “Performing Arts”.

The art of gold mining – gold panning in Međimurje, the tradition of lace making in the region of Saint Mary, gingerbread craft from Northwest Croatia and Slavonia, traditional pottery in Northwest Croatia and the artistry of traditional manufacturing of children’s toys in Northwest Croatia are pieces of cultural heritage included in the group of “Traditional Crafts”. Referring to archival inventory of craft businesses and other documentation, the author accurately states the name of individuals who at some point in time were involved in some of the previously mentioned *traditional crafts*, pointing out the fact that what we imply by the term *intangible cultural heritage*

is inseparable from people and their activities. The author placed the origin of *traditional crafts* of Međimurje region in the wider European context. *Traditional crafts* were most frequently family businesses and were gradually passed down from generation to generation. Specialised division of labour was common in case of family crafts. For example, while men, master potters, manufactured objects, their wives decorated them or *cifrale* in local dialect. The author also presented the economic aspect of *traditional crafts*. People from Međimurje generated additional revenue through gold buyout, lace sale, wooden children's toys, honey and wax products and pottery items. In addition to being sold, the products were also frequently bartered. Hence, for example, for one jug a potter used to get corn or wheat in the amount that was sufficient to fill the jug twice. *Traditional crafts* have recently been primarily involved in tourism activities. Crafts businesses from Međimurje participate in different tourism events both in Međimurje and beyond, presenting the ancestors legacy, while simultaneously adapting it to modern market needs and requirements.

Under “Social Practices, Rites and Festive Events” the author included as follows: the skill of making the traditional carnival mask in Selnica village, in Croatian regional dialect referred to as *pikač* (*Pikach*), the skill of making traditional Christmas ornaments – *kinč* in Northwest Croatia, the skill of making ornaments – Christmas chandelier in Northwest Croatia and the skill of making traditional Christmas manger and the nativity scene in Northwest Croatia. As in the case of “Traditional Crafts”, the heritage included in this group is also not exclusively linked with Međimurje, as it is common heritage of the broader north-western part of Croatia. Traditional practices included in this group convey their primary meaning in the context of individual traditional annual customs. The author presents the connection of the carnival mask *pikač* (*Pikach*) typical of Međugorje region with the usual apotropaic role of carnival, against the backdrop of oral storytelling and the transfer of *pikač* from the village of Saint Martin to the village of Selnica, where this mask is currently uniquely represented. The author also mentions the co-operation of Čakovec Museum of Međimurje with Selnica municipality and Pikač Association in 2016, which resulted in the inclusion of *pikač* mask in the permanent exhibition of the Ethnographic Department of the Museum. The remaining heritage included in the group “Social Practices, Rites and Festive Events” is closely linked with the Christmas set of *traditional customs*. The author connects the making of ornaments from crêpe paper (Christmas ornaments, the so-called *kinč* and Christmas chandelier) with common practices of decoration of households and business premises at Christmas, as evidence of human need to mark this special period of the year. The catalogue provides comprehensive descriptions of making of Christmas ornaments from crêpe paper, while also providing a brief overview of the history of this material and the ways in which it reached women in Međimurje region.

“Oral Traditions and Expressions, Including Language as a Vehicle of the *Intangible Cultural Heritage*” is the name of the group in which the author included three heritage pieces: Štrigova dialect group, Kotoriba dialect group and Saint Mary toponymy. The author provided a brief description of the two previously mentioned dialect groups at the phonological, morphological and lexical level, referring to valuable insights of ethnomusicologist Vinko Žganec about specific language features of oral songs writ-

ten in the villages of Štrigova and Kotoriba. The chapter about the dialect group from Kotoriba provides also a lengthy digression about the so-called circle dance from Kotoriba. The author believes that dance features of the area of the Dinara found by ethnochoreologists in that circle dance and Stokavian and Ikavian features of Kotoriba dialect group are the result of the same historical context – migration of the population from Northwest Bosnia to Kotoriba region in the 16th century. Three pieces of *intangible cultural heritage* from Međimurje region are closely linked with the village of Saint Mary – traditional skill of bobbin lace making, Saint Mary dialect group and Saint Mary toponymy. The latter heritage piece refers to the historical development of the name of Saint Mary municipality and in its description the author primarily refers to the work by Anđela Frančić.

The last group entitled “Performing Arts” includes the following heritage pieces: the skill of making and playing the cymbal in Podravina, Međimurje and the region of the Croatian Zagorje, the skill of playing *farkašice* tambouras in North and Northwest Croatia and *popevka* folk songs from Međimurje. Around the end of the First World War cymbal was regularly played at parties, socialising events, weddings and carnivals throughout Međimurje, most commonly with string instruments. The author explains the appearance of the cymbal in Međimurje was the result of Hungarian influence. Cymbal was subsequently replaced by increasingly popular tamboura bands and brass bands, locally referred to as *bandisti*. The author highlighted the importance of Seljačka Sloga Donja Dubrava Culture and Arts Association, which has provided three young cymbal players during the last several years. *Farkašice* tambouras were named after the conductor and composer Milutin Farkaš and his specific tuning system of tamboura band (the so-called Farkaš system). The author pointed out that very little is currently known in Međimurje about *farkašica* tambouras and there is no tamboura band comprising exclusively of *farkašica* tambouras.

The order in which the protected *intangible cultural heritage* from Međimurje region has been presented, besides being in accordance with the UNESCO *intangible heritage* classification, also has a strong symbolic note. The author started a story about the *intangible heritage* of Međimurje with descriptions of gold panning and she ended it with the sounds of *popevka* folk songs from Međimurje – “from real gold to that which in Međimurje is valued as gold” (Kovač 2017: 14). In her presentation of *popevka* folk songs from Međimurje the author yet again followed the usual chronological pattern – starting from the oldest written folk song lyrics dating back to the end of the 16th century, through collecting and research activities of the ethnomusicologists Franjo Kuhač and Vinko Žganec only to finally address the issue of modern remakes of *popevka* folk songs in a wide range of music genres.

”My People of Međimurje, You Have Treasure and Wealth – the Intangible Heritage of Međimurje” is a comprehensive catalogue, which is not surprising, considering the wide range of contents that it includes. The author allocated sufficient space for each heritage piece, describing the chronology of its existence in Međimurje region, as well as the changes in meaning that it experienced in accordance with the corresponding political, economic, social and cultural contexts. The author regularly shares her knowl-

edge of ethnology through different interdisciplinary insights, providing the reader with a comprehensive picture of a cultural phenomenon in question. Understanding is enhanced also with a large number of photographs meaningfully accompanying the text and making the catalogue more visually appealing. Irrespective of the exhibition, this catalogue will certainly remain valuable literature for anyone deciding to start their quest for “the treasure and wealth” of Međimurje.

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