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WHERE DOES THE MEDITERRANEAN BEGIN? CAN THIS QUESTION BE ANSWERED FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF SLOVENIAN ETHNOLOGY?

The Mediterranean region in Slovenia spreads from the Bay of Trieste to the pre-Alpine hills and valleys, and lies within two countries, Slovenia and Italy. The paper will briefly explore how the Mediterranean was treated within the framework of Slovenian ethnology, and some of the topics will be dealt with in order to contribute to the discussion about the local and the global "readings" of the area.

Keywords: ethnology, the Mediterranean, Slovenia

Introduction

In the area of Slovenian ethnic territory some of the wider European natural and cultural regions meet and intertwine. Even though the subject of this paper is centred on the ethnology of the Mediterranean, let me briefly introduce the phytogeographic and ethnological regionalization of Slovenia and then the ethnological regionalization of the Slovenian ethnic territory.

There are six phytogeographic regions of Slovenia, defined by ecological circumstances (climate, geological basis with its relief, soil and waters) and natural components (vegetation and its historic development): Alpine (1), pre-Alpine (6), Dinaric (2), pre-Dinaric (5), sub-Pannonian (4), and sub-Mediterranean (3) (after Wraber 1969:184-185; published in Župančič & Smole 1997; see Table 1).

Ethnological regions of Slovenian ethnic territory are the following: Mediterranean (1), Alpine (2), Central Slovenian (3), Pannonian (4),

including the areas in Italy, Austria and Hungary (5) (Novak 1990:48; see Table 2).

Literature on history, ethnology and natural sciences of the regions is abundant. The same is true for works on the Mediterranean, despite the fact that due to political reasons (fascism in the period between World War I and II, and the almost closed state border between Italy and Slovenia, which for a number of years made it hard for Slovenian ethnologists to conduct any research) research had been difficult for many decades. In order to shed some light upon some of the answers pertaining to the questions in the title of this paper, I have prepared a short selection of ethnological works dealing with the Mediterranean in different contexts and included some of the results of my fieldwork in Istria. My paper is divided into the following chapters: I. The Region of the Mediterranean; II. Different political authorities and state borders; III. "Alpes Orientales" (1956-1975); the research of cultural phenomena and elements; the cartographic method; IV. The Mediterranean house; V. Family and household (V.1. On ethnic determination of family forms, V. 2. Inheritance customs, modes of production, systems of colonization) and VI. Conclusion.

I. The region of the Mediterranean

This region lies in the western part of the state of Slovenia and across the border in the Republic of Italy (see Table 3). It is not a geographically, historically, culturally, or administratively unified region, but an extremely diversified area in all respects. In Slovenia it measures 1734 square kilometers, which makes 8.6% of the whole Slovenian territory, with the population of 143.357 or 9.4% in 1991 (Kladnik 1997). In Italy it comprises the areas where Slovenian is spoken in Trieste, Gorizia and Udine provinces, with the population of around 90 to 100.000 (*Enciklopedija Slovenije* 1997:165).

In the region of the Mediterranean the Slovenian population meets the Friulian and Italian and touches upon the neighbouring Croatian and German population. In the recent past, only two centuries ago, the borderline between Austria and Venice ran through it, later between Austria and Italy, still later between Yugoslavia and Italy. In certain periods, especially in the first half of this century, these borders presented strong political demarcation lines.

The basic ethnological work on the Mediterranean was written by Milko Matičetov (Matičetov 1948) and entitled *O etnografiji in folklori zapadnih Slovencev* [On Ethnography and Folklore of Western Slovenians]. In different time periods this area was divided and thus does not have a uniform name. In order to avoid misunderstandings, Matičetov calls all Slovenians living west of the former Yugoslav-Italian border western Slovenians. It is true that Carinthians in Val Canale (Kanalska dolina) in the

north, which was Austrian until World War I, belong to the northern branch of Slovenians (ethnologically speaking to the Alpine region), but after World War I they became separated from their national nucleus, and under Italy experienced an identical fate as western Slovenians. In his article Matičetov first lists historic sources from the 14th to the 19th century and then gives a systematic ethnological overview of "western Slovenians" describing their architecture, economy, clothing, law, customs, medicine, music, literature, plays, inscriptions, art, etc., and concluding his writing with the data on scientific collaboration with Croatian, German, Italian and Friulian neighbours.

Vilko Novak, the author of Slovenian ethnological regionalization (see Table 2), wrote numerous articles on Slovenian ethnological regions. He tied his definitions of regions to the research of ethnological strata — — Mediterranean, Alpine and Pannonian (Novak 1958) and attempted to interpret the regions in a uniform geographic, ethnological, and historic manner. When he writes about the area of the Mediterranean, he first lists its material characteristics which are based upon geographic elements. The two most characteristic features of this region are its stone house, often with more than one floor with a staircase outside the building, with an open hearth with a kettle hanging on a round-linked chain, etc., and a little cottage which served as shepherds' shelter. Other characteristic elements are viticulture, production of olive oil, fig-drying, fishing, donkey- -breeding for transportation purposes, and a special form of saddle connected with it, specially shaped yoke, a special type of chest, bread- -baking with leavened dough, use of olive oil, specific customs, motifs in oral literature, embroidery ornamentation, etc. In order to avoid further details let me just add that according to Novak these Mediterranean-
-Roman influences have been present in Slovenian culture since the High Middle Ages when the established position of the Church, particularly in the domain of the Aquileia patriarchate, spread them especially in the spheres of material and spiritual culture.

II. Different political authorities and state borders

Historic development strongly affected the formation of ethnological regions, their dimensions, the naming and the identity of their inhabitants. The more different authorities, political ideologies, borders, administrative units or official languages changed, the more different cultural influences there were. Many authors call the Slovenian Mediterranean a cultural crossroads.

In order to demonstrate how intense were the historic changes and influences that have to be taken in consideration while doing the research in this region, let us closely examine two papers held at the 18th congress of Yugoslav folklorists in Bovec (1973) by Branko Marušič and Pavle Merku.

In his paper Marušič describes the Bovško region (Bovec and its surrounding area) in the upper Soča valley as an Alpine valley which features a number of elements from the Mediterranean on which it borders in the south. Then he describes, how, just like natural influences intertwined, in the historic development from the Early Middle Ages individual interests of different masters from the north and from the south intersected: from 1099 the Aquileia patriarchate, Carinthian and Friulian feudal lords, the counts of Gorizia, the Habsburgs, the town of Cividale, the Habsburg authorities in 1509 (but at the same time the monastery of Rosazzo, which was situated in the area of the Venetian Republic, and the Cividale chapter remained landowners). These administrative authorities dictated the cultural development and the life-style of the population in this area (Marušič 1973).

In the same congress Merkù presented the area in Italy with Slovenian population as a narrow strip of land along the Italian-Slovenian border reaching from the Bay of Muggia to the border between Italy, Austria, and Slovenia. He spoke about how the research into oral tradition had to take account of historical facts: in the history Muggia was an ally of Venice, Trieste was an independent city searching the protection of the Habsburgs, the Gorizia area belonged to the crown, Slavia Veneta under the Venetian republic experienced extraordinary administrative autonomy, while the northeastern part of it, together with Resia, learned about the burden of feudalism, and Val Canale was incorporated into the Carinthian crown land. Aside from a number of cultural differences originating in different political regulations, a still stronger cultural differentiation was the result of contacts with Romanic and Germanic neighbours throughout a millenium and a half: while along the entire border the socially lower level of these neighbours were Friulians, on a socially higher level these neighbours were the Venetians, in certain periods of history possibly also German feudal lords or administrators (Merkù 1973).

III. "Alpes Orientales" (1956-1975); the research of cultural phenomena and elements; the cartographic method

"Alpes Orientales" was the name of the "independent ethnographic work group" of international specialists for the Eastern Alps. They met eight times, the first time in Ljubljana in 1956, and the last one in Resia in 1975. Each of their meetings resulted in a volume (*Alpes Orientales* 1959; 1961; 1961a; 1966; 1969; 1972; 1975). The preface to the first of them states that "rare are the areas in our old Europe in which comparative ethnographic research was as satisfactory and promising as in the area of Eastern Alps" (*Alpes Orientales* I. 1959). Among the most urgent topics they named the definition of the Eastern and Central Alpine cultural regions and the research which would define their boundaries.

The volumes deal with the central themes of these meetings: general characteristics of the Eastern Alpine folk culture, intertwining of cultural ties of all three ethnic segments of the Eastern Alpine area — Romance, German and Slavic, based on different examples from spiritual, social, and material culture, ceremonial masquerading or ceremonial masks in Eastern Alps, remains of old natural and ethnic strata in the folk culture of Eastern Alps, shepherd culture of the Eastern Alps, life forms in the mountains, migrations. Their maps, which pertain to the outer edge of Eastern Alps, would help us find the answer to the question about where the Mediterranean begins.

Let us first see the example of the localities in which the variants of the story about the wooden rib were registered (Matičeto 1959:81; see Table 4).

The stories about the witches who punish somebody so that they take the body apart, put it together, but one bone is missing, was told by Slovenians, Croats, Ladins (Rhaeto-Romans) from Southern Tyrol, and Germans and was most often retold at the edge of the Mediterranean. Matičeto quotes different authors who wrote about this theme (let us mention here only the work of L. Schmidt 1951) and lists many variants of the motif. He himself states that he had never researched the story of the wooden rib in detail, but only enumerated all its known variants and classified them geographically. Although this map contains only the results of one step of the research with no final conclusions, it nevertheless indicates the edge of Eastern Alps or a zone which could be a passage between the Eastern Alps and the Mediterranean. But before all, I show this map as an example of the relevancy of ethnological and folkloristic research, supported by cartographic method, for a discussion on regions.

Let me cite also two articles by Niko Kuret on customs which were observed in this very borderline area between the Alps and the Mediterranean: on the gardens of Adonis (1961) and on the Christmas log among Slovenians (1961a) (Table 5 and 6).

The author conducted two inquiries throughout Slovenia (in 1943-1944 and in 1954-1955), with the exception of Slovenian Carinthia (in Austria) and the area of the Slovenian minority in northwestern Italy, both of which yielded only a small number of replies. He established that the custom of Adonis gardens is known throughout Slovenia and occurs around Midsummer Day, Easter, and Christmas, with the predominance of young wheat as a Christmas custom. With regard to this custom Kuret divided Slovenia into three areas: in the north the custom is almost unknown, eastern and central Slovenia have elements in common with the neighbouring Croatia, while the southwestern part of Slovenia is undoubtedly connected with the Mediterranean, specifically with Italy.

The burning of the Christmas log (see Table 6) is a widespread custom which spans in a wide arc from the Balkans across southern and western Europe all the way to Scandinavia. Until the second half of the 19th century this custom was practiced throughout southeastern, southern, and southwestern rim of Slovenian territory, thus creating a natural link between Croatia on one and the Friuli on the other side. After 1880 it slowly started to disappear, but it persisted until World War I, when open hearths were replaced by stoves.

In order to demonstrate the mutual support of folkloristic and historic findings, let me cite briefly also the article written by Oskar Moser (1959), who speaks about historic relationships between Eastern Alpine countries, Friuli and Slavia Veneta as reflected in the stories about mysterious strangers, who under different names — Venediger, Walsche, Walen, Lahi or Italians — search for gold and gems in the Alps. This tradition brings into mind the results of historic research, which show that the region of the Alps was open to migration even before the end of the so-called age of autarchy to exploit the mineral wealth of the mountains (Viazzo 1989:154).

Alpes Orientales published numerous other treatises which should be taken into account when writing about the Mediterranean. They deal with individual customs and cultural elements, ethnic and cultural substrata, and regions in general. E.g. Gaetano Perusini (1959) writes about the existence of ethnographic regions which are completely independent of language borders and whose borderlines do not follow the lines of the easiest traffic connections which were present in the mountain valleys of the main rivers, while Milovan Gavazzi (1959) describes Eastern Alps as the territory of contacts between the peoples, influences, and cultural streams of the Mediterranean and of the European North, from the lowlands of the Po and from the Danube basin.

IV. The Mediterranean house

The regional aspect has been most strongly considered in Slovenian ethnological research of architecture and house types. Matija Murko was the first to divide the territory of Slovenia into three cultural areas, each with its own house type (Murko 1906).

In the course of his research into the form and style of Slovenian houses Stanko Vurnik (1926; 1929; 1930/1931) defined the following house types: Alpine, Mediterranean or Primorsko/Karst type, eastern Slovenian or Pannonian house type, and central Slovenian type. Vurnik pointed out the ethnological position of Slovenia which is situated among four neighbouring cultural areas. He was also of the opinion that the ethnographic border between western and eastern Europe goes from the north toward the south across eastern Dolenjska.

The geographer Anton Melik maintains that there are six house types in Slovenia, one of which is the Primorsko type, or the Mediterranean type (Melik 1963; Table 7: The house types in Slovenia: 1 - Alpine, 2 - Bovec type, 3 - Mediterranean, 4 - Škofja Loka - Cerklje type, 5 - Eastern Slovenian or Pannonian, 6 - Central Slovenian). While the border between different house types (regions) seems simple from afar, it is much more complicated from up close. The house from the Bovec region, for instance, belongs to the Alpine house type according to Vurnik (1930/1931), while Melik feels that this is an independent house type with specific features which differ both from the Alpine as well as the Mediterranean house. Melik mentions two villages in the Bovec basin, Žaga and Srpenica, in which the Mediterranean house starts to appear, and then becomes predominant when one goes further south. Matičetov (1948) also drew the line between the central European house type in the east and southern European or Mediterranean type in the west which ends at the right bank of the Soča. He established that aside from small variations to the right or to the left this boundary line had been very similarly defined by Vurnik, Melik, and Nice (Nice 1940), and that it is geographically correct. Yet Matičetov stressed the fact that this division of house types refers to the situation in the first half of the 20th century. Only a century ago, however, the line between various house types went much more to the west. Between the period of the first reports and the present certain areas entirely changed their exterior. Matičetov also cites the details about Slovenian farmhouses as had been observed by Venetian humanist and historian Marin Sanudo, who in 1502 speaks about the Kobarid village which was entirely made of wood. Bovec was built of only wood at that time as well. In the 16th century the most important, if not exclusive, building material in the upper Soča valley and Val Canale was therefore wood. Later houses started to be made of stone which is the building material of the Mediterranean.

Let me mention also the elliptic shepherd's shelter or dwelling made of stone and called "hiša," "hiška," "bajta" , built on common land and in meadows of the middle and upper Karst, which is by all authors treated as a characteristic Mediterranean building.

V. Family and household

In the Mediterranean area between Slovenian Istria and Alpine valleys it is very interesting to study to what extent the family types are ethnically determined and in what way they depend upon inheritance customs, modes of production, systems of colonization, and changing political borders. On this relatively small territory there is a great diversity in all these respects — Slovenians, Friulians, Italians and in the vicinity Croats and Germans; divisibility and indivisibility of property; extensive agriculture, sharecropping system, mountain dairy-farming, remote rural areas and urban centres; some parts were under Venetian Republic, some under Austro-Hungary, later Italy, Yugoslavia, Austria, Slovenia.

V.1. On ethnic determination of family forms

The subject was broached in the fifties by Carlo Guido Mor, Pier Silverio Leicht, Milko Matičetov, and Sergij Vilfan, and concerned the interpretation of two events which occurred in localities in which Romans and Slovenians were immediate neighbours. When he got married in 1288, a man from the Soča valley made a contract in Cividale, probably with his bride's guardian. Among other things, he pledged to pay a penalty should the bride be chased away by the relatives, "si... ipsam expelleret parentela." In 1556 a woman from Slavia Veneta took a man to court, trying to make him confess that they had gotten married. She stated how the marriage took place: first the groom promised the bride to marry her, then drank some wine from a cup. The Sunday after the groom and the bride took each other's hands and completely informally exchanged words of agreement on getting married; later the marriage was also consummated. After the first wedding night the groom gave the bride a coin to reconfirm the consummation.

Italian literature drew attention to both cases and also offered their first interpretation. The case from 1288 supposedly proved that the agreement of the relatives was needed for the validity of the marriage, which in comparison with the Roman consensual matrimony and with the Lombardian marriage was a specific feature of Slovenian marriages. The solemnity and the publicity of marriage are essential elements of such Slavic forms of matrimony. The marriage from 1566, however, did not occur in public, took place in secret, only in accordance with the groom and the bride, and with its consummation, the drinking of wine, clasping of hands, handing over a coin

after the first wedding night. It was stated that in the 16th century in such a manner Venetian Slovenians entirely adapted to Italian customs which were then a mixture of Roman and German ones and that the Slovenian family community disintegrated amidst Italian individualism. The interpretation of the 1288 marriage was already given by P. S. Leicht (1910), and reaffirmed by C. G. Mor (1948/1949) who wrote about both cases.

The debate was initiated by Vilfan and Matičetov, who critically discussed the assumption that large or complex family communities were typically Slavic, and that Slovenians must have adopted the small or individual family from their neighbours in the west. Matičetov was the first to react to Mor's presentation by drawing general attention to the difficulties in explaining borderline phenomena, and prompted Vilfan to compare individual elements that the Italian law historians had isolated from both cases. Vilfan then (1954) wrote an article on old wedding customs among Slovenians living along the Soča, and among Venetian Slovenians. In his article he attacked a widely accepted belief that collectivism was supposed to be a typically Slavic feature, whereas individualism (supposedly un-Slovenian) was believed to be typically Italian. Vilfan analyzed Mor's work, stressing his assessment by giving some examples of comparisons between the customs of different nations. He furthermore reiterated that a household community, whether it is called "zadruga" or something else, is not a specifically Slovenian feature, and that in this respect Slovenians attained family individualism earlier, and in a more thorough manner, than many of their neighbours in Alpine regions and in Western Europe. At that point Vilfan referred to the findings of P. S. Leicht (1910) which show that fraternal communities were widespread throughout the Mediterranean coasts and were a common occurrence in Italy, where the form survived for a long time. It was the Italian sharecropping system which encouraged the emergence of these communities (Vilfan 1954).

V.2. Inheritance customs, modes of production, systems of colonization

Some years ago I made a research into kinship and family in Slovenian Istria (Ravnik 1996) and chose, for the fieldwork, two micro regions in its rural hinterland: the edge of the Karst, which is near Trieste and the remote Pregara plateau. The main activities of the inhabitants in both micro regions were agriculture and animal husbandry. However, people supplemented their income with a number of additional activities, which were different in the two areas. This difference was related to the proximity of Trieste and the coast in general — those who lived nearer, had better opportunities for additional income or for moving into the city or its vicinity. This was one of the most important reasons why also family types and household structure differed, although in both regions the rules of inheritance were the same.

The research was based mainly on the informants' narratives, their memories and family traditions, encompassing the period from the first half of the 19th century to the present.

During this period inheritance customs were dominated by the principle of equality among heirs, and the division of property. Sons received equal shares of family farms, while daughters were given a dowry. In reality, this principle was enforced in different ways, more or less consistently, depending on the family's financial capacity and its circumstances. The further away from the coast and the poorer the villages were, the harder it was to survive on small, fragmented farms. As a result, people postponed dividing the land and stayed together. The closer we go to Trieste, divisions were more frequently made within a person's life-span — with each new generation, while further inland away from Trieste, divisions occurred at greater intervals. In the interior of Istria, families were often complex while in the villages below the edge of the Karst this was rarely the case. At a first glance it appears that those were two different family types. Actually we are dealing with the same system of inheritance, whose common denominator is the division of property.

People in the villages under research in general believe that the division was the root of their economic troubles. Let me refer here to the findings of the historian Sergij Vilfan, who also sees property division as one of Istria's main problems. Elsewhere in Slovenia feudal colonization introduced single-family farms, and landlords saw to it that these farms were not divided. In the Venetian region, in which the villages in question were situated, the relationship between farmers was not typically feudal. This, together with the predominance of the Roman law, caused farm division from as early as the 16th century, if not before. This also caused the differences between the areas where farms were partitioned, and those where they were not. Besides the reasons rooted in different colonization and legal systems in

the Middle Ages there are also other reasons such as the proximity of towns, and additional income opportunities (Vilfan 1961).

In Slovenian Istria, in the vicinity of the two regions, which I researched, in the dispersed settlements above the coast, a prevailing system of production was not extensive farming, but sharecropping. Very little is known about the household structure and the way of life of the families of the sharecroppers or *coloni*. If we knew it better, it would be very interesting to investigate how much the different modes of production were connected with different family types which coexisted in this part of Istria. In the Slovenian Mediterranean the sharecropping system occurred in the coastal belt of Istria and in the region of Brda, on the very edge of the Friulian plain. Even though Slovenian *coloni* in Brda lived in the closest vicinity of the Friulian *coloni*, their families were different. In the 1950s Vilfan (1954) was told in Slovenian Brda that the neighbouring Friulians sometimes lived in extended family households which was unknown in Slovenian families of *coloni*. Yet during the course of his fieldwork Vilfan wrote down a "memory of two Slovenian *coloni* and their wives who shared a common husbandry in Brda. This proves that the boundary between an extended and a nuclear family can be flexible to some extent, especially where the *coloni* are concerned" (Vilfan 1992:144). Despite this interesting detail it seems, however, that Slovenian *coloni* did not live in complex families. Here we are faced with an interesting question, namely why this (apparently) ethnically conditioned difference persisted despite the same type of economy.

VI. Conclusion

As we have seen, certain researchers drew clear lines between different regions, and Slovenian ethnological literature offers several answers to the question where the Mediterranean begins in Slovenia — in any case somewhere where the Alpine and the central Slovenian regions end. Due to limited space this paper deals only with certain aspects of regionalization treated by Slovenian ethnology. I could have cited quite a lot of interesting literature on this subject which deals with individual cultural phenomena on micro as well as macro level, but all such details had to be left out. Likewise, I did not touch upon the significance of the Mediterranean in the way of life in Slovenia, for it goes far beyond its regional boundaries. Had the theme of this conference been understood in such a manner, our task would have been much more difficult. We would have to deal with the broader Slovenian hinterland which in different periods of history gravitated toward the Mediterranean with extensive economic, social, and cultural ties. In this century, fugitives from the places which were in the middle of the front lines and were ravaged in the fiercest battles of the World War I, and later those who immigrated to Yugoslavia fleeing fascist Italy which tried to oppress

Slovenians living there, greatly contributed to the spreading of influences from the Mediterranean. In order to research these problems ethnological literature could be of help with a number of fragments, while, unfortunately, a complex summary presentation thereby has not yet been accomplished.

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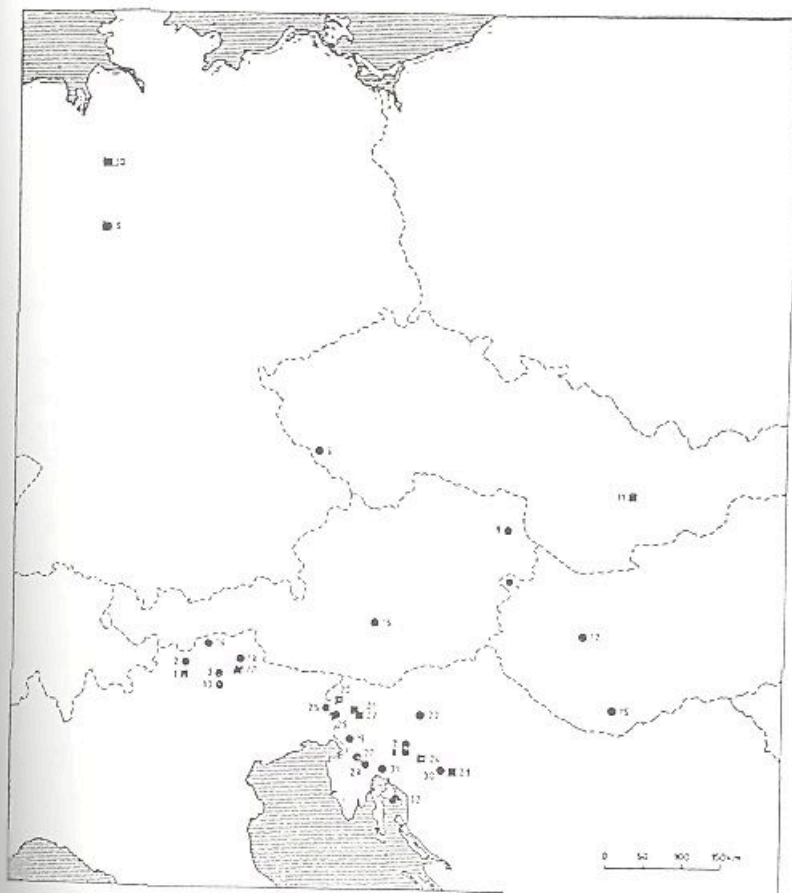
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Table 1
PHYTOGEOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF SLOVENIA

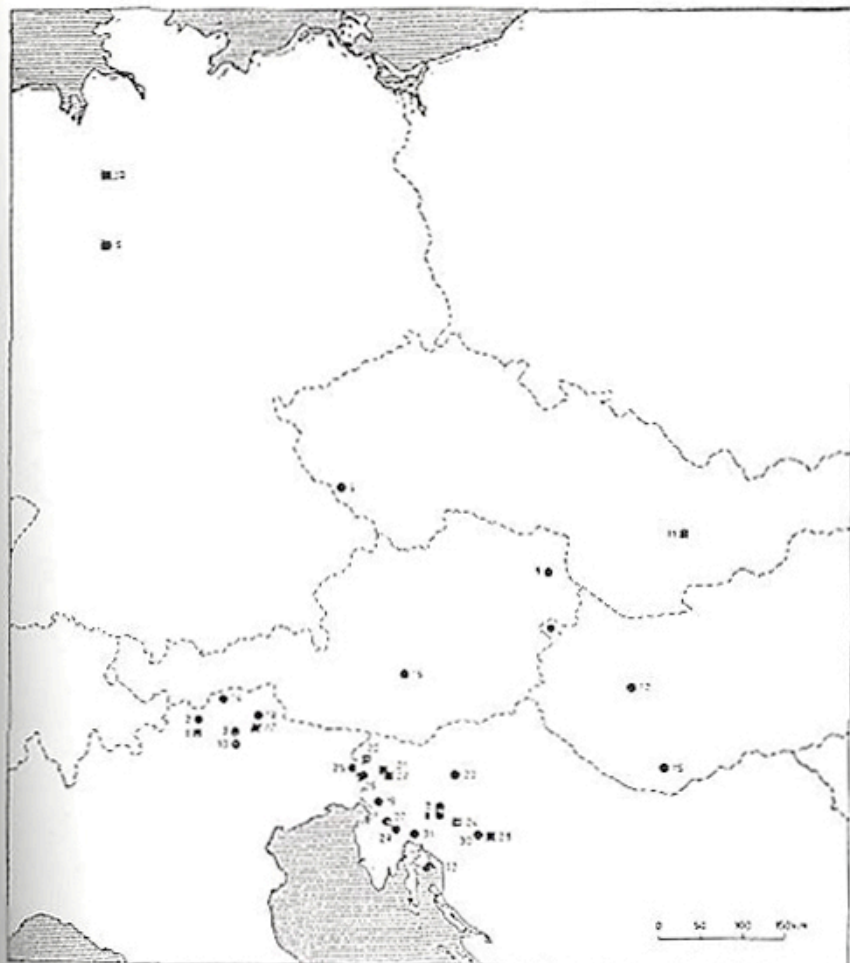


Table 4
THE LOCALITIES IN WHICH THE VARIANTS
OF THE STORY ABOUT THE WOODEN RIB WERE
REGISTERED (Matičetoč 1959)



Variants which are only approximately localized.

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THE LOCALITIES IN WHICH THE VARIANTS
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Variants which are only approximately localized.

Table 5
THE GARDENS OF ADONIS

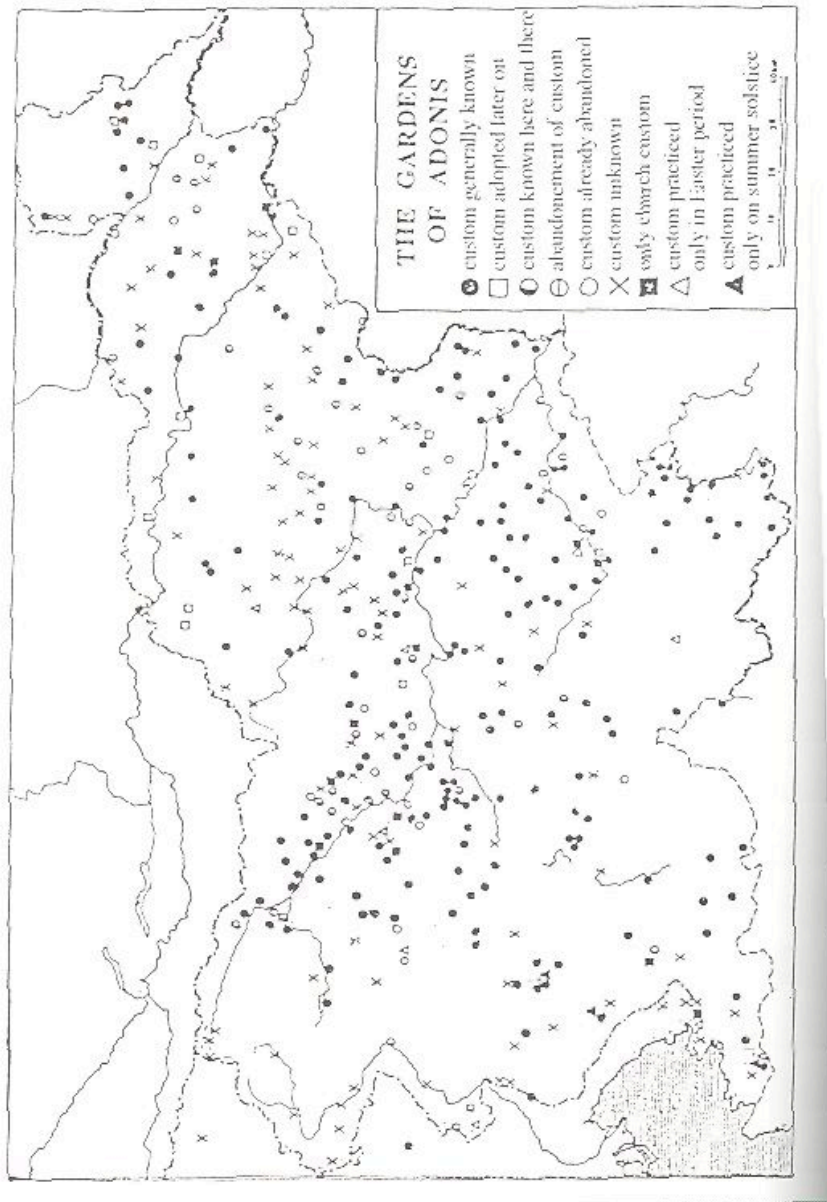
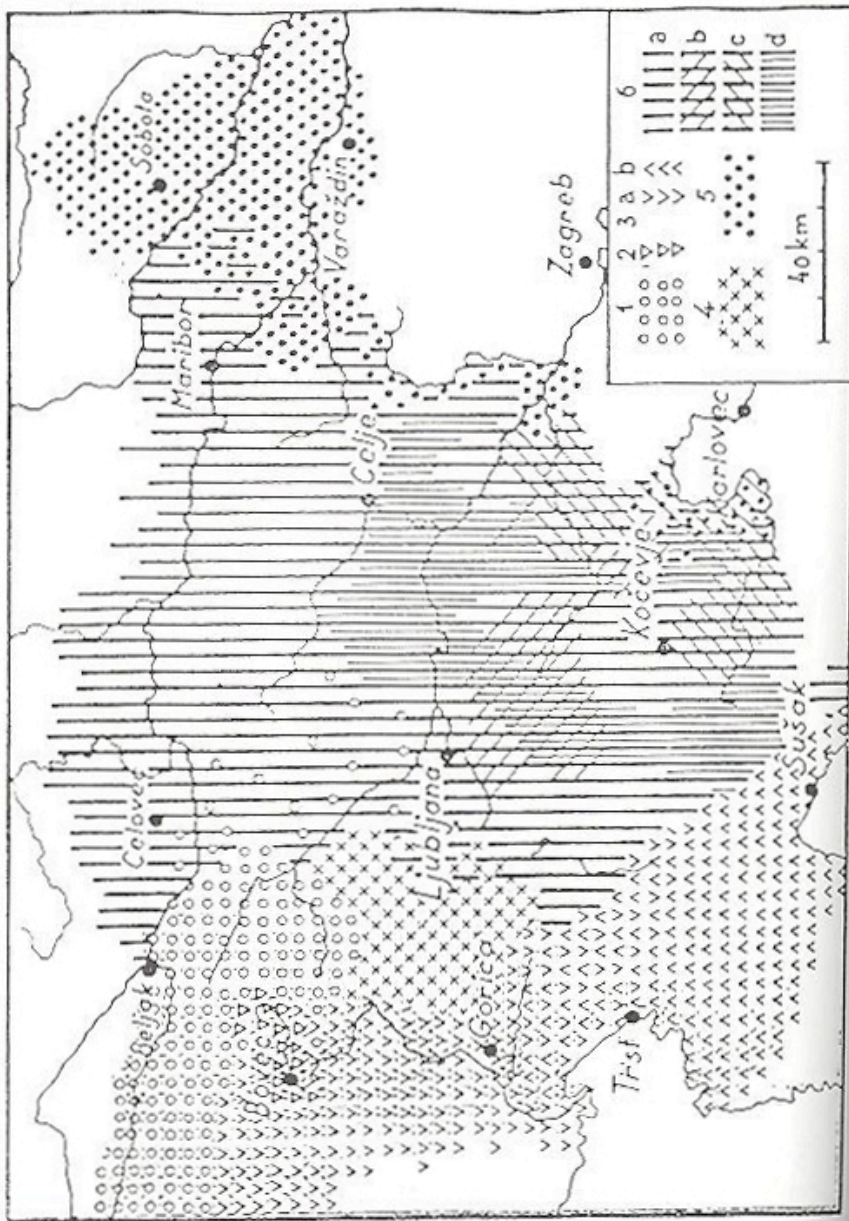


Table 7
HOUSE TYPES IN SLOVENIA



(See p. 71)

GDJE POČINJE MEDITERAN? MOŽE LI SE NA TO PITANJE ODGOVORITI SA STAJALIŠTA SLOVENSKE ETNOLOGIJE?

SAŽETAK

Premda je slovenska etnološka literatura o Mediteranu opširna, ona je rijetko razmatrala neka opća pitanja o toj regiji, primjerice gdje Mediteran počinje ili završava. S druge strane bilo je mnogo istraživačkih projekata o kulturnim pojavama u toj regiji, koja se proteže od Tršćanskoga zaljeva do predalpskih brda i dolina i koja leži između dviju zemalja, Slovenije i Italije. S etnološkoga stajališta to je vrlo zanimljiva regija u kojoj se dodiruju različite etničke skupine (slovenska, talijanska, frijulska, hrvatska, njemačka). Sve donedavno bilo je to područje i političkoga separatizma i sukoba. Članak ukratko opisuje kako je Mediteran prikazivan u slovenskoj etnologiji, poglavito s aspekta nekih posebnih tema (panj badnjak, tipologija obitelji i sl.).

Ključne riječi: etnologija, Mediteran, Slovenija