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Nadja Maglica: "Colourful Baranja": Traditional Clothes of Croats from Baranja

The bilingual monograph dealing with clothes worn by the Croatian peasant population in the region of Baranja is a book of wide ranging content and sumptuous graphic design (by Studio Rašić, Zagreb; translated by Jasna Bilinić-Zubak). In addition, it is a book of peculiar destiny. When its author started working on the theme in 1991, little did she know about the events soon to befall the furthest eastern region of Croatia. She could not anticipate that Baranja will be swept over by the wind of war, leaving deep mark on the former lifestyle, with a disastrous influence on the cultural inventory and a devastating effect on the people's self-perception. This is why Nadja Maglica had to adapt her research to the circumstances, processing what was available and leaving out something of what was planned, but was not to be realized due to the situation at hand.

She approached her task by introducing the reader in the first part to the atmosphere of the world of Baranja through the description of its natural surroundings, followed by a concise overview of the historical destiny of this region and complemented by a dynamic picture of its heterogeneous ethnic structure.

The book goes on giving a detailed presentation of the clothes of the Croatian population, divided into individual elements of male, female and children's everyday and holiday clothing, footwear and ornaments. The description comprised all possible details of the diversified clothing inventory of Baranja, accompanied by local terms, explanations of home-made textile production techniques and references to factory-made materials used in clothes production and descriptions of clothing modalities for individual seasons and other special occasions. All is illustrated by old black-and-white photographs, modern art colour photographs by Damir Fabijanić and Petar Strmečki and tailoring schemes expertly drawn by Dijana Heide. Nadja Maglica has a specific writing style, characterized by a resolute refusal to use loan-words, even the ones belonging to the *termini tecnici* of ethnology. In the attempt to replace them with Croatian vocabulary, she uses even expressions typical of past times. This style

will be appreciated by some readers, but cause incomprehension and even aversion with others. I assume that the author has deliberately exposed herself to such risk.

But, let us return to the content of her book. Detailed descriptions of clothes and the analysis of their elements were the basis for the creation of a typology of the traditional costume of Baranja Croats. By comparing the cuts, terms, girl's and female hairstyles, headgear and other features, it was possible to distinguish between the Drava-basin and Danube-basin type. The author then takes one step ahead and compares the described female costume with the clothes of Croatian women in the Hungarian part of Baranja. The similarities and differences she observed are indicative of common roots and the later independent development of these two modalities of traditional clothing.

Nadja Maglica further expands her observation angle to the entire complex of clothing culture. This is evident especially in the chapter where she again illuminates the traditional clothes of Baranja, but this time through an individual's course of life. Analyzing the clothes and the associated textile objects from the newborn age and childhood to adolescence, maturity and old age, she indirectly depicts the life of the extended family in Baranja and the customary marking of the rhythm of human life, with turning points of birth, marriage and death.

In the next chapter, *Clothes as Part of Traditional Culture*, the author's goal was to observe the clothing complex of Baranja from the ergologic, functional, semantic and symbolic aspect. The elaboration of this part remained, unfortunately, on a too lapidary level.

The major part of the book, reflecting the times past, ends with this chapter. These times were characterized by a constant order of things, relative economic prosperity, psychological tranquillity and long-living customs. As a clear opposition, it is followed by the *Appendix*, presenting the results of a research conducted in 1995 in direct contact with the refugees from Baranja - traumatised, impoverished and with a completely uncertain future at the time. The published accounts of three Baranja women of various age and social standing show not only their attitude to tradition, of which the traditional costume is a part, but also towards life in general. These reports are direct testimony of the inglorious last decade of the 20th century in one of Croatia's regions. The author's meticulous approach to this research is confirmed also by the attached field research form concerning heritage.

Finally, it should be added that the manuscript of this monograph, which has enriched past perceptions in many ways, was ready to be printed in 1998. The book saw its publication, however, in December 2003, i.e. full five years later. In the meantime, the winds of war have settled. The war-ravaged regions are coming to peace, refugees are slowly returning, the wounds are – hopefully – healing. For this very reason, it would be especially useful for ethnology if Nadja Maglica resumed her research in Baranja.

Translated by Sanja Novak