

RURAL HOUSING SPACE IN THE MIRROR OF RITUALS

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The paper attempts to reveal the relationship of members of certain traditional community towards their housing space. Since the problem is set in the past -- during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries -- and the direct research was impossible to conduct, the author employed an indirect approach. This relationship is viewed in the context of its social dimension, using symbolical procedures within the process of integration of a newly arrived family member, that is, within the process of segregation of family from its late member. Ethnographic and other materials dealing with architecture, as well as the materials dealing with wedding and death customs of the peasants from Banija -- one of the central Croatian regions -- were used as a basis of this questioning.

The extent to which the processes of interdisciplinary overlappings, that intensified especially during the second half of the twentieth century, influenced the articulation of new scientific problems, is well known. One of such processes of connecting two disciplines resulted by establishment of so-called anthropology of architecture. The problem articulated was -- -- to put it briefly -- the research of the relationship between a building and a man as a cultural being, and the basic starting point leaned against the hypothesis of the two-way quality of this relationship. Namely, people

feel and use architectural artifacts in a certain way; at the same time, the built or constructed environment influences cultural behaviour and motivates certain cultural attitudes (Egenter 1991:7; also Eco 1973:219 and Fister 1988:24).¹

The novelty in the questioning of this relationship was in warning the architects about the existence of popular architecture,² casting the light on a somehow absurd fact that the majority of buildings of the populated areas of our planet consists of popular architecture itself, although both history and theory of architecture have been neglecting it until then (Rappoport 1978:119). Moreover, it warned about some positive features of this type of architectural skills, that corresponded with modern worldview -- for example it corresponded with this type of architecture's harmony with natural environment in which it was built, not having endangered the ecological stability, that is nowadays considered to be so important. It warned about different consideration of the space category; according to M. Segaud's interpretation, human use of space is a special cultural product, and the space itself is -- in accordance with its structure or form -- a social product, at the same time both acquired and imposed (1978:114, 116–117).³ The inveteracy into a certain space also produces the awareness of (social/cultural/ethnic) identity, the category that also belongs to the modern scientific discourse. A new research programme dealing with architecture and culture gradually formed during the 1980s in the realm of those new ideas. N. Egenter described its essence: "...relationships between two different areas of human existence -- between the immediate experience of concrete things and **learning their meanings** -- are researched.⁴ On the one hand, it is a question of describing the genuine and spatial structure of material culture, denoted as building/architectural form, and of the awareness of its importance" (1991:9). Egenter considers important that it is "...the frame that man reveals all the time, the frame he is born into, as he is born into his mother

¹ Using this supposition as a starting point, I have myself tried to research the correlation between housing space, determined by architectural patterns, and the way of life, determined by cultural habits. The research was conducted in a Croatian village, using family houses built between 1895 and 1975 as examples (Muraj 1990:105–110).

² Not having a proper or established term, Bernard Rudofsky called the whole set *architecture without an architect*, that is, *architecture without pedigree* (Rudofsky 1976). Besides those, some other terms, such as *traditional*, *rural*, *folklore*, *anonymous*, etc. architecture or building, are also used.

³ "if (...) every truly inhabited space carries in itself the very the essence of the term house" -- claims Segaud -- (...) we have the right to ask ourselves why there are so many different spaces, depending on the societies they belong to, and also to demand interpretations that anthropology uses to locate space within a social system" (1978:112).

⁴ Emphasized by A. M.

tongue. It is the frame he keeps, directly or indirectly, and that present an order of things that he carries around with him for the rest of his life" (1991:9).

The anthropology of architecture, conceived this way, places new challenges for ethnologists/cultural anthropologists. Their duty would be to research and make public the meaning of certain things, or -- to make the issue somewhat narrower -- the semantics of the inhabited space. When talking about the popular architecture of the types of human communities such as European rural communities belonging to the pre-industrial or early industrial period, we might have at our disposal some ethnographic data describing the exterior of buildings, spatial and functional division of the house, interior decoration and typical furnishing, and even some ways of satisfying housing needs. However, do we know enough about the symbolic places within a house and its nearest surroundings, about places that displayed social values and reflected cultural ideology of a certain human group? Contemporary researchers are no longer able to search for the answer by conducting their own fieldwork research. Houses built in a traditional way hardly exist as an inhabited space. However, even more important is that the whole peasant social and cultural context has completely changed. Namely, we are dealing with a reality that is temporally and in every other sense very removed from us. The problem is made more complicated by the implicate nature of architectural evaluation. We could illustrate it by the above mentioned Egenter's comparison about being born into one's mother tongue: although they can express each of their needs in communication and expression in their mother tongue, the uneducated people cannot explain its grammar and syntax. Accordingly, the habitual everyday behaviour of people living in an architectural building would hardly reveal the hidden meanings of some "sacred" or "dangerous" places of the spatial structure.

Therefore, the attempt to define the semantic code of the built environment indirectly must be done through observation and reading of another symbolic system. We have chosen rituals for this purpose. Here we do not speak of religious rituals, but of the worldly ones, the ones that constitute some (so called "life" and "calendar") customs. While the customs are, being the wider level of attainment, looser structured, rituals consist -- according to C. Geertz -- of strictly formalized behaviour with deliberate use of motions, words, objects, etc, and are a means of expressing a deeper cultural meaning. Geertz emphasizes that by this ritual expresses and supports -- both consciously and unconsciously -- the basic cultural values, the meaning of life, and gives the legitimacy to the existing cultural order. At the same time, it is the model of a cultural system, as well as the model for behaviour within that system (Geertz 1973:87–125).

Starting from the above mentioned conceptual premises, and having in mind living space and cultural traditions of a closed group of the members of rural community, we shall try to establish the following: (1) whether some especially significant places within the inhabited space exist, and (2), if they exist, to check if and to what extent those places display social values and reflect the ideology of culture of that group. Rituals selected from the complex of wedding and death customs are going to have the role of research instruments.

Before we start to conduct the above described, we shall briefly describe the spatial, historical and social context of the group we are dealing with. Peasants we are discussing lived in the region of Banija.⁵ Being one of central Croatian regions, Banija is situated on the border of the Pannonian valley and mountainous slopes that stretching further form the Dinaric Alps. Its encircled geographic position along the border with the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina form the central flow of the river Sava, the lower flow of the river Una and the lower flow of the river Kupa with its tributary, the river Glina. The landscape mostly consists of mountainous hills (the average height is about 300 meters), and the wooded mountain called Zrinska gora (its highest peak being 615 meters high). The natural conditions have enabled the establishment of vegetable production, corn and potato cultivation, gardening and fruit-growing, and -- as a part of animal cultivation -- especially cattle and pig breeding. Therefore, this region has had a character of an especially agricultural area for a long period of time. During the modern times such natural resources were crucial for the development of food and wood industry (Geografija SR Hrvatske [The Geography of Socialist Republic of Croatia] 1974:155 and on).

While geographically belonging to a part of wider contact area between Central and Southeast Europe, Banija's historical destiny throughout several centuries had given the region the border position between two imperial powers -- Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Ottoman Empire. One of the results of such a situation were numerous migrations of population that have influenced the change of demographic picture several times from the late fifteenth to the late eighteenth centuries. The native Croatian population and the newly arrived Serbian population, driven by the Ottoman conquests, have traded places and taken shifts with different intensity (Šimunović 1992:243). The absence of larger settlements must be the result of the insecure life of such a border region. Except for the regional centre -- the town of Petrinja -- and three smaller

⁵ The name *Banovina* has also been used recently.

municipal centres -- the towns of Glina, Kostajnica and Dvor⁶ -- all the other settlements from Banija are of a rural type.

The phenomena from the traditional culture of Banija peasants that we deal with here belong to the life style that prevailed approximately from the late nineteenth century until the beginning of the World War II. Ethnographic recordings and other sources that we use here were crucial for the definition of the temporal coordinates of this historical period. We are mainly dealing with the manuscripts written as results of ethnographic and folkloristic fieldwork research of several members of former *Institute of Folk Art in Zagreb*.⁷ True, the researchers have done their fieldwork research between 1954 and 1960, but their informers' testimonies (some of the informers were born during the last quarter of the nineteenth century) mainly speak of the situation of the preceding decades.

The researchers themselves were surprised by the unexpected archaism that was interwoven into the everyday life of the Banija peasants. The analysis of their holidays and calendar customs that I did using those materials (Muraj 1992:185–218) showed that those people were still deeply inveterated into their old agricultural world, and not willing to adopt the modern agrarian achievements. Namely, features of their production were still numerous irrational actions that were done in order to secure rich harvests and accretion, protection from natural disasters, and the actions of what they believed to be evil forces. That is why the constitutional part of calendar customs were performances of symbolic actions that were supposed to protect from hail, provide rich and fertile fields, more eggs, abundant cow lactation and larger sheep accretion, protect bee-hives, enlarge honey production, etc.⁸ Besides having the agricultural production as their primary activity, they also dealt with domestic

⁶ In the year 1971, 12 555 inhabitants lived in Petrinja, 3 419 in Glina, 2 431 in Kostajnica, and 1 629 in Dvor (*Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* [The Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia] 1980:481).

⁷ Now called *Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research*.

⁸ For example, when the storm was about to begin, people would burn twigs blessed on the Palm Sunday; girls who were virgins took part at the processions of blessing fields on the Ascension Day, having decorated the cross with young spikes; the first Christmas well-wisher had to sit down on the house floor and cackle, and the masquerade during carnival had to dance in the yard to provide more eggs; people would take their cows across the bonfire on St George's Day, so that evil women could not cast a spell on their milk; on the same day, they would take sheep bowels into an ant-hill, so that their sheep would be as numerous as the ants; on the Midsummer Day, they would put flower wreaths on (among other places) bee-hives to protect bees and provide more honey; during the especially festive Christmas Eve ritual, the host would bring hay into the house, and his wife would at the same time throw grains at him, so that the next year's harvest would be rich; after that, they would light three candles -- -- one for the good faith of the inhabitants of that household, the second for the cattle, and the third for the corn and vineyard, etc. (Muraj 1992:185 and on).

production of textile. During the first half of the twentieth century, flax and hemp were still produced and processed within a family household -- those materials were necessary for making the linen parts of clothes, bed-clothes and soft furnishings. They weaved woollen textile and produced cloth out of domestic sheep's wool (Gjetvaj 1988:9 and on). This production was also followed by irrational procedures.⁹

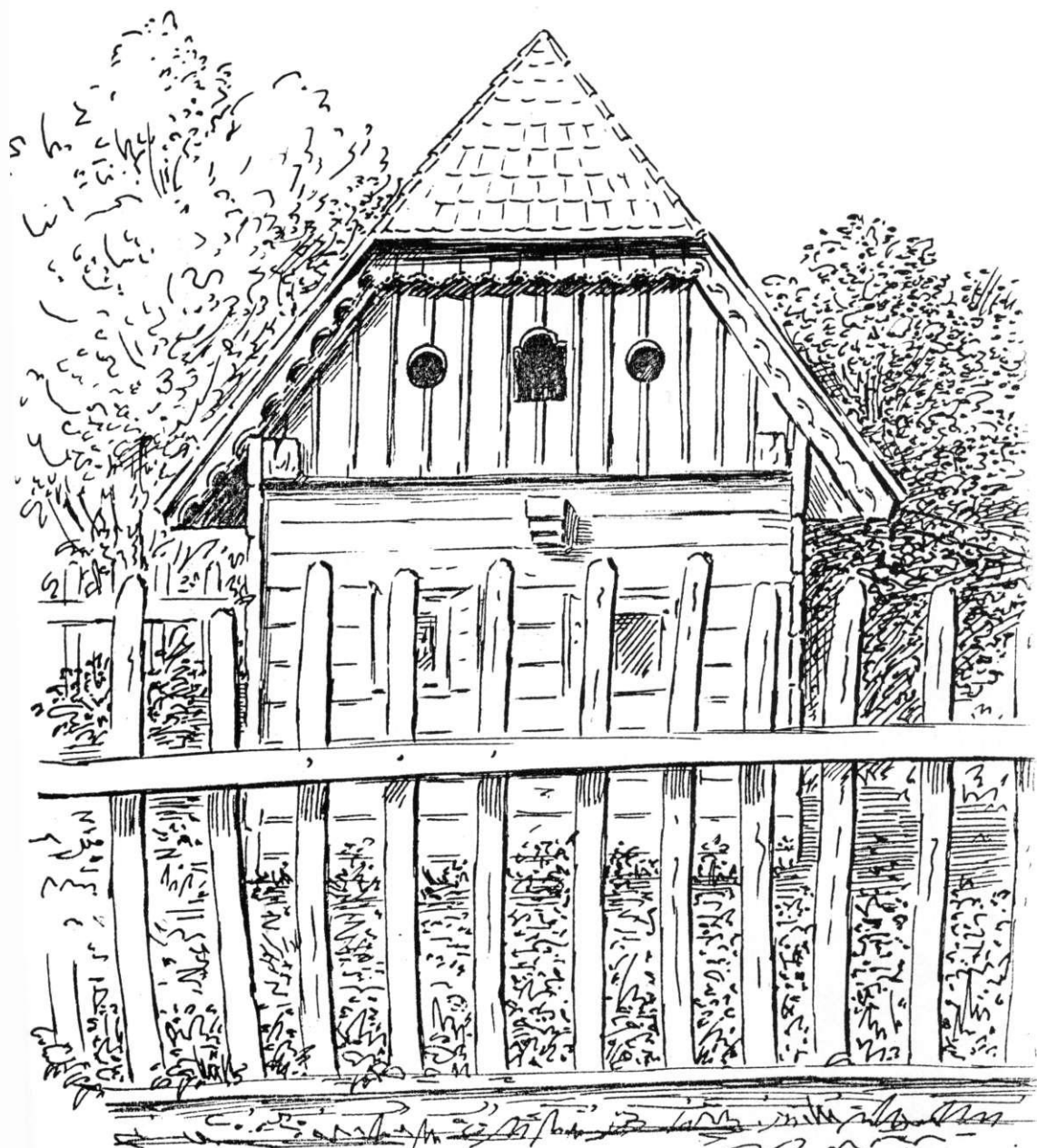
The other life segments could also reveal in what way the family as a basic social unit was at the same time economic unit, creating its existential sources mainly within its own estate. The obviously high level of self-supply, the usual practice of mutual unpaid help of people living in the same village during large works, the oral communication as prevailing, and the significant participation in the collective festivities full of magic features suggest that we are dealing with a highly traditional rural society; indeed, a society that was even very conservative for that historical period.

The building made for living had another function, besides the one for everyday-life purposes, characterized by the usual rhythm of working and taking rests, and satisfying basic biological and social needs. To put it vividly, it was a stage on which also the unusual events were performed -- the events that were crucial in both an individual's and a family's life. However, before viewing the *performance* of some of those events taking place on this stage, we should get acquainted with its material features.

Although we are aware of the diversity of concrete examples, we shall use the general architectural model for describing the features of the Banija built environment of the first half of the twentieth century. The encouragement for such approach can be found in an important characteristic of popular architecture: since those buildings were created on the basis of common knowledge of the rural community, they were adjusted to concrete needs of their inhabitants. As Rappoport warns (1978:120), they did satisfy the majority of cultural, physical and usage demands of that particular way of life, and therefore their forms are indeed similar.

Thus, the peasants' rural tradition of building their homes of wooden materials was still preserved during the first half of the twentieth century. The vicinity of the raw-material source made its impact -- the material was found in the nearby forests of Zrinska gora -- as well as the trim skill they have mastered with time, being an inheritance from the numerous generations prior to them. The superficial areas of houses were put together with oak round logs (previously cut and trimmed, after that sawed), that were placed horizontally and mutually connected in an

⁹ Especially during carnival the masquerade members would rise their legs very high when trick-or-treat dancing, so that flax would grow as high (Muraj 1992:189).



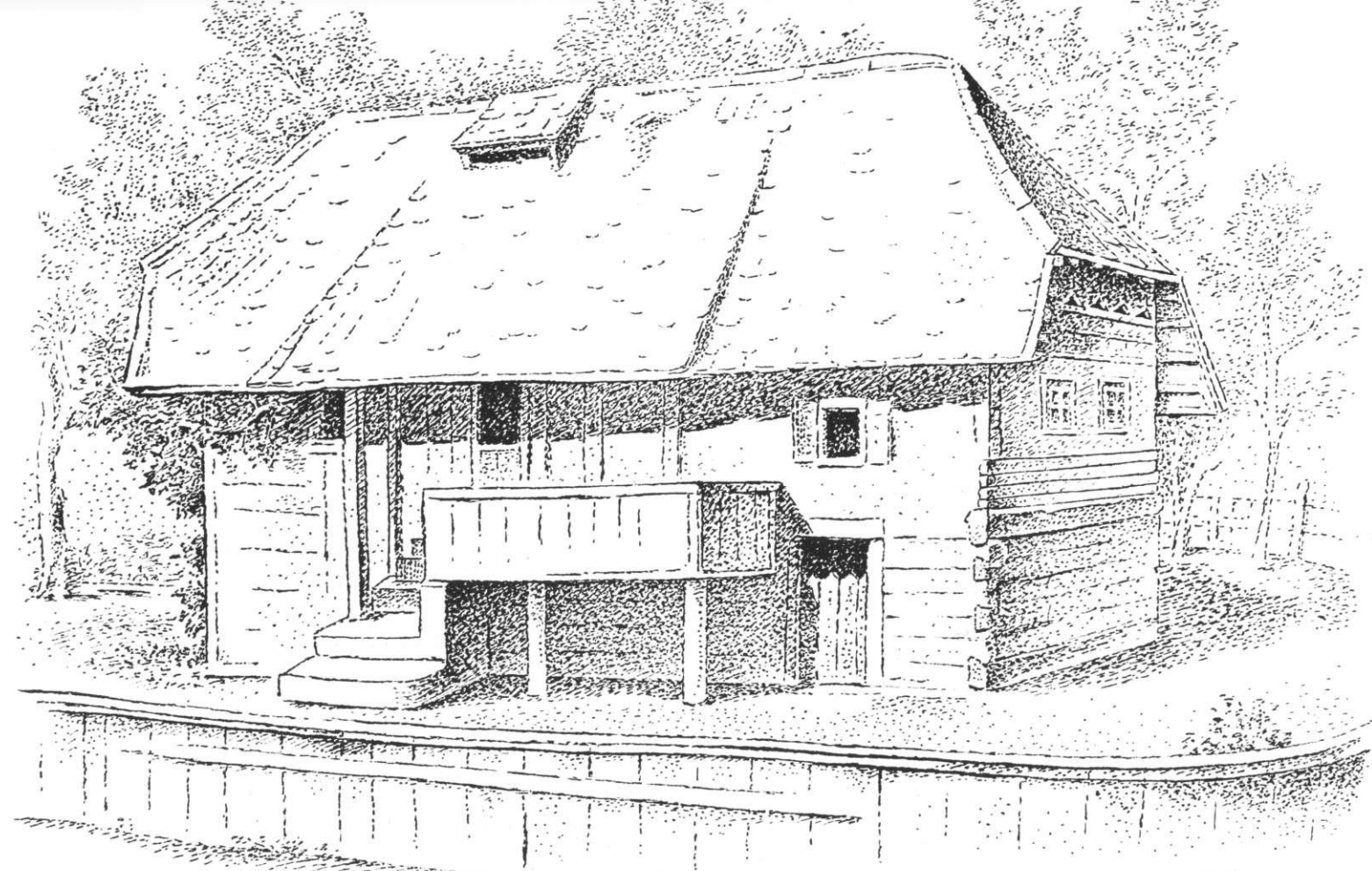
Dvorna kuća u Marin brodu - Glina. Ž. Kljaković 1954.

By Živko Kljaković, 1954; a house, the village of Marinbrod



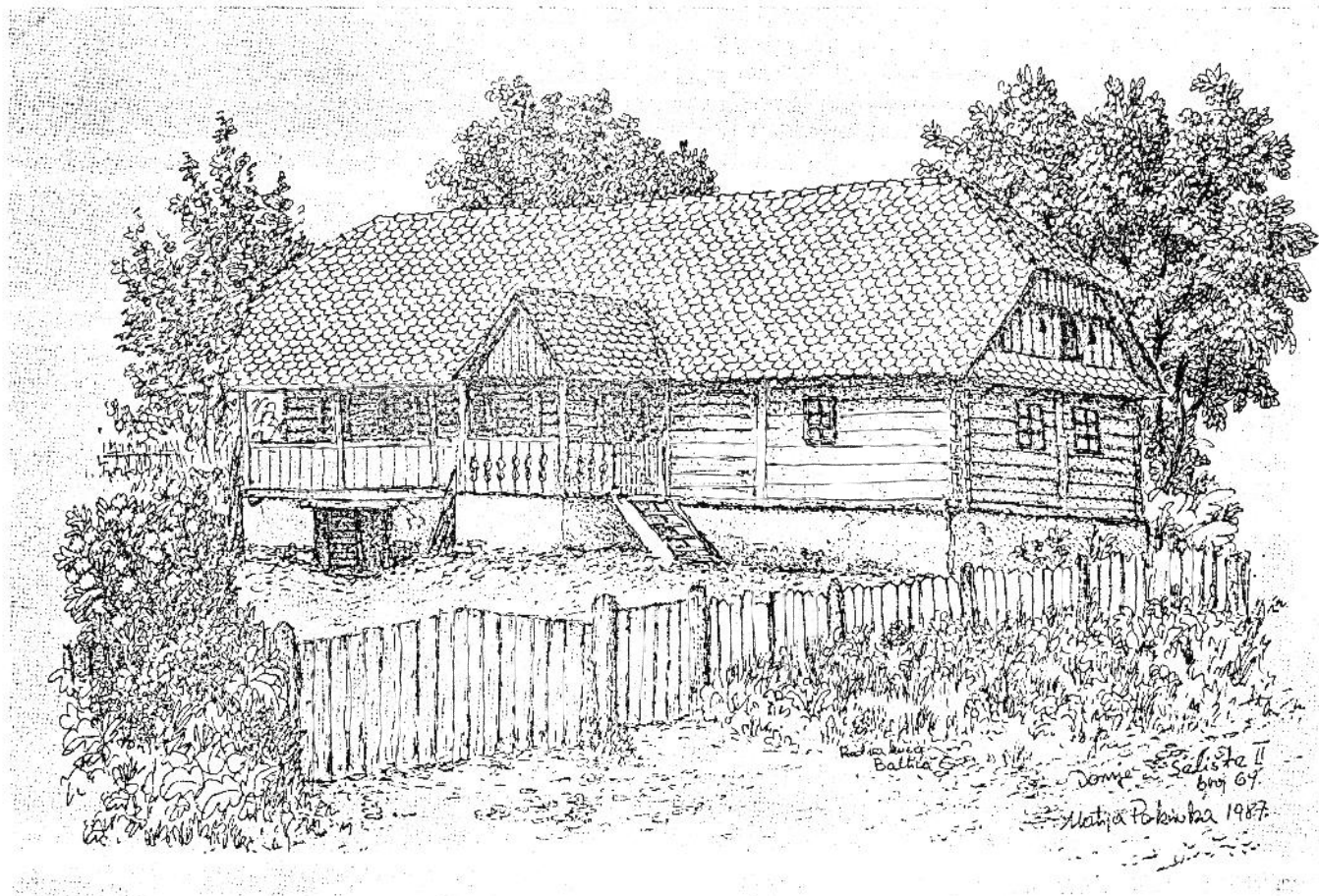
Kuća je sagradena 1875. godine - Gornje Selište
gline 11
Ž. Kljaković
1954.

By Živko Kljaković, 1954; a house, built in 1875, the village of Gornje Selište

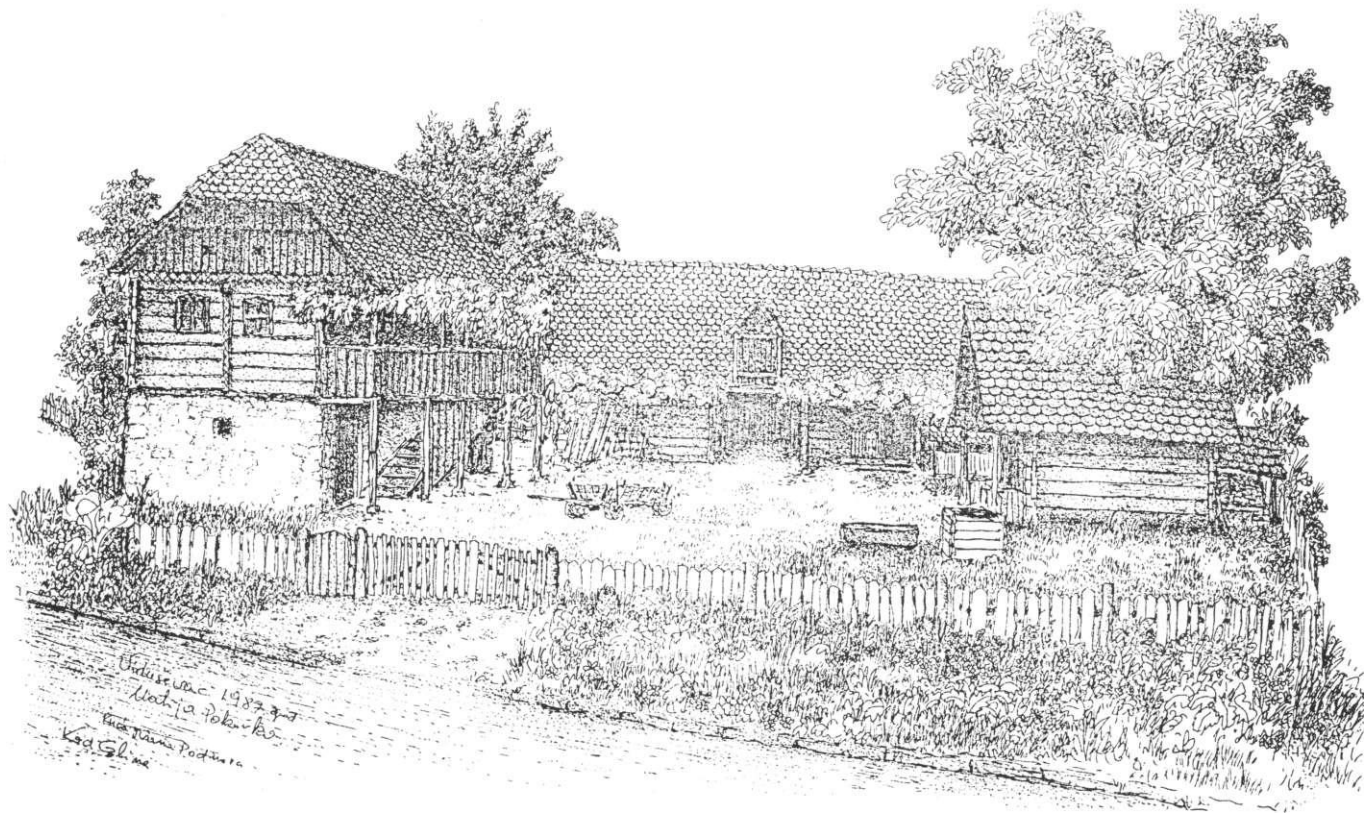


Jedna od najstarijih kuća u Rujevcu (Dvor na Hri) gdje stamo svi!
Kuća je sagrađena iz drveta, a pokrivena crijepom.

By Živko Kljaković, 1959; a house, the village of Rujevac



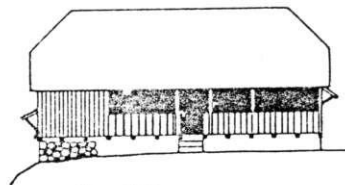
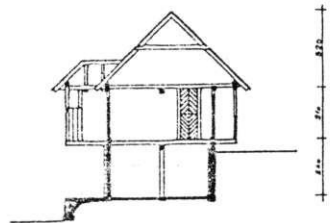
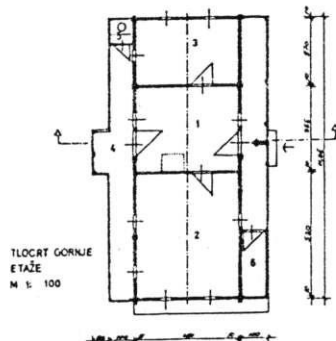
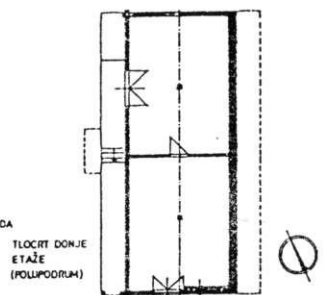
By Matija Pokrivka, 1987; a house, the village of Donje Selište



By Matija Pokrivka, 1987; a house with a yard; the village of Viduševac

Općina:	D V O R
Mjeslo:	K O M O R A, 2079
Vlasnik:	STOJAN MEČAVA
Stručni nadzor:	tema, br. 100/1986, obit. c.
Arhitekt:	Z. ŽIVKOVIĆ, X 1986.

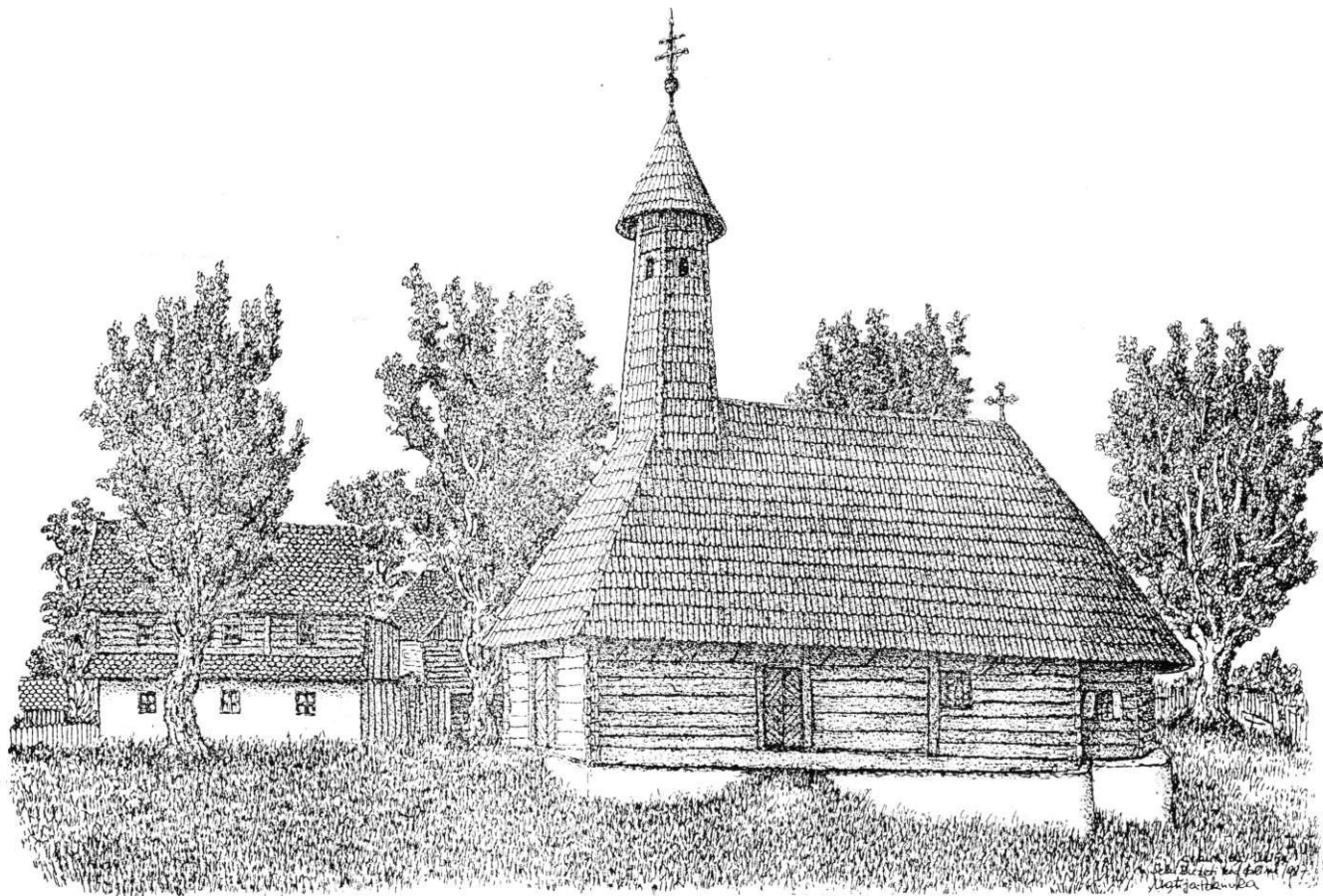
STAMBENA ZGRADA
na ovom mjestu
od 1912.



By Zdravko Živković, 1991; the ground plan and the exterior of a one-story house; the village of Donji Javoranj



By Matija Pokrivka, 1987; a house with a yard; the village of Joševica



By Matija Pokrivka; 1987; a wooden log church; the village of Buzeta

archaic way -- with wooden wedges and slits on the corners. In valley areas, the wooden superficial areas are laid on the short basis made of the quarry-stone, while in mountainous areas the stone connected with lime-mortar was built under a part of the house, so that the location on the slope would be levelled (Živković 1991:585 and on). Two-eaves roofs with semi-slope on their narrower, gable sides have already had a changed cover in this period of time. While the roofs in the wood areas used to be covered with shingle and with hay in valley areas during earlier periods, they were mostly covered with tile during the period we are discussing (Kljaković 1959:1). The customary decoration of the roof-peak with a metal cock figure contained one of the aesthetic features of the Banija houses.¹⁰

Taking the volume and spatial division of living-buildings in consideration, they were mostly formed as single-story or one-story houses. The single-story house usually had a protruding, uncovered porch along its longer side, where the front door was situated; several steps were leading towards the porch. The most humble variant of living space consisted of the kitchen (the space one would enter directly), and one room, while the more luxurious variant had two rooms, each of them situated along the same line left or right from the kitchen. The underpinned space consisted of a room used as a sort of depository or store-room for certain food, house tools and smaller agricultural tools. During the earlier period, a narrow open hearth was placed on the earthen kitchen floor, although it tended to be replaced by built stove. A record from the village of Donje Selište witnesses that hearths with all their related chains could be found as late as the year 1954, although they merely had assistant role, and were used for cooking cattle food or boiling clothes (Kräusel 1954:33). While the kitchen was the place for preparation of food and keeping drinkable water, and even do the personal hygiene, the room was used for sleeping, eating, spinning and weaving (during the winter), and for day life in general. The other room, if it existed, was used only as a bedroom or storage for clothes and certain food. That modest kitchen did not even had the ceiling, so that the smoke from the hearth widened throughout the attic freely and went out through a hole in the roof. A central protruding rafter was dominating the room board ceiling, not only by its size. Namely, it was the place that eloquently talked about the history of the building, because it often had the year of the building, together with the name of the builder or the owner engraved in it; it was also the place where family documents and money were kept (Kräusel

¹⁰ A record dating from the year 1887 mentions that the Banija peasants would buy such a metal cock and put it on the roof next to the smoke-hole primarily because they enjoyed its shining (Begović 1986:44).

1954:42). As the researchers claim, the peasants made their humble board beds themselves; they were placed against the walls. The benches with movable backs of carpenter origins were turned into beds during the night as well (Kljaković 1954:1). The table was placed in the very centre of the room or along the longer side of the front, that always had two windows and was turned across the village street.

The space of the one-story houses was divided in such a way that the ground floor was intended for economic functions, and the first floor for living. That was why store room and sometimes coach-house, cowshed and pigsty were placed on the ground floor. One would reach the first floor by climbing the outer wooden stairs, placed along the longer side of the house, and often continuing into the open porch (Dukić 1980:65). The front, as well as the porch posts were often decorated with ornaments; besides that, people used to insert eaves into the sideways walls in the height of the first floor -- they had a decorative function, but they also protected the lower parts of the walls from water (Kljaković 1954:1; 1960:3). The kitchen remained in the line even in a house organized like this. A larger room was placed on the one side of the kitchen, overlooking the street and with a function of living-room, and one or two smaller rooms with functions of bedroom and store room were placed on the other side. The space for the pantry was also provided, and at the end of the porch there was the lavatory (Živković 1991:590).

No matter whether we are dealing with a single-story, half-story or one-story house, the Banija families (formerly with numerous members, extended) also had some other objects, that were freely dispersed throughout a relatively spacious yard. That is why they had a one-room buildings in which married couples were spending the nights and keeping their properties (Živković 1991:589). Cowsheds in combination with depositories for hay and straw, pigsties and buildings for chicken, corn-storages and granaries were also standing on the yard as separate objects. A baker's oven could stand separately, but more often it was within a special small building, so-called summer kitchen. The well with wooden neck was obligatory, and a trough for cattle was placed beside the well (Kljaković 1954:2). The whole housing complex was usually encircled by a wooden fence, facing the village street, with a short gate with a double-door for coaches and a single-door for people.

The harmony that the built environment of the Banija villages of that time managed to create together with the natural environment was joined by numerous small village churches, many of which were built of round logs and covered with oak shingle. The use of the above mentioned constructing materials, the selection of locations adapted to the landscape

and the reasonable dimensions of the buildings were also very significant for achieving this harmony.

This survey of Banija traditional architecture emphasized only the elements that are relevant for full understanding of the phenomena discussed further in this paper. The readers can find more detailed information in the cited bibliographical references and sources. We also have to mention that one part of the described architectural set was destroyed in the devastation of the World War II (1941–1945). The second part was destroyed during the period between 1945 and 1990 in a less violent way: by abandoning and deconstruction of the existing buildings in favour of the new construction materials and modern building forms, being the results of the changed life conditions of the Banija peasants. Still, the drawings and notes by the painter and travel writer Matija Pokrivka, created in the area around the town of Glina at the end of 1987 have still shown some preserved traces of this architectural style -- -- both in individual objects, and in some parts of rural units (Glina 1988). Finally, a strong and violent blow stroke this architecture during the war in Croatia (1991–1995). The war events were unusually destructive in the very region of Banija.

We have already stated that the rural house was also a stage of unusual productions, and one of the prominent places among them must belong to the wedding. The origins and preservation of the more or less immense wedding ceremony reflect the importance that the rural communities have awarded the act of getting married. The peasants from Banija were no exception; their celebration of the founding of a new married unit consisted of a set of traditionally determined procedures. Having in mind that we are primarily interested in the spatial, territorial aspect of those phenomena, we shall single out only a part of wedding customs.¹¹ We shall take a look at the events that are related to the departure of the young couple and going to the groom's home, because in that very moment (by the physical arrival of the bride to the groom's home) the process of integration of a new member into the family community begins. The ethnographic records that we have show us that the reception consists of real and symbolic actions using which the hosts wanted to make the bride feel welcome, tried to express their hope and wish for her harmonious fitting, but also to point out the duties she was

¹¹ Discussing only the scenes that are significant for the territorial passage, and that warn about the meaning of certain places within the house and in its closest surroundings, we shall not describe the whole structure and context of the custom. The scenes that we describe here are a sum of the most common correspondences: however, the practice and the concrete examples have more or less not been faithful to the described model, so the temporal and spatial order of the scenes could have been rearranged or arranged differently than described here.

supposed to fulfill. The reception was gradual and it happened on several selected places of the space.

Before introducing all of these, let me make another remark. We tried to explain the symbolic acts using the words of the informers whenever it was possible. Namely, their words reflect the meaning that the members of the community subscribed to these acts, and through their words they have indirectly revealed their social values and ideology of their culture. Unfortunately, the incompleteness of such materials made this approach not consistently applied.

The first crucial place is expressed in the scene when the wedding procession, approaching in the village street, stops in front of the yard building. According to the testimonies of Ivka Ikić from the village of Gvozdanski and Miloš Rađenović from the village of Oraovica (Bonifačić 1959:19; 1960:7), the hosts have prepared a bundle of straw and put it next to each side of the gate. The bride's father is going to light them at the moment when the wedding guests arrive and open the door. The fire from the bonfire, which the bride had to pass by, was a visible sign for the whole village to know that she was at the transition from her former single status to the social status of a married woman. It was also the beginning of the reception into a new yard. This procedure, provided that it is based on the ancient-old belief about the lustrative power of the fire, gives a new member the chance to approach her new community as a pure person. However, it was also the place that divided the outer and the inner worlds. Namely, the yard building was the first border line that divides the common, public area -- the village street -- from the private one -- the area of wider home space.

The scene to follow is placed in the yard; while a group of girls sings their welcome and dance the reel, the bride has to throw an apple over the house roof with a strong swing. Manifesting the physical connection with (for her) the new building, she expressed her wish that the new family accepts her by throwing that apple. The informers Stanko Zorić from the village of Žirovac and Mara Milošević from Kostajnica explained that if she threw the apple successfully, she would live happily, but if she did not succeed, her husband would eventually make her leave home (Bonifačić 1959:13; 1959a:3). In the latter citation we can recognize some patriarchy in the worldview of the Banija peasants; we shall encounter it again.

At the same time, they would stretch a roll of brand new, not previously used domestic white linen across the stairs; it leads the bride, who walks only having her socks on, to another transition point -- the immediate enter into the house itself. The use of this linen, in whose production was put so much effort, can be interpreted (from today's point

of view) also as a sign used by the hosts to express their openness and good will towards the newcomer. However, it would be difficult to answer the question whether the white colour of the linen was used as a metaphor for purity and innocence, characteristics that were also expected from the bride. Nevertheless, the magic connotations were present in this procedure, as well as in many others: according to Ilija Samardžija's (born in 1912 in Selište) narration, it was believed that this bride's walk would bring more flax (Bonifačić 1954:32). Having in mind that domestic textile production used to be quite intense at the time, the social meaning of this theatricalization could also act as a remainder for the new member of the community of her work duties that await for her -- being a spinner and a weaver -- in her future life.

If we were to come back to the idea of the house as a stage, we could say that the above mentioned scenes were held on the proscenium, so that the appearance on the real scene was to come. And if we were to apply the well-known van Gennep's theory of the *rite de passage*, we could say that the first of the three levels of rites of passage is playing on this proscenium stage. It is the level of so-called *separation* (van Gennep 1960:11). Being on the axis between public and narrower, private space, the bride is separated from her previous status, but the entrance into the new one still awaits.

The bridge leading towards the new status is the house door-step. The mother-in-law appears next to the bride as a protagonist in this third border line, the one nearest to the interior of the house. The relationship between those two people is going to be very relevant for the functioning of their everyday family life, because the female role in running the house was unquestionable, in spite of the prevailing patriarchy that apparently dominated the social relations of the Banija peasants. Therefore, the earlier "manager" of the household meets her future substitute at this transition spot, and at the same time welcomes her by giving her bread -- the basic food, the starting point of every meal.

The belief that the bride became protected by the landlord with the act of entering the house was wide-spread. The fact that she was barefoot could express another meaning, related to the ancient image of the threshold as the place where the souls of ancestors reside. The newcomer expresses her respect for the dead by making direct physical contact, by joining her body with this sacred spot. At the same time, she becomes a new link in the family chain, and, being a potential parent, creates a new branch of the family tree.

According to van Gennep's interpretation, crossing over the threshold (*limen*), being the second phase of the rite of passage (so-called *margin*), is at the same time dangerous and sacred state (1960:11). It is not

accidentally that mother-in-law (a female) was chosen to be the person to help the bride cross the dangerous place. The belief that she gained lucky charms by entering the house successfully is expressed by what follows directly. Namely, she should step on a sack or a bag filled with corn, the most important food product. Sometimes she would step on an egg. Mira Jandrić (born in 1937 in Prnjavor) explained that "she broke the egg in order to achieve richness" (Bonifačić 1960a:30).

The bride leaves the outer and enters the inner space with her last step. Where is she about to go first? Towards the very centre of the house space -- towards the hearth. The father-in-law or brother-in-law bring her there. First, she will dig the fire with a fire-iron, and then she will encircle the fire three times. The practice that was noted in the household that did not have a hearth any more speaks of the Banija peasants' caring about this procedure. In such houses, people would take a burning live coal out of their stove and put it on the floor (Bonifačić 1959:6, 20; 1954:32, 38), thus enabling the bride to encircle it three times and do her symbolic duty of approaching the house fire.

If the hearth is essentially an existential centre, that is, the narrower circle of the home, the second concentric circle is the table, the place around which the family gathers most. The bride approaches it now, and encircles it three times, just as she encircled the hearth. According to a record from the village of Bačuga, at the same time she would bow to every corner, kiss it, and put in it a piece of bread given to her by the mother-in-law as she entered the house (Bonifačić 1954:38). The participants themselves experienced the encircling of the table as an integrative process. It is shown in testimony of Ilija Samardžija from the village of Selište: "The landlord takes her by the hand and leads her around the table, so that she becomes a part of the family [*družinče*]" (Bonifačić 1954:32). After that, the bride is being seated at the table and brought a male child that she would seat in her lap and present with a gift. The meaning of this act is obvious: it is meant to encourage a soon reproduction. The emphasized wish that the first-born child is male reflects the earlier discussed patriarch worldview of the inhabitants of Banija.

Moving from the threshold towards the table, the bride gradually enters into so-called *aggregation*, the third and final van Gennep's phases of the *rite de passage*. She is now achieving her new social status. She has been accepted by the house members, and gained a new place for living. The only thing left to do is to announce it publicly; a place in the room under the main beam is serving this purpose. In some cases -- for example in the village of Bačuga (Bonifačić 1954:38) -- the best man and brother-in-law are going to lead her and help her to turn around three times in the

traditional direction -- clockwise.¹² Having kissed her after each turn, the best man and brother-in-law, being the house's representatives, finalize her reception in public. In other cases, the place under the main beam is going to be the stage somewhat later, in the moment when all the guests have been seated at the table. During the toast, whose first line says: "The bride has come into this house, let God help her!" [Došla je snaža pod ovaj krov, pomogao joj gospod Bog!] (as Miloš Bogdanović from the village of Gornji Kukuruzari told us) certain wedding character takes an ax and hits the beam very hard (Bonifačić 1959a:6). If we remind us of the lit bonfire as the visual signal from the beginning of the process of reception, hitting the beam could be interpreted as the auditory signal at its end. The metaphor of beam within the context of the house as a whole can also be seen in the scene that happens later, in the phase when guests present the bride with gifts. Juraj Vučićević from the village of Hrastovica said that the wedding ceremonial character invites the father-in-law to join this act and hits the beam, crying out: "This ridge has to give the bride some lucky coin!" (Bonifačić 1960a:12).

This last act, performed at the mentioned place in the house, actually brought the process of social integration of an adult member, capable of reproduction and work, into the family (and production) community to its end. We have seen that its direction was from the public towards the private, from the outer towards the inner, from the far towards the near -- it lead through some crucial points of the territory and within the house.

However, in order to determine their validity, let us try to follow the path from the opposite direction, the direction arousing from an opposite social situation. We are talking about the final parting from a family member, caused by his death. Although this shift in life, the transition of the deceased into another world, is followed by rituals, their varieties are not as numerous as in wedding customs; therefore, the analogy of comparison is going to be significantly decreased. Still, it is worth trying.

It should be stated as an introductory note that the Banija death and funeral ritual interweaves two groups of procedures, just as anywhere else. The one group expresses the attempt of family members that their deceased member would be well equipped and would happily and satisfied go into the world of the dead. On the other hand, the other group tries to protect the living from the deceased member's possible disturbance, or even from his ability to take another family member with him.

Discussing wedding rituals, we have seen that the process of integration ended in the room, under the main ceiling beam. The process of segregation, with which the family separates from its deceased member,

¹² The rural terminology names it "following the Sun's steps" [*na oposun*].

begins in the same place. Namely, it was where the bier used to be placed. It was in that sacred place that near and remote relatives, neighbours and villagers, guarding the deceased person and spending their nights beside him, started to say goodbye, that is, to separate from him. Let us just mention that the whole space was especially decorated, with firmly closed windows, paintings hanging upside-down, stopped clock, covered mirror and crucifixion, everything arranged this way in order to make the deceased person's soul remain within his dead body. However, at the moment of leaving his former home, a moment characterized by lifting the coffin from the bier and carrying out of the house, someone would hit the beam with an ax. This procedure was not merely an auditory signal of the beginning of the segregation process; it had a deeper meaning. For example, Dragica Batnožić from the village of Čukur told us that people believed that this was the way to stop the deceased person's soul return to his former home (Bonifačić 1959a:21), while Dragica Vučićević-Stojanović (born in 1919 in Hrastovica) warned about hitting the beam with an ax when the deceased was the houselord; they believed that this hit would protect the estate from possible disaster (Bonifačić 1960a:33).

The rule that the deceased was carried out feet first was strictly obeyed. Mate Cestarić (born in 1921 in Soline) said "so that he goes as if he were alive", "in order not to come back" (Bonifačić 1954:46). On the way from the interior of the house towards the outside, the sacred/dangerous place should be passed through -- the threshold. The group with the coffin would give it their respect (or tried to charm it and its dangerous might) -- they would lower the coffin and touch the door-step three times.

Crossing over the threshold left the first border line behind. The separation of house space continued in the yard by a symbolic scene whose contents we already know, although it is now performed with different equipment. Namely, it was customary that a chicken was slaughtered at the moment when the deceased passed the threshold; a clucking-hen for the female deceased, and a cock for the male deceased. When the group carrying the coffin enters the yard, the head of the dead animal is thrown over the house. So, if the bride wanted to make a connection with the house by throwing the apple, the chicken head attempts to cut this connection loose. The differences in performing this action are interesting as well. Jaga Lipak, born in 1901, talks about the village of Marinbrod, where it was performed at the moment when the coach carrying the coffin started to move (Kräusel 1954:19); it was during the transition from the private into the public. However, in the village of Kostrići (narrated by Josip Lješkarac), the animal is killed while the coffin is still in the house. They do it on the threshold itself, and it gets tainted

with blood. The group carrying the deceased had to step in it (Bonifačić 1959a:21). This will symbolically cut off the way through which the deceased person's soul might return into the house.

Wishing that the parting is definite and without negative consequences, a family member will break a pot and pour out all the water in the house at the moment when the deceased leaves the house. However, these precautions are not applied only in this space; the wider environment is also being protected from the possible return of the deceased person's soul. Namely, members of all houses on the way from the house to the cemetery, the place of the final transition into the world of the dead, pour out water.

The deceased person's escorts -- possibly contaminated by evil forces -- have to cleanse both physically and symbolically, in order to continue their household and family lives as usual. The hearth plays a role again; every member of the funeral escort will wash their hands above it, and, according to Mira Grubić's narration, people from the village of Čukor used to throw live coal over their heads in order to drive away the "dirt" (Bonifačić 1959a:22). After that, all of them would gather around the room table -- the room was given back its everyday appearance during the funeral. Having parted from the deceased family member at his grave, the friends and grave-diggers part from his soul as well, having a meal together. Before the third course is served, a prayer for his soul is going to be said with a lit candle; this candle will then be fixed onto the beam, where it will burn off. This will symbolically close the circle, the circle of the ultimate departure.

We are aware of having cast only a single ray of light on the revelation of the relationships that people living in the villages of Banija during the first half of the twentieth century had with their living space with this presentation of procedures taken from a set of folklore inheritance and with the attempt of its interpretation. In order to view this relationship in its entirety, we should observe it through the context of other life events. However, the uncompleted presentation like this one can tell us something. First, we have to claim that the restrained living space and its material frame, such as the one people from Banija had at their disposal, did not give a large range of ways of satisfying housing needs. It was arranged in a modest manner, poorly furnished, and it had to be not very comfortable. These feature limited the possibilities of the inhabitants themselves, so that it is not peculiar that the places found to be most significant in their behaviour and perceptions were at the same time the most basic ones -- hearth, table, threshold. However, the meanings given to those common places are far beyond their practical, everyday function. They denote the meaning of the house itself. And the house meant for its

inhabitants more than a mere territorially defined space that represented shelter and physical asylum from the outer world's tempests, space that provided them the satisfaction of their biological and existential needs. Besides that, the house was the primary territory of their social existence.

(Translated by Sanja Kalapoš)

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SEOSKI KUĆNI PROSTOR U ZRCALU RITUALA

SAŽETAK

U svjetlu promišljanja suvremene antropologije arhitekture prilogom se pokušava razmotriti odnos seoskoga stanovništva određene zemljopisne regije spram nastanjenog prostora. Budući da se htjelo spoznati kakav je taj odnos bio u minulom vremenu, tj. razdoblju koje obuhvaća kraj 19. st. i prvu polovicu 20. st., nije ga bilo moguće istraživati izravno te se pribjeglo posrednom načinu. Odnos je razmotren u svojoj društvenoj dimenziji pomoću simboličkih postupaka uvriježenih u dotičnoj zajednici, koje su primjenjivali u dvije situacije: u procesu integracije pridošloga odrasloga člana u obitelj, odnosno u procesu segregacije obitelji od preminuloga člana.

Kao podloga za propitivanje poslužili su etnografski i drugi zapisi o arhitekturi te svadbenim i posmrtnim običajima seljaka u Baniji. Ti zapisi sugeriraju da se u rečenom razdoblju radilo o tradicijskom, štoviše vrlo konzervativnom seoskom društvu, što ga je još obilježavalo arhaično poljoprivredno gospodarstvo s visokim stupnjem samoopskrbnosti, usmenost kao prevladavajući način komuniciranja te znatno sudjelovanje seoske zajednice u kolektivnim svetkovinama.

Banijski seljaci stanovali su u kućama sagrađenima mahom od prirodnoga materijala (s osobitom prevagom drvene građe), jednostavne prostorne razdiobe, oskudnoga inventara i bez suvremenijih stambeno-tehničkih uređaja. Stambene su zgrade zajedno s gospodarskima, raspoređenima na dvorištu oko kuće, najčešće bile opasane drvenom ogradom. Osim za zadovoljavanje osnovnih stambenih, pa i nekih radnih namjena, kuća je bila i poprištem zbivanja u kojima je sudjelovala i šira društvena zajednica, i to u situacijama koje su bile prijelomne i u životu pojedinca i obitelji.

Analiza onoga dijela svadbenog rituala koji se primjenjivao pri dolasku mladenke u mladoženjin dom, pokazala je nekoliko značajnih mjesta, odnosno graničnih crta, na kojima se pri prijelazu teritorija i prostora očitovao integrativni postupak. Mjesto uz dvorišna vrata, pristup kućnim stubama, zatim prag pa ognjište u kuhinji, stol i mjesto pod glavnom gredom u sobi bili su ti posvećeni toposi u postupku prijema. Vjerodostojnost tih mjesta pokušalo se utvrditi u suprotnoj društvenoj situaciji kad se obitelj odvajala od preminuloga člana. Potvrdilo se da su se pri odlasku gotovo na istim toposima (mjesto pod glavnom gredom, prag, dvorišna crta, ognjište, stol) poduzimali postupci kojima se htjela presjeći veza pokojnika (tj. njegova duha) s domom.

Ljudima koji su nastavali banijska sela u prvoj polovici 20. st. ta su mjesta u nastanjenom prostoru sadržavala znatno dublje značenje nego što to odaje njihova primarna praktična i uporabna funkcija. Pokazuju značenje kuće same, koja je uz ostale svoje namjene bila i nezaobilaznim teritorijem njihove društvene opstojnosti.