

## Darinka Veić the Ethnographer

When the beginnings of the research and interest in folk culture (V.Č-K. Ethnological forums, 2, pp. 67-88) were analyzed in 1979, the work of Darinka Veić was unfairly, but unintentionally omitted. Namely, at that time the manuscript of her *Ethnographic notes* was unavailable to the public. Nearly twenty years later, the author's son, Zvonimir Veić gave it "to the Ethnographic Museum in Split for evaluation". After a positive reception, the manuscript was published in 2000 by the Croatian Cultural Society "Progress" in Split, titled *Ethnographic memorial of the folk life and customs of the population and Neorić and Sutín in Muć Krajina in the first half of the twentieth century*, with a note that the preparers wanted it to serve as "contribution to the occasion of marking the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ethnographic Museum in Split". Now, facing the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Split Ethnographic Museum we are talking about that monograph.

The book has 112 pages, of which 99 pages consist of text with ethnographic content written by Darinka Veić, accompanied with 20 illustrations. Among them are the passage of the author's manuscript and the copy of the drawing of a man in traditional folk costume of the Lexicographic Institute Encyclopedia. On the inner cover there are articles about the author and her work, signed by the editor Mladen Vukovic. The book starts with quotes from the work of Antun Radić *The basics for collecting and studying material on the national life* (p. 5). After that there are "the letter of the editor" by Zvonimir Veić (p. 6-7), the editor's prologue, and the text "Antun Radić - the founder of Croatian ethnology" (p. 8-10) serving as an introduction. The editor ended the book with the text by the ethno-choreograph Branko Šegović about the Muć traditional whirl dance, singing and costumes, his drawings of the parts of Muć costumes (p. 101-102) and a review by the ethnologist Renata Vujnović (p. 103-104) written on 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1998 titled *The first ethnographer of Muć*. On 105<sup>th</sup> and 106<sup>th</sup> page there are the notes about the author and the *Summary* written by her son, Zvonimir Veić.

Originally from Split, Darinka Veić, born Rogošić died in 1984 aged 73, leaving the manuscript she wrote in Neorić (then in the municipality of Muć) "from 1/IX-40 - 42/ VII month", as she noted above the title. She was one of the first qualified teachers

in this part of the Dalmatian hinterland, and the first in the just opened elementary school in Neorić. Married to her fellow villager Stipan Veić she entered the family whose family name, among many immigrants (in 1720, 92%) in the documents for Neorić (the land books of Dalmatia, Zadar Historical Archive), was recorded as being among the very few indigenous villagers in the 17th century. In such a family environment she encountered all forms of traditional life. As an educator, Darinka Veić observed the life of the local population. Although she lived in the village, it is obvious that she followed the then contemporary newspapers, especially those following the life of the people.

Published 58 years after its creation, Darinka Veić's book, although focused on the culture of a village, is very much important for ethnography because it reflects the basics of the traditional culture of the entire Muć region, as a part of the mountainous hinterland of Dalmatia. It is a pity that this work remained unknown for so long, and so with this review, I want to draw attention to its value, the more because it includes the time when Dalmatia and parts of its hinterland were under Italian occupation. Darinka Veić apparently tried to record for future generations as much of the traditional culture Muć Krajina as it was possible. The mere statement that people of the region take pride "when they say the Croatian language" and that they "love their language", suggests it was a time when people sought to preserve the Croatian cultural tradition inside their life. It is obvious that the author consciously contributed to this historical truth.

Before Darinka Veić the ethnographic material, mostly modeled after Radić' *Basics*, was written mostly by educated male "contributors." Don Frane Ivanisevic and Friar Sylvester Kutleša used Radić ethnographic questionnaires as a basis for writing a monograph on Poljica and Imotski regions. Those first describers of a complex life and culture in Dalmatia were followed by Darinka Veić in the effort that she made to document a comprehensive description of the life and customs of the Muć krajina. She did also use the *Basics* by Antun Radić, the former secretary of the Committee for the folk life and customs of the then Yugoslav, and now the Croatian Academy of Science and Art. The Academy has since its beginnings, owing to the efforts of its first President Franjo Rački, outlined in its program of the study of, as it was then called, "wisdom" and "the history of the rights of the South Slavs". This meant that the Academy's work would not be bound by the borders of the states, but would focus on dissemination of culture throughout the area of Southern Europe. Since then, up to half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Committee was engaged in discussion about what is crucial - to record the material in the vernacular, as Radić sought, or in the literary language, as the younger junior scientists held! Darinka Veić clearly opted in the 40's for the latter, more modern approach, which was then generally accepted at the end of the 50's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was concluded that Radić was wrong also when he insisted that the authentic materials about the culture of the village were only the ones written by the villagers, the residents of the concerned region, in their dialect. She wrote in the literary language, but sought to explain the meaning of specific local expressions, which is important for understanding the lexicon.

Darinka was an urban, cultural and educated woman with a gift for observation of the events and behavior of people in her environment. Ivanisevic and Kutleša, being priests, were such pedagogues too, as well as the other later authors of ethnographic records. Her husband's death and the difficult life, the war and economic circumstances forced Darinka to cease her ethnographic work, and some thematic chapters of her ethnographic memorials remained untreated. However, in each thematic section, the author, in addition to the description, provided information on the previous status, clearly pointing out the differences in the social and material culture at the beginning of the Second World War, compared to the situation in the previous period. In addition, by describing the way of life the author expressed the differences in the behavior of certain environments by sex and age. Thus, for example, she points out the lack of hygiene because of which children often died in the first year of life, and points to the negligent attitude towards small children. In addition to that one can observe the position of women in the contemporary family and rural society.

In addition, in each thematic section the author gave her opinions and examples from her teaching practice, using and explaining the less well known local expressions and the administrative division of villages in the region in that time. It is particularly important to note her explanation of the work and life in the cooperative, along with detailed descriptions of the family life. She indicates the process of the fragmentation of cooperatives into fewer nuclear "families" and their prevalence in the structure of family life. This is manifested in the past too. According to available documents in the early 18th century the smaller family prevailed throughout the Muć Krajina. Then in Neorić the average was 5.6 members per household. Constant process of dividing the family is characteristic for the entire area of the Dalmatian hinterland, shaken by centuries of conquest and warfare, with the influx from migration and the exodus of the young. These convulsive movements, due to severe political and economic conditions, created the tradition of disintegration of large families, or married sons leaving the larger family.

The Ethnographic value of the *Memorial* is compounded by fluid descriptions of the economic conditions with signs of urban and political impact on village life. A system of senior authority in marriage is described, along with family and rural social relations. One also finds the observation of the interweaving of traditional qualities and the impact of bourgeois and customary legal norms and the acceptance of new legal regulations. Through some content the author's own unobtrusive attitude towards the behavior of individuals and society as a whole can be deduced, from which we can see that she indeed used Radić's *Basics* as a starting point for work in which her ability of perceiving even the most obscure developments in society in which she lived came to the fore. Her education contributed to her work, but for the interest she selected she obviously had natural talent.

Darinka Veić, a teacher from Neorić, the first woman describe the life and culture of one whole subregion of Central Dalmatia in a monograph. In the early 20th century, in collaboration with the editor of the Academy's Almanac of public life and customs, teachers Nike Balarin and Paulina Bogdan-Bijelić, as the first women, described the

witchcraft and the Konavle embroidery, but they did not venture to record the complete cultural traditions of their region. Darinka Veić was obviously motivated to describe the traditional culture of the Muć locality by the fact that just before World War II the director of the Ethnographic Museum in Split Kamilo Tončić had developed a network of associates in the Dalmatian Zagora to collect pieces of decorated costumes, record the production of carpets, and especially to popularize the application of elements of the old folk costumes into the contemporary women's bourgeois suit. It is a pity that no correspondence or other evidence was preserved concerning the author's collaboration with some of the authors of ethnographic records, the employees of ethnographic museums or members of the Academy's Committee for the public life and customs. We believe that, as a cultural woman, she followed the publication of folk songs and other articles in the newspapers. But knowing all this, it was before the World War II that she decided to pursue her ethnographic work, obviously feeling the need to preserve the Croatian national cultural identity. Thus Darinka Veić made an important contribution to the cultural history of the Dalmatian people that will be indispensable for further studies of popular culture and changes in the life of the Dalmatian hinterland.

*Translated by Tomislav Redep*