

FROM RITUAL TO THEATRE AND BACK: THE LASTOVO ISLAND CARNIVAL

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This paper is an elaborated version of the text read at the international conference "Folklore Theatre in the Balkans and in the Danubian Basin Countries" and published in the collection of studies under the same title (Lozica 1984). The documentary film (in S8 format) about the Lastovo carnival in 1981 was shown to the participants at the conference. The aim of the paper is to point to the changes of structure of the carnival ritual on the Island of Lastovo during the last hundred years, keeping in mind the role of theatrical elements, representation and improvisation in performing the ritual. A hypothesis is given on repeated gradual weakening and strengthening of rigidity of the ritual, which on the Lastovo Island gave ground first to the appearing and then again to disappearing of the phenomenon previously termed by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin as the "carnival drama".

The Lastovo Island carnival is not solely a theatrical phenomenon, it is a folk custom¹ which includes ritual (or rite)² and performing³ acts. Moreover, it is a public celebration of the utmost meaning for the participants.

My preparations for the field-work on Lastovo Island actually lasted for a very long time. Serving in the marine corps of the former Yugoslav army I had many opportunities to master the geography of the island, literally step by step. As a soldier, I did learn a lot about Nature and the people. I was well informed about the context of the carnival events, but I was not allowed to participate. My first experience of the Lastovo carnival came three years later. Namely, in 1981 I visited the island again as a civilian and scientist.

The motive for the field-work on Lastovo Island was the text "Poklad i majka" ["Carnival and his mother"], published in the book by N. Bonifačić Rožin (Bonifačić Rožin 1963). The comparison of the above-mentioned text (and other earlier and subsequent records from the archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb) with my experience of the Lastovo Island carnival in 1981 is the main topic of this paper. The aim is to show the variable and unstable nature of rituals (rites), and to describe the

¹ Custom as a deviation from the everyday behaviour, caused by tradition.

² Ritual (or rite) as a part of custom which includes performing.

³ Performing as the presentation of the invented reality.

role of "theatable" moments, performing and improvisation within the ritual performance.

Manuscript No. 183 in the archives of the Institute contains the collated transcript of the large collection of folk narratives from the library of V. Bogišić in Cavtat (near Dubrovnik). Among the folk tales there are some other texts, including two descriptions of the Lastovo carnival. In her foreword to the collection, M. Bošković-Stulli writes: "The texts transcribed on pp. 287–290 contain the description 'Poklad lastovski' [Lastovo carnival]. The original is in handwriting by M. Lucianović, on 5 free small sheets of paper, similar to notebook sheets. On the page 287 (according to pagination of the Institute manuscript) Bogišić wrote: 'The description of carnival in Ston (?) and Lastovo in the folder: The tale in the booklet is handwritten by L. Zore'. On the p. 291 Bogišić wrote: 'Zore 3 and the small sheet containing the tale'. The texts transcribed on pp. 291–300 (carnivals from Slano and Lastovo, tales, riddles etc.) are written on eight bound sheets in the format of school notebook, handwritten by L. Zore, and only the first group of riddles is in different handwriting" (Bogišić 1953).

Here are the two mentioned descriptions (translated into English):

The Lastovo Carnival

The material for the description

The public folk celebration with dance on the last day of the carnival on the Island of Lastovo takes place uninterruptedly from ancient times. Although something might have changed and something new might have been performed, the armed dance of clearly folk character has remained unchanged. It is a custom on Lastovo that immediately after the first day of the (new) year, the youths gather together, organizing several companies according to class and friendly relations, in order to entertain themselves the best they can in the period of the approaching carnival. Among those various companies, the company of *boljari* is chosen. They enjoy the privilege to organize the above-mentioned dance party on the last day of the carnival, with the permission of the local political superior, headman or mayor. After permission has been given to the company, the members of the company are called *pokladari*.

The center of the celebration is *Poklad* [Carnival], a guy made on the Monday before Ash Wednesday. His body is made of chaff and his feet are made of sand within the boots, so that his lower part is heavier than his upper part while he is swinging and gliding down the rope. Thus he can not be turned over on the rope while "flying", and he can stand upright. He usually weighs 30 libbras (about 10 kilogrammes). They try to dress him up in the finest garments and adorn him with utmost care. (His left hand is on his hip, and his right

hand is held out, showing the sign of contempt with his fingers). When *Poklad* has been completed, the company of *pokladari* has a banquet, toasting and singing folk songs. After lunch they go round the village performing farces in the houses of *boljari*. The farces are about the living persons from the village, persons who are funny (*ridicole*) or have taken part in some funny event. For that purpose the most vivid and the most humorous among the *pokladari* are chosen, and each of them is given an appropriate role to play, according to his wits and his skill. Those performers are, on account of their uncomely clothing on that day, called "*grubi maškari*" [rough masks], as compared with the next day's beautiful *pokladari*.

On the last day of the carnival, early in the morning, a few *pokladari* clamber up the *Pokladarova grža* (*Pokladar's rock*, *macigno*) which lies at the top of a steep and rather high hill dominating the village. They tie a rope, one inch in diameter, to the rock, and they drag it into the valley to the *Pokladar's* column, which is erected for that purpose. The rope is pulled tight and left there.

As soon as lunch is over, the *pokladari* gather in the company's house. They all wear white trousers and red jackets, with golden and silver belts across their shoulders, and a golden pin on their chests. A lot of them wear golden necklaces with large beads around their necks. Top hats have been introduced recently, wrapped round with golden or silver tinsel. Clothed festively in that manner, holding swords on their shoulders, the *pokladari* set out marching two by two, 20 to 40 pairs in number.⁴ They wear no masks on their faces. *Poklad* leads the way, "riding" the prettiest small donkey that can be found in the village. *Poklad* is followed by an actor playing the *lira* (a special string instrument). A man in rough clothes, wearing a mask on his face and holding a sprinkler, performs the task of keeping away the children and the mob which spins around *Poklad* and the *pokladari*, blocking their way. Singing heroic songs they arrive at *Pokladar's* column. The company halts there and sends off six companions together with *Poklad* to *Pokladar's* rock. When they reach the brow of the hill, they put tubes (about 40 centimeters long) greased with tallow onto the rope and tighten them. *Poklad* is fixed upon the tubes, and when everything is ready, a rifle is fired. The six *pokladari* on the rock start yelling and *Poklad* starts out. As soon as they become aware of this, the *pokladari* in the valley yell back very hastily and clap their hands to welcome that speedy falcon which glides down the two hundred and fifty meters of rope in 15 seconds. After he has been taken down from the rope, they send him up to the top again, in order to send him down once more. It is done three times. With *Poklad* placed again on the donkey, the company of *pokladari* sets forth round the village, usually singing this song:

⁴ Their number is varied from year to year.

Malena se četa podignula,	A small company has arisen
Mala četa al' je ognjevita.	A small company, but fiery.
Medju sobom četa govorila:	Among themselves the company spoke:
Čemu nama naše četovanje	What's the use of our warfare
Kad nemamo pred nami vojvode.	When we have no captain to lead us.
Homo na dvor Alijinoj majci	Let's go to the court of Alija's mother
Da nam poda Alu za vojvodu" itd.	To give us Ale for a captain" etc.

While they are going round the village and visiting the houses of the *boljari*, they perform the short version of the dance in each house. The dance will not be performed as a whole until the evening. On leaving each house they are offered sweets and mulled wine to drink. In the twilight, after having visited all the houses of the *boljari*, the magnificent company reaches Dolac, a flat piece of ground beneath the main church. In front of the church there is a vast square, an appropriate coign of vantage for a spectator to watch the enchanting dance which takes place beneath. The *pokladari* range in two rows, so that each *pokladar* faces his companion. The leading dancer gives orders for the commencement of the dance and for every change in movement. His command "face to face" starts the dance. The first figure is a simple *vis à vis*, the dancers dance face to face to their companions, holding the sword on the right shoulder. While changing the position, the swords are clinking on the encounter. The second figure differs from the first in the following way: each dancer extends the sword to his companion, who catches it by the tip and, holding the sword pointed horizontally toward himself, dances as before. Each figure consists of two parts. After the first part of the second figure, the swords are passed over their heads, still holding the tip in the left hand; after the second part the same procedure is repeated in the opposite direction. After these two introductory figures the real *kolo* (circular dance) begins, which in some parts bears resemblance to the *rondo* in a *quadrille*. The *kolo* is danced in many different ways, sometimes in a simple manner, sometimes with crossed hands, sometimes shriveling up concentrically until it forms a heap and then spreading slowly outwards. There is a lot of running. When the leading dancer starts to run, the others are leaving the *kolo* one by one, so that finally all the dancers are running as if they were charging. Coming abreast with another dancer, they clink the swords. Running in circles they thrice come round some places outside the flat ground on which they are dancing the *kolo*. After the third circle, *Poklad* on the donkey is brought in. They start dancing *kolo* around him, closing in on him little by little, so that at the end they put their swords on his head. The last dancer clinks his sword on the grate made by the other swords on *Poklad's* head (*sull intreccio delle spade*). While doing so, they all move slowly. Then the leading dancer leaves the centre and starts the *kolo* again, and after several similar figures the dance is brought to an end with the same *vis à vis* with which it commenced. When the dance is completed, *Poklad* is unclothed - the body made of chaff sewn up in toils remains. The naked *Poklad* is impaled on the stake and burned.

Until some ten years ago, the reading of the testament used to accompany the *Poklad's* death. It was a strictly satirical poem in octonary verse (*verso ottonario*), rhyming the first verse with the next, i. e. first verse with the second, third one with the fourth. Like *Annales annuales*, the poem contained all the important annual events, or funny ones which were pleasing to the ears of the crowd. Sometimes the poem put shame on some people, using allegorical means to rebuke a person vehemently. Hence these poems used to have a twofold intention, to please and to rebuke. One year a great slaughter almost happened, caused by the annoying nature of these songs, and the political authorities abolished public readings for good and all.

Split, June 15th 1877

Melko Lucianović

[L. Zore]⁵

The Lastovo Carnival

B. I.

On Monday morning, i.e. in the middle of the carnival, the company gathers in a house to make *Poklad*. His body is made of straw, save the legs; to his knees they fix the boots filled with sand or grit, so that each leg weighs nine pounds, and the rest is as light as straw. They clothe him "*na engležsku*", in the English manner as they say: in a waist-long red uniform jacket and white trousers. They put a tall hat on his head, all wrapped round with ribbons in various colours. On Tuesday morning they climb up the hill above the village and tie a thick rope to an oak. The other end of the rope is carried to the centre of the village and tied to the column which stands there. In that way a triangle is formed: the rope is a hypotenuse, while the hill and a part of the village act as two shorter sides of the triangle. After midday, the company of *pokladari* gathers. Their number is varying from year to year and sometimes reaches thirty or even forty men, in uniforms identical to the one that *Poklad* wears, and holding swords. They get a donkey and place *Poklad* on it, paying a visit to the distinguished families, where they perform folk dances accompanied by *ljera* (a string instrument). They yell and drink wine. The donkey with *Poklad* fixed to the pack-saddle goes afore the company, with one of the companions running in front and spraying the mob with a sprinkler (*serviziale*). After they have yelled and raved with *Poklad* through the village, the three men

⁵ Above the title in the transcription, on p. 291 there is an addition in pencil: "L. Zore". Very likely it refers to the famous philologist Luka Zore, who is born in Cavtat (near Dubrovnik) in 1846 and died in Cetinje (Montenegro) in 1906. He was the founder of the journal *Slovinac* where the description of the Lastovo carnival by Lucianović was published in 1881 (IV, No. 6).

from the company take him onto that hill, while the others wait in the valley near the column (to which the rope is tied), ready to welcome *Poklad* with cheering and noise. After three men have reached the top of the hill, they put the rope through the well-greased reed between *Poklad's* legs. *Poklad* is placed to ride on the rope, and with thunderous yelling, they let him go down the rope. Now the purpose of the sand-filled boots and the reed can be seen - without them *Poklad* would tilt and topple down to the ground. In almost no time *Poklad* appears at the other end of the rope, welcomed with long roars of laughter, and seized up so as not to be smashed. The same thing is repeated three times. His left hand is stretched forth to show the sign of contempt with its fingers, while his right hand is on his hip. The eyes of a cock (once placed under *Poklad's* armpit) drop off due to the fast glide down the rope. When the game has been finished for the third time, *Poklad* is placed on donkey again, and the company passes through the village, yelling and performing *Poklad's* last will (his testament). The testament is written every year in rustic verses, and includes satirical moments. When the actor finishes reading the last will, he starts beating *Poklad* and issues the order to the company. In the evening *Poklad* is torn into pieces by swords. After he has been burnt, everybody goes home.

Similarities and differences

Comparing these two descriptions from the Bogišić's collection we can notice both similarities and differences. Lucianović's description is more detailed, it describes the organization and preparations, it mentions *grube maškare* (rough masks), and thoroughly describes the movement of *pokladari* through the village as well as their dance. On the other hand, Zore mainly discusses the swinging and gliding of *Poklad* down the rope, he hardly touches upon the dance, but gives a detailed description of *Poklad's* and the *pokladari's* costumes (*na engležsku*, in the English manner). Zore does not mention that the reading of the *Poklad's* last will is forbidden, which could mean that his description refers to an older state than Lucianović's. (If we can place trust in Lucianović, the reading of testament was abolished in 1867 or thereabouts.) *Poklad's* and *pokladari's* English-like costumes can be interpreted as a reminiscence of the British occupation of the island (1813–1815), because the English uniform of the time was red and white. Such a description of *Poklad* is in contradiction with the wide-spread legend about the Catalan origin of *Poklad*, and partly even with his present looks (the brown face, the position of hands). It would be very interesting to know whether Zore's description is the firsthand one - it might be based on second hand information as well.

There is an addition to the manuscript collection from the islands of Šipan and Lastovo (Bošković-Stulli 1953:19) with the written remarks given to the author by Ambrozije Sangaletić on Lastovo, "in order to show the

differences between the contemporary carnival customs on Lastovo Island, and those described by M. Lucianović". The remarks refer to the less important role of the *grube maškare* (rough masks), who are not performing "farces" any more, and restrain themselves to collecting eggs in the village. Once white, the trousers of *pokladari* are replaced with black or dark-blue ones, with "folk ribbons sewn up to the outer part of the legs of the trousers, like those of generals. *Pokladari* do not have top-hats any more, they are replaced with hats called "*mezzocanna*". A man in rough cloths, called Medo, wearing a mask on his face and holding a sprinkler, who used to perform the task of maintaining order, is nowadays replaced with two men dressed like American officers. Sangaleti is the first to mention the macaronic text of yelling which accompanies the swinging of *Poklad* down the rope: "*Eviva nam kumpanija, pošlo nam je alla via*" ["*Eviva our compagna, it all went alla via*"]. He mentions the replacement of real swords with wooden ones, which took place at the same time when the reading of the testament was forbidden.

The Lastovo Island carnival in the Sixties and Seventies

The most complete description of the Lastovo carnival is given by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin (Bonifačić Rožin 1960). Sjepan Stepanov, Ivan Ivančan and Nikola Bonifačić Rožin joined the Lastovo carnival in 1960, in order to record it on film and audio tape. In the preface to the manuscript Bonifačić wrote: "The plan partially failed. The dialogues which accompany the burning of *Poklad* were recorded unclearly, and the filming was ruined because the camera was out of order". Bonifačić's manuscript contains 14 texts about the carnival, 6 records of poems and verses related to the carnival, 16 texts of other poems, 6 reports about the origins of the Lastovo carnival, and 9 texts of other narrated legends. As Bonifačić states himself, the most significant is "the text of the carnival drama, which I managed to write down on the very day of the performance (Tuesday), following closely the main actors: mother, her companion and the doctors" (Bonifačić Rožin 1960:II).

The limited space keeps us from describing Bonifačić's manuscript in detail - we shall point out only the new, until then unnoticed data. Moreover, there is a new description of *Poklad*, which is different from the former ones. *Poklad* is a Catalan, the legend refers to the unsuccessful Saracen invasion on Lastovo, and to the prisoner-of-war who was swung down the rope. Further on, there are valuable pieces of information about rough masks (*grube maškare*) and their behaviour on the Monday before Ash Wednesday. Several permanent characters are identified (doctors, mother, mother's companion, an admiral etc.). An extremely detailed description of the each day of the performance is given; the bombs used during the swinging are described; for the first time the beautiful masks are mentioned (they have been vaguely

mentioned in Lucianović's description before, but Lucianović seems to confuse them with *pokladari*). The improvised dialogues during Tuesday's performance are recorded. These dialogues were published later in Bonifačić's book *Folk dramas, proverbs and riddles* in a slightly corrected and completed version (Bonifačić Rožin 1963:56–62). In his preface to the manuscript, Bonifačić gives some interesting remarks about the nature of the dialogues and describes them as unstable improvisations by the actors who impersonate the same characters from year to year.

In the manuscript *Folklore on the Islands of Lastovo and Mljet* Ivan Ivančan described the folk dances from Lastovo, including the *kolo* of the *pokladari* (Ivančan 1960). Those descriptions were published later in the book *Folk Dances from Dalmatia* (Ivančan 1973).

In the manuscript about the Islands of Vis and Lastovo by Josip Milićević, there is a text about the Lastovo carnival, written by B. Lucijanović from Lastovo. The text includes the legend about the origins of the custom and describes the making of a dummy, the procession of *pokladari*, the swinging and burning of *Poklad*. B. Lucijanović writes about *lijepa maškare* (beautiful masks, women only): "They are following the *pokladari* at a distance, and they do not join them until now (on the Dolac plateau in the dusk). All the masks are dressed up in the most beautiful way, and one must really admit that almost all of them do have a special and fine sense for dressing up. Some people think that they impersonate liberated slaves, the women captured by the Turks, always escorted by two *pokladari* as guards. The liberated slaves join the *pokladari* in the *kolo* dance, showing their joy". B. Lucijanović writes about the ban placed on the reading of the testament, and finishes his text with a remark that Bonifačić overestimates the role of the mother's complaint in the performance (Milićević 1965:14–18).

In the year 1971 Stjepan Stepanov published an interesting paper about the Lastovo carnival: "The carnival ballad from Lastovo about Alija X" (Stepanov 1971). Stepanov compares the variant of the ballad given by M. Lucianović in 1881 with his own recording from 1960, and comes to the conclusion that both variants of the song are incomplete. He mentions the third variant: the similar event is described in a poem from the so-called Erlangen manuscript (beginning of the 18th century). In this epic poem a company of 30 highwaymen (*hajduci*) from Bosnia attacks the town of Senj on the Croatian coast, and their leader young Jovan is killed, shot by the famous hero Ivan Senjanin. But both variants from Lastovo are about Turks, and Stepanov is astonished by the queer fact: on the Lastovo Island, within an exclusively Roman Catholic community, a Moslem folk song about the bravery of a Turkish military unit plays an extremely important role as a part of ancient carnival custom...

Zagreb Television made a movie about the Lastovo carnival in 1970. Ivan Ivančan was in the team, and the result of it was the new manuscript

about dance customs on Lastovo Island (Ivančan 1972). A transcribed conversation with the inhabitants about the carnival custom is included in the manuscript. From the conversation (Ivančan 1972:38) one can assume that carnival custom had become weak, or even that there was a certain break in tradition - a reconstruction was needed for the sake of filming. Even if it had not been so, the filming itself helped the revitalization of the carnival custom on Lastovo. Since then the carnival has been an extremely important event for the islanders, and it never slackens.

The Lastovo Island carnival in the Eighties

Arriving on Lastovo in 1981 I was well informed. I learnt a lot, from the accounts of local people as well as from the relevant literature. Although I was familiar with many carnival customs in Croatia and elsewhere, I was surprised and struck by the strength of the Lastovo carnival. Its strength is in extreme opposition with the small number of inhabitants and with the deserted houses in the village of Lastovo. During the carnival days, as the happening was growing up to reach its climax, it seemed as if *pokladari* and masks sprang out from beneath the earth, as if they had been hidden under the stones in the apparently deserted village. Everybody came back to Lastovo: school children, students, adults and retired persons. A lot of people living in Split, Zagreb or elsewhere returned to their native island, including some of those living and working far away indeed: in Germany, America or even Australia.

On Saturday before the Ash Wednesday, when Ljiljana Marks and I arrived in the village, the carnival costumes for *lijepa maskare* [beautiful masks] were almost ready, often sewn according to paper patterns from *Burda* or other foreign fashion magazines. The participants in the Lastovo carnival often wear three different costumes during the same carnival season: the first (usually last year's one) is used for the masked ball on Saturday evening, and the second one (an improvisation made of old clothing and other material) is used for the procession of *grube maskare* [rough masks] on Monday afternoon. The third costume depends on the participant's role on Tuesday: the men (*pokladari*) wear the above described uniforms, while young women and children wear the new, this year costumes of beautiful masks (*lijepa maskare*).

The carnival happening started on Saturday evening with the masked ball in the communal hall on the Dolac plateau. Almost the entire population of the village was present, and the hall was crowded. Some quite serious conversation could be heard about the plans for voluntary labour needed to enlarge the hall, which seemed to be too small for the New Year and carnival feasts. At the masked ball the *doctors* appeared for the first time, performing ostensible medical checkups and prescribing funny medicines on the original

blanks taken from the local polyclinic. During the night, after the masked ball was over, a group of men belonging to the *pokladari* company (in plain clothing, wearing no uniforms) went to the place in the lower part of the village called *Pod kostanju* ["under the chestnut tree"] where they yelled "uvo". Nobody can explain the meaning of the word. That mysterious shout accompanies all the important moments of the Lastovo carnival, especially the making of the *Poklad* dummy and its swinging and gliding down the rope. On Monday morning *Poklad* was made in the same communal hall where the masked ball had taken place on Saturday. The group of *pokladari*, again in plain clothing, went to fetch the *lira* instrument. The *lira* had been played by Antun Glumac (called Kičić, born in 1907) for many years. Accompanied by the music played on *lira*, the company continued their way to the place near the graveyard, where they took the sand (*prlina*) which was needed for *Poklad's* boots. Then they went to pick up the tailor. Tonko Karlović (called Dusa) was the tailor, and he was in charge of keeping all the clothing needed for the *Poklad* dummy in his house throughout the year, stored in a special case. Having everything that was needed for making *Poklad*, the company started singing the song *Podiglo se malo četovanje* [A small company has arisen] accompanied by the *lira*, and set off for the communal hall.

Poklad's boots (called *šćivale*) had lead mounted in them to increase stability. The boots were filled with sand, and then weighed to be of equal weight. *Poklad's* body was made of straw (*pjeva*) sewn up in fishnet. The tailor and the *lira* player were paid for their job by the *pokladari* company, sometimes helped by communal funds. The Lastovo carnival is partially financed by the admission charge for the dance parties.

When *Poklad's* body had been completed, he was dressed in the prepared clothing which is always carefully stored and never burnt. *Poklad* had a brown face (according to the legend, he is a Catalan pirate) and he was dressed in "Turkish" clothing. The making of *Poklad* is considered to be a serious job, as well as all the activities connected with *Poklad's* swinging down the rope. In 1981 the tailor was in mourning - there had been death in his family eight days before - but that could not prevent him from making *Poklad*, and no words of disapproval could be heard in the village.

While *Poklad* was being made, the *pokladari* were producing bombs. The bombs are made of gunpowder wrapped in cord, curled up in a ball, with wicks of different length. When *Poklad* had been completed, the *pokladari* shouted the inevitable "uvo", and activated one of the bombs. *Poklad* was placed at the window of the communal hall, and the *pokladari* who had made *Poklad* went for lunch which had been prepared for them.

On Monday afternoon it was time for the rough masks (*grube maškare*). Groups of children, (but also adults and even the *pokladari*, including the mayor of Lastovo) were circling throughout the village accompanied by the *lira* or an accordion, or simply singing, dressed in old

and ragged clothing, with blackened faces. They were collecting eggs. The *pokladari* dressed as rough masks were passing through the village following exactly the same path as they would be passing the day after (on Tuesday afternoon) with *Poklad* and his procession. Although the path is more or less the same every year, there are some modifications. They were not visiting the houses where there was illness or death, and the houses where *Poklad* had not been welcomed properly the year before. Some of the collected eggs were eaten on Monday evening, and some were saved for another supper of the *pokladari* society, on the second Sunday after the carnival.

About eight o'clock on Tuesday morning, the *pokladari* dressed in plain clothing set off for the house in the part of the village called *Pod kostanju* ["under the chestnut tree"] to pick up the rope. Accompanied by the *lira*, they carried the rope on their shoulders, following each other, to the road above the village. Starting from that place, one side of the rope was pulled up the hill to *Pokladarova grža* ["*Pokladar's* rock"], while the other was dragged downwards to the column in the lower part of the village (*Pod kostanju*). When the rope was tightened, a hunting shotgun fired and the *pokladari* started to shout "uvo". Only after that was singing allowed. On Tuesday, the noon bells started to chime at eleven o'clock and the *pokladari* had an early lunch in order to have enough time for the afternoon events.

On Tuesday afternoon two groups gathered at the community hall. The *pokladari* assembled at the entrance, and the beautiful masks (*lijepi maškare*) gathered together on the opposite side of the building. The beautiful masks were women and children, and their group consisted of pairs dressed in identical costumes. The beautiful masks were trying to reach the gathering point as soon as possible, in order to occupy a better position in the procession.

When the *pokladari* were ready, they placed *Poklad* on a donkey led by a child. Accompanied by the *lira* (but without singing any songs) and carrying a flag, they set for the mayor's home to obtain permission for the procession and *culjanje* [swinging down the rope]. After the mayor's speech, they danced in front of his house, and the column marched on accompanied by the *lira* and singing the song *Podiglo se malo četovanje* [A small company has arisen]. They were visiting the houses following the path as agreed, starting with the parish priest's rectory. In front of the houses, the *pokladari* danced with wooden swords, and inside the houses wine was served, along with fritters, various cakes and liqueurs. When leaving the houses, they used to shout "uvo" three times. The procession of beautiful masks visited the same houses after the *pokladari*, but the two columns did not meet before the swinging of *Poklad* down the rope. The two columns met again on the Dolac plateau in the evening to burn *Poklad*.

Poklad was swung down the rope three times. While he was swinging, the bombs tied under his boots exploded (first time there were five bombs,

then seven, and finally nine). Every time *Poklad* had successfully reached the end of the rope, the *pokladari* jumped and cheered with joy, waving wooden swords and singing: "Živjela nam kumpanija, pošla nam je *alla via*" ["Long live our company, he went *alla via*"]. After the third swinging was over and the sword dance completed, the procession continued. At dusk the two columns met again on the Dolac plateau, where the main *kolo* of *pokladari* took place. In the meantime the beautiful masks joined the *kolo* dance. *Poklad* was undressed, impaled on a stick and burned. The celebration continued as a dance party in the community hall and lasted till morning. At dawn, a bus full of drunk and merry masks set out for Ubli to catch the ship which was sailing for Split.

The changes confirming the strength of the tradition

The comparison of the above descriptions and other accessible data show the changes within the Lastovo carnival. We should not worry about it too much - the changes are the sign of life and somehow they confirm the strength of the tradition. The appearance and clothing both of *Poklad* and the *pokladari* have been changing. The top-hats appear and disappear, replaced by hats with artificial flowers on them. The white trousers become black or deep blue with ribbons, the "English-like" (*na engležsku*) *Poklad* garment is now described as Turkish. *Poklad* does not show the sign of contempt with his fingers any more - just one of his fingers is pointed upwards, and he smokes a cigarette (*španjulet*). The accessories have been transformed - the real swords have been replaced by wooden ones, the cock has been replaced by bombs. New characters (masks) constantly appear or disappear (like Medo with his sprinkler and *Poklad's* mother). Some characters appear to remain, and some have been transformed recently (like the doctors and the American officers turning into admirals). There are some stable and constant parts of the ritual, which can not be omitted (the procession of rough masks, the procession of *pokladari*, the swinging of *Poklad* down the rope, the dance and the burning of *Poklad* on the Dolac plateau). It seems that some other parts of the ritual have been discontinued forever, like the reading of the testament. New rules have been invented: the beautiful masks (*lijepa maskare*) appear in pairs dressed in identical costumes. The social circumstances and conditions provoke changes: the dance parties are not held in private houses any more, they are confined to the community hall. The importance of the masked balls (on Saturday and Tuesday) has been increasing. The rules are changed or abolished to be restored again. In the past the rough masks (*grube maskare*) were allowed only on Mondays, but in 1960 we could see them as constant characters improvising the dialogues on Tuesday. In 1981 they appeared again on Monday only - the carnival drama as described by Bonifačić Rožin

became impossible and disappeared: *Poklad's* mother and the doctors were the rough masks, they were not allowed to appear on Tuesday!

The Lastovo Island carnival is probably one of the two most interesting carnivals on the Croatian side of the Adriatic. The other one is more than 250 nautical miles away to the North, in the town of Novi Vinodolski. Although those two carnivals can hardly be compared at all, an amazing similarity can be seen where carnival dummies are concerned. Both are made of straw, both are smaller than human size and dressed in the same military way as the male company that makes them. There are even some similarities in the position of hands of the dummy. In any case, in Novi Vinodolski there are no records about gliding or swinging down the rope. That seems to be the speciality of the Lastovo Island carnival nowadays — but in the past it was not so. Gliding down the rope is a Venetian influence, a kind of acrobatic show (with a living actor) often used in public celebrations (called *mormario*) and within the carnival itself. The rope was usually fixed to a belfry on the higher side, and to a sailing ship or vessel in the harbour at the lower side. A description of a similar carnival event in Perast (in the Bay of Kotor, on Sunday, March 3rd 1715) is recorded in an official letter written by Marko Martinović in 1715. The letter contains a scenario of the public performance prepared to celebrate the beginning of the war between the Venetian Republic and the Turkish Empire (Novak and Lisac 1984:221–224). Although possible Venetian influence can not be denied, the gliding and swinging of *Poklad* down the rope on the Island of Lastovo has its own characteristics. The event is happening far away from the sea, the dummy is used, and no belfries or vessels are involved. Furthermore, it is nowadays a unique custom of the kind in this part of the Mediterranean.

The intention of my paper is not to follow the history of carnival in general, nor the history of the Lastovo Island carnival. I am going to complete this survey of the reports on the Lastovo carnival with a hypothesis about the relations of theatre and ritual - which may be of the great importance for theatre studies.

Luka Zore describes the company of the *pokladari*, but he mentions neither the rough masks nor the beautiful ones. His report probably describes the condition of the Lastovo carnival in the middle of the nineteenth century. The report of Melko Lucianović is more accurate: he mentions the rough masks (*grube maškare*) on Monday, strictly isolated from the *pokladari* procession on Tuesday. That isolation is less severe in the middle of twentieth century - in 1960 Nikola Bonifačić Rožin describes the rough masks (*Poklad's* mother and the doctors) on Tuesday. *Poklad's* mother and the doctors (as individual characters) stem out from the choir of *pokladari*. The loosening of the ritual rigidity enables performing in the theatrical sense. The improvised dialogues of individual characters have been interpolated within the ritual performance. Just as it happened in the Ancient Greece long ago,

the theatre was reborn from ritual on the Island of Lastovo in the middle of the twentieth century. During the Sixties the carnival customs on the island continued to lose strength, and the continuity of the tradition was endangered. But, in the Seventies the trend had changed - the Lastovo islanders became aware of the values of the carnival tradition. The function of the ritual was changed. The magic function and the function of social criticism had been almost extinct (the abolishment of *Poklad's* testament took place more than a hundred years ago). Nowadays the main function of the Lastovo carnival seems to be the confirmation of local identity. People who do not live on the island any more gather for carnival events, the ritual has been renewed and its structure is stronger than before. The rough masks (*grube maškare*) are expelled from the Tuesday performance, the inceptions of drama have been replaced by ritual rigidity again.⁶

⁶ In 1985 I did some more field-work on the Lastovo carnival, which only confirmed my thesis. Carnival is a living process, it is subject to changes and innovations. The perpetual presence of media (especially of TV and radio crews in 1970, 1983, 1984, 1994 etc.) helped strengthen the tradition, and the technicians with their cameras and paraphernalia became the common masks in the Lastovo carnival. Even small groups of tourists are sometimes joining the carnival events (since 1985), but their impact is still negligible.

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