

## The Lenten Carnival in Vinogorje

### Summary

The intention of the author is to lay open the meaning of the contemporary carnival events in the northwestern parts of Yugoslavia. The Carnival is ever more popular event which has been acquiring numerous forms and meanings during last two decades. The analysis is based on an in-depth research of the Lenten Carnival and other aspects of everyday life in "Vinogorje" (a village in western Croatia) in the late seventies, research in Istria in the eighties, as well as comparative data from published ethnographic accounts, including some from the turn of the century. The author answers the question about the meaning of contemporary Carnival by analyzing its three major aspects: the shift in the ritual practice from the symbolic manipulation of nature to the symbolic manipulation of people; the relation between traditional and innovative expressive means of the Carnival; and the relation of the carnival ritual to social/cultural order and disorder. The Carnival is understood as a paradigmatic event which reveals significant facts about the everyday life of "ordinary" people, particularly the way in which people experience and reflect on social forces beyond their control. Thus the meaning of the Carnival is only revealed if the ritual is placed in its wider social/cultural context.

It is concluded that the Carnival in "Vinogorje" and elsewhere currently expresses people's concern about the position and status of their local community within larger social body. The ritual reveals the conflicting values of social integration and cultural urbanization on one side, and of the local community cohesion on the other side. The conflict is expressed in many ways, including parades with allegoric scenes, staged shows, and oral or written public accusations for evil deeds, addressed to concrete or abstract persons. Even the traditional expressive means of the Carnival (masks, ritual dances, magic) are given new meanings; cultural tradition is redefined and used according to current interests and practice. The author concludes that the carnival ritual is neither the time of total disorder, anti-structure and *communitas*, nor the glorification of cultural order after a temporary topsy-turvy play. It is a "thick" symbolic statement on both orderly and disorderly aspects of everyday life. By means of the Carnival, "ordinary" people express solidarity as well as conflict in the social sense, and tradition as well as change in the cultural sense.