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SKETCHES OF DAILY LIFE OF ZLARIN FARMERS

Summary

Farmers represent the largest group of Zlarin inhabitants. In an attempt to describe the patterns of their daily life, our research was directed at certain aspects of the so-called material culture under the headings of 'habitation' (housing and eating) and 'work' (farming and handicraft activities). The aim was to establish typical developments and patterns of behaviour of Zlarin farmers between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century.

The material presented here comes from authentic statements made to the author by many Zlarinians during her visit to the island and from her own observations.

The chapter on housing discusses the prevailing building practices and describes typical forms of family housing. In addition to the architectural characteristics, the interior arrangement and furnishing are also described in considerable detail. The description includes not only the living quarters and domestic farm buildings, but also other farm buildings and structures in the village and outside. The characteristics of the two villages, Borovica and Zlarin, are dealt with only to the extent that they throw light on the patterns of life of the farmers.

The dominant agricultural branches in Zlarin were olive and wine growing. Oil and wine were produced not only for the farmers' own needs but also for the market. Vegetables from family gardens and home-grown fruits were the staple food, while wheat and barley were grown only in small quantities. Livestock breeding was mainly confined to sheep raising. For each of these activities, the annual sequence of jobs is described, together with the tools and processing utensils.

The first part of the chapter on eating patterns lists the main foodstuffs and describes how meals were prepared. The foodstuffs included cereals and their products, vegetables, fruits, wild-growing edible plants, fish, meat and related products, milk and dairy products, and eggs. The second part describes the meals eaten on weekdays (with seasonal variations), then on Sundays, on the occasion of important work in the field, in connection with folk customs and village feasts, on special occasions in life, and at the time of food shortage and famine.

The chapter on handicraft activities deals only with those whose traces can still be followed. The most important such activity was the making of textile articles from domestically grown and processed wool. Two other activities are also discussed: the making of light leather sandals and wicker baskets.

Finally, the author notes that the material culture of the Zlarin peasants in the period under review was a product of different earlier cultures integrated in a living and dynamic mechanism in which recent elements are found side by side with elements of paleo-Mediterranean, Illyrian, Slav, Venetian-Italian, and Dinaric provenance. In this context, the role of women in the Zlarin farming society is once again stressed.

(Translated by V. Ivir)