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FOLK TALES AND LEGENDS FROM THE ISLAND OF ZLARIN

Summary

The material for this collection was gathered during the author's ten-day study tour of the island of Zlarin in July 1975. A brief introduction is intended to provide basic information about the folk narratives of Zlarin and about the narrators.

The bulk of the narrative material consists of legends, both mythological and historical. In them, the narrators almost invariably express also their emotive links with the local scenery. The legends themselves are often connected with specific localities on the island: thus, fairies always appear at Lokvica (a large water cistern), Greek galleys are said to have often called at Srima (where the Zlarin farmers worked in their fields), a diviner is said to have lived at Kotor, and a famous diviness at Glavica. The intention in this collection has been to preserve the narrator's attitude to the story, and that is the reason why some of the motifs appear in several variant narrations.

Even a superficial survey of the material shows that there are some local legends known by all the villagers; even those who cannot tell them in full remember the basic motifs: the apparition of Our Lady in a dog-rose bush and the subsequent building of a chapel in that place; the expedition of Roko Makale to Mexico, »where Emperor Francis Joseph dispatched him to provide a guard of honour for the Emperor's brother Maximilian«; fairies dancing a reel at Lokvica or taking away children; twelve-oared Greek and Turkish galleys coming to the island and capturing a villager or two as slaves (who would invariably escape and return home after a year of captivity); a diviness trying to make mischief but ending up by being badly beaten; the rustling noises heard in the house in which someone has died; the dead coming back to visit the living; the satyr which appears in the shape of a donkey which a weary traveller mounts on the Zlarin quay and which then grows so tall that he can deposit the rider on the spire of Our Lady of Dog-Rose or on a branch of a tall tree.

Fairy tales and long stories are rarely told. Two excellent story-tellers, Ljubica Miškov and Srećka Gregov, held a story-telling session for the present author and a few neighbours during which they told nine longish stories (texts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11), smoothly linking one story to the next. In this collection the stories are given in the sequence in which they were told, thus hoping that at least something of the narrative situation can be preserved.

Short anecdotes form part of the active male narrative repertory. They are told by Zlarinians about some of the deceased villagers, but not infrequently also about those still alive (texts 12—19).

Conversations with the narrators, as well as their narrations, are exact transcripts of tape recordings made on the island. The extent of the editorial intervention is minimal: small changes have only been made to eliminate inconsistencies or incoherence, or to avoid repetitions which play no role in the text. The author is otherwise of the opinion that the researcher should not tamper with the original transcript, even when the narrator deliberately avoids local and dialectal expressions in his speech, replacing them by expressions from the standard literary language. By changing his speech (under the influence of the school, radio, television, or simply because of the presence of the researcher), the narrator consciously changes also his attitude towards the story which he narrates, and for that reason any editorial intervention would betray the original. The transcript of the narration is just one of a number of its possible written realizations. It is intended to be read, but it is also an object of literary study and is only partly what it was in actual natural communication.

At the end, we give short summaries of stories collected during the same visit to Zlarin but not included in the present collection, as well as of those collected by the Zlarinians themselves.

(Translated by V. Ivir)