

Olinko Delorko

FOLK POETRY FROM THE ISLAND OF ZLARIN

Summary

The present paper has three parts: introduction, texts, and lists of recorders, narrators, and certain variants of folk poems.

The introduction notes that the folk poems given here were recorded on the island of Zlarin on three separate occasions: towards the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, then in 1955, and more recently in 1975, 1976 and 1977. The bulk of the poems have been recorded by the present author, and it is these poems which form the main part of the collection.

It is interesting to observe that hardly any linguistic or stylistic differences can be noted between the earliest recordings published in the magazine »Zora Dalmatinska« in 1846 (by an unknown collector), the recordings of 1955 and the more recent ones of 1975—1977. This is illustrated with three examples.

The author also discusses the narrators, who were invariably elderly women. Some of them felt quite uneasy when they were asked to narrate poems for recording purposes and only reluctantly agreed to do so. The poems are all except one (No. 42) lyrical in nature and can be classified into ten groups: ritual songs, prayer songs, lullabies, jesting songs, local songs, fragmentary songs, lyrical songs for different occasions, soldiers' songs, romances, and ballads. The last two groups, romances and ballads, are most frequent in this collection; many of them tell stories of abduction of young girls and their forced enslavement. But other topics are also represented, including incestuous love between a brother and a sister. One such romance is particularly interesting as an example of a successful fusion of the elements of Croatian written and folk poetry in the Adriatic region. The fusion began in the sixteenth century and has continued until the present day. It can be observed already in sixteenth-century Croatian *bugarštice* (ballads), long-meter folk songs from Dalmatia, which are characterized by strong feelings and forceful expression.

The author's attention has been drawn by songs which must be seen as fragments of larger wholes, but which at the same time possess all the properties of self-contained wholes. A particularly effective example of such a fragmentary song was included by the present author in his anthology *Zlatna jabuka* (The Golden Apple, Zagreb, 1956).

Another interesting example of folk poetry from Zlarin is a romance (no. 40 in the present collection) describing how a girl dressed as a man went to war and successfully fooled the emperor, who suspected her sex. When he eventually learned that she was a woman and was ready to take her, she managed to escape. The romance ends with the girl — and the anonymous author — ridiculing the power of the rulers. Such 'sweet revenge' was sometimes the only outlet for the poor people oppressed by despotic rulers.

Local songs reflect people, events and situations in the part of the country in which such songs first appeared. They are local because their appeal is local rather than universal.

The only epic song in this collection (no. 42) is a description of the various obstacles encountered by a wedding procession passing through uninhabited areas and threatened by bullies and robbers. The song belongs among the so-called wedding songs, sung at weddings with an apotropaic intent — to avert evil from the newly married couple.

(Translated by V. Ivir)