

Urška Stražisar
Ljubljana
Slovenia
urska.strazisar@siol.net

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Hidden Traces: Water as a Cultural Heritage in Sali and the Telaščica Nature Park

*„We have a pond!!
Deep in the ground.
Fenced in stone from top to bottom.
Like a picture!!?
Stairs of stone going all the way down.
Looking out from the wall you have a view
To a boat, three chests and the door,
which closed from the outside.
Abundance of water like a miracle.
How it was done?
Who knows??
According to the chronicle it is old.
We have a pond:
Beautiful, lively picture, our pride!“*

(Ankica Piasevoli, 1995: 44)

The article covers a theme of water as a non material cultural heritage in the Sali region and Telaščica Nature Park

Keywords: water, traditional culture, beliefs, cultural heritage, Sali, Telaščica Nature Park

There are two water related human experiences which will be covered in this article, both in the Sali and in the Telaščica Nature Park regions of Dugi Otok ('Long Island'). The first one concerns human dwellings in the natural surroundings, and the second one concerns human individual and collective interaction with water, manifested in various ways. It manifests in the existing, traditional ways of water supply technology on the material level; on the symbolic level it manifests in the traditional elements which made up the Sali 'culture of water'.

The article will also examine the concepts of environment and space which are presented as a product of interaction between human and physical elements, and not just

as a simple material backdrop or a system of unchanging pressures (Horden and Purcell, 2000). A community is not a shut system, its relationship with wider environment is complex and dialectic. Such a perception is still to be acquired by the institutions in the Telašćica Nature Park, it is still dualistic in terms of (separate) approach to the matters of culture and nature. Previous research activities¹ were based on a specific anthropological principle according to which natural (ecological) and social (cultural) facts are inseparable and as such should be analyzed (Guille-Escuret, 1998). It means that we shall look in more detail multiple levels of relationship between a man and his environment and examine a social characteristic of water, and its physical flow through material landscapes becoming a symbolic flow through many „cultural landscapes“, which will be illustrated here and viewed in the context of modern understanding of heritage.

The role of water in social learning

In the island region of the Adriatic water and access to water have been shown as an one dimensional problem, usually dealt by (hydro)geology, biology (ecology) and (hydro)geography,² while the Croatian ethnological/anthropological steps in that area are . However, water makes its way to social sciences and humanistic. In the Mediterranean history the water management has been a constant subject and an area where human skills and virility are put on test, and an influence of water technology development on the society is shown (Horden and Purcell, 2000). Strang (2004) wrote about water supply technology development and its numerous applications in modern England, uncovering various meanings of water, saying: ‘the key issue remains privatization of water springs, which became possible when people alienated themselves from water and became its buyers.’

Water is articulated in human activity as a cultural artifact and sometimes as a commodity. According to Marx (1961), by perception of water as a commodity and by using commodity fetishism as a concept (Page, 2005), it is possible to see water, through technological processing, as a product of human activity. Man shapes natural things according to his needs, turning water into an artifact or a commodity to be traded in for other commodities. In such an exchange, working products of commodities become a mirror of social relations (Marx, 1961; see also Bakker, 2005). Water sources become socio-natural phenomenon which does not stand just for what it is, but as a symbolic tool and socio-natural artifact connecting people, environment, their ideas and practices, and its aspects depend on regional and micro-local environment and cultural/social/historic processes.

¹ Field research on Dugi otok was done as part of post graduate ethnological and anthropological study at the Philosophy Department in Ljubljana. The synthesis of the gathered material will be published in the Ph. D. thesis *Narava in kultura v vodnih krajinah: družbene rabe vode na Dugem otoku*.

² For example: Trninić, Dušan, 1998. *Okrugli stol Voda na hrvatskim otocima*. Zagreb: Hrvatsko hidrološko društvo.

Another word, water is dematerialized, which is especially expressed in the sacral rituals. (Universal) religious symbolic meaning of water can be reduced to three dominating themes: water as a source of life, a means of purification and the center of renewal. Water is attributed to possess cosmic powers. It appears in the creation myths, it stands as an immortality elixir (Beekman and Costin, 2000), and has mythical symbols. Such example is pointed out by Mencej, who writes about Slavic mythology, and who uncovers its role in the afterlife schemes, which show „the remains of an older belief of souls travelling across the water - border to another world“. (Mencej, 1995: 235). Water is thus the element, the medium, the place where the soul goes after death, the connection between two worlds (Mencej, 1995).

If we look in the past through archaeological binoculars, water had told its stories in prehistoric times. It had played an important role in development of ancient communities, their dwellings especially. It had meant a natural communication and natural boundaries among ethno-cultural entities, and had presented a mechanism which regulated relations between social communities and natural environment (Marijanović, 2003). While in rural regions water has presented a pre condition for survival and certain economic development, in the urban communities it is related to a discourse of morality and symbolic power of purification, it can be seen as a powerful catalyst of social changes (Rawson, 2004) or an element which divides and causes conflicts. In the Mexican capital, for instance, the ‘water conflict’ (a battle for equal access to drinking water), is only a part of a greater civil battle for human rights and dignified living conditions (Castro, 2006). The history of water as a moving social force is illustrated through museum exhibitions and adds as an attractive element to various thematic exhibits. For example, Museum of Water in Lisabon (*Museu da água*) open back in 1987. Shows all the major characteristics of urban water supply in situ includes: an aqueduct from the 18th century, two local public water tanks, and a steam pumping water tank from the 19th century, now serving as an exhibition space. Closer to us, in Zagreb, an exhibition „Water, a blue gold“ was held in the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb in 2005. In the exhibition guide we can read the following introduction: „This exhibition aims at presenting a numerous meanings the water has in human life. The water is presented in seven exhibition parts: Water is life, Water and environment, Water consumption, Water in everyday life, Water and laws, Water and spirituality and Water and entertainment (Brenko and Randić, 2005).

Anthropological and ethnological studies of water in the folk tradition, in the community customs and applications, in the legends, in the magic or religious rituals in the folk medicine, in the cultural technology of irrigation and cultivating, in social-sex determined practices, etc. illustrate material reality and disclose products of spiritual culture it had affected. Attempts to validate such knowledge and their inclusion into a process of defining cultural heritage are present already (See: Mitrović, 2004), and this paper is one of them.

Perception of water through the heritage discourse

Water, which in the context of senses, we still interpret as a natural element, is looked upon as a part of cultural heritage in the continuation of this article, focusing on its role in society. Today we come across some sort of heritage daily – in our routine and simple everyday life, in scientific efforts and thoughts. In the late 20th century we had witnessed a blossoming of the heritage discourse, in which the key constructive role has the past. Our age is defined by the need of preserving the past based on a belief that „the past was different from the present, that relics of the past are needed for our identity, and are a few and disappearing“ (Jezernik, 2005: 13). They are seen as a reference to an ideal past, preserving memories of the past periods and giving us a sense of continuity (Lowenthal, Jezernik 2005).

After the WW2, a need presented itself to protect memories of the past (monuments, ambience, human knowledge, nature, etc.) from the »killing machines of the modern civilization« (Muršič, 2005a: 7). The last quarter of the 20th century was marked by various 'heritage' related processes: »various ways, shapes, heritage invention processes, appearance of new important heritage objects, formation and spreading of new heritage values and opinions ...« (Baskar, 2005: 42). A thesis that this is a consequence of the fall of the industrial society; »proclaiming heritage« works as a replacement for industrial society because people want something lasting in the consumerism era (Lowenthal, and: Jezernik, 2005), that is, in the mass of disposable objects and values, searching for the true lasting uniqueness (Muršič, 2005b). Preserving heritage therefore means preserving something indefinitely in a world of temporary presence of things (Jezernik, 2005). Urry (1996) discloses several common reasons why we deal so much with heritage preservation in the present: a loss of faith in the future due to the „perception of the present“ and unexpected risks; a belief that modern social life is deeply disappointing and that a golden era is in the past; increasing esthetic sensibility to the historic patina; an attractive presentation of the past which is shown as heritage and is suitable for visual consummation.

A care for relics from the past later „had turned to an ideology of an untouchable fetishes“ (Hudales and Muršič, 2005: 9); and Muršič warns to traps brought on by fetishism of the heritage, as it could be a means of „it's destruction by distinction from the everyday life“, (Muršič, 2005b). Thus the word got a negative connotation, as it became a synonym for manipulation and exploitation of the past for commercial purposes (Jezernik, 2005: 11-12). Such connotation is partly removed by empirical field research and an extensive knowledge about life of human activities, equipped with scientific reflection, and expert activity in the field who understand the need „for a unique, whole and multidisciplinary approach... considering that heritage becomes an increasingly important trade mark of local and imaginary communities ... and a need for symbolical and material recognition of local characteristics is increasing“ (Hudales and Muršič, 2005: 8-9). This links to the fact that each of them „deserves to be a part of its own historical, social and cultural environment“ (Delak Koželj, 2005: 20); where the heritage is shown as a „bonding element on the local and regional level“ (Delak Koželj 2005: 20).

The history of the term 'cultural heritage' started with the UNESCO convention in 1972,³ and has incorporated variety of meanings over the time. Its complexity and its outreaching contents are best described in the UNESCO's declaration on cultural diversity and the convention on intangible cultural heritage.⁴ The concept of cultural heritage has been widely applied and monitored by the professionals at all levels, and also spiritual heritage discourse in Croatia⁵ gains in importance.

The term intangible heritage in the UNESCO's definition encompasses: "practice, presentations, and expressions [!], knowledge, skills, and instruments such as objects, hand crafts and cultural places [!] Related to them, which communities, entities and on occasion, individuals embrace as their own cultural heritage. Intangible material cultural heritage which is transferred from generation to generation, communities and entities keep recreating as a reaction to their circumstances, their mutual actions with nature and their history. It gives them a sense of identity and continuity, and advertises respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. ("<http://www.min-kulture.hr/default.aspx?id=3639>).

UNESCO's convention clearly states the spheres where intangible heritage can manifest itself: in stories and testaments passed on orally, together with the tongue as its initiator; in the performing arts; social practices; rituals and festive traditions; in the knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe; in traditional arts and crafts (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00052>), and in Croatian regulatory procedures⁶ which has divided cultural goods to immobile, mobile and intangible goods (<http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/271022.html>).

How do our fluid assets flow through these administrative, dry, definitions? Intangible cultural heritage has become 'a part of the life practice; interwoven with it, with a tangle of orchestrated improvisations, with structuring structures which are also structured structures, with fields of practice... it comes as a series of practical skills, used by individuals to utilize available livelihood sources, which also enable their adjusting to unpredictable changes. Such practices are viewed in relation to creativity and continuity. « (Muršič, 2005b: 31).

Practices are „places of dialectics *opus operatum* and *modus operandi*“. A researcher's interest, according to Bourdieu (2002: 90), returns to »objective and materialized products of historical practice, structure and habitus«. Habitus, one of the central concepts of Bourdieu, is a „fixing principle which gives birth and organizes practice« (Bourdieu, 2002: 90) and which is to be sought in the »content sources, or more precisely, in the scheme of the body« (Bourdieu, 2002: 20).

³ *Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and national heritage* (1972), which defines cultural heritage as a monument, a group of buildings, or a site of historical, archeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological meaning.

⁴ *Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage* (2003), ratified by Croatia in 2005.

⁵ In 2009 Croatia added seven of its intangible cultural heritage sites to this UNESCO's list (<http://www.min-kulture.hr/default.aspx?id=5220>).

⁶ The heritage protection and preservation law.

Water is tangible, material substance, while knowledge, views, behavior, concepts, practices of management and symbolic meanings which it implicates are of intangible nature. Techniques of producing artifacts (such as. the technological culture of water supply) can be recorded in writing, but the creation act itself does not have a material shape, instead it is embodied in the skills or techniques of those who do them. Therefore, „the focus must be on context when dealing with the subject of intangible heritage ... as it promotes processes more than products“ (Papuga, 2005: 57).

Thus, water and its material and symbolic aspects can be in this case interpreted through constructive elements of intangible cultural heritage, for example:

- oral testimonies;
- social practices; rituals and festivities (traditionally performed to mark some events of the community, such as change of seasons or agricultural calendar events, seasonal ceremonies or practices related to a particular sex, including various religious expressions (processions);
- certain knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe, including the (*know-how*), skills, practices and presentations developed in interaction with natural environment, such as traditional ecology, wisdom, rituals, religious beliefs, nature related cults;
- traditional crafts, skills of different kinds, with an accent on skills and knowledge and not so much on the craftsmen's objects.

We shall further look at how the body of knowledge and activities reflects in a certain time and space, that is, how it is inscribed in cultural landscapes – material and symbolic water scapes of Sali and the Nature Park.

Possible heritage presentations in the Telašćica Nature Park

Telašćica received a status of protected area in 1972, as a natural area reservation, and it became a Nature Park in 1988. In the Telašćica,⁷ region, whose name was derived from the largest bay in the Park, people from Sali had land property, either in ownership or rented. First human dwellings date back in the paleolithic period, when the inhabitants started to develop fishing along the coast and small scale agriculture (olives, fruits and vegetables) and keeping livestock. Several material heritage remains witness of their presence in that region, marked as cultural heritage by the Park management. Considering that almost the whole area today belongs to private owners, the inhabitants, it has to be mentioned that up until the first quarter of the 20th century the Venetian economic order had been in place, a feudal type, where the land owners (the church, the Zadar noblemen, and several rich families from Sali) and

⁷ „Sali and Telašćica are one entity, they cannot be separated, on the contrary, in the distant past in Telašćica (10th century) it was 5/6 Sali, and only 1/6 near the St Mary's church“ (Filipi, 1981: 21).

peasants (land workers, most of the Sali population) regulated their legal matters and relations (Peričić, 1993; Stulli, 1992). It means that Sali population had been in touch with the Telašćica Park, had lived with it and not by it, as might be implicated by the artificial boundaries of the Park. The current Park legislation suggests that the Park is a foreign entity to its inhabitants, a construction which leads a separate life (taken care of by the management, scientists and park rangers) ruled by the technical-expert bodies and orchestrated by conservationist stand points on environment protection.

Human presence has defined this region, has shaped it and (re)produced it through various local agricultural and cattle herding practices, which may be considered as a cultural-technical utilization of a landscape strongly related to scarce water sources. Thank to men who worked to preserve them in the dry region of Telašćica, they provided for economic development of the local community. The Park therefore discloses itself as an „inscribed space“ witnessing of the relationship between man and his environment, who inscribes his presence in his environment in the lasting way, and thus gives it a special significance (Low Zúñiga, 2003). The Sali people have formed a relationship with their living environment by inhabiting its areas and transforming them, a process which still lasts and implies a space marked with certain people and certain events (Low Zúñiga, 2003). Beside the visible physical roads crossing the fields of Telašćica, a human imprint in the landscape, there is also an invisible essence, an emotional link between Sali and its agricultural infrastructure. That essence is water, a landmark substance, a medium between material and spiritual reality of the Sali people.

As far as scientific analysis of natural environment and protected areas is concerned (national parks, nature parks, reservations), which have always been marked by the human presence, and its resonance in the institutional activity, a need for interdisciplinary approach has arisen due to the split between humanistic/social and natural studies. Separate studies of connections between biological and social relations suppresses the potential of combined studies (Guille-Escuret, 1988); dualistic method which conceptually materializes these two categories, nature and culture, cannot successfully analyze their interrelation and presents an obstacle to the integrated analysis (Strang, 2004). The fact that scientific and expert discourses in which dualistic paradigm prevails is seen through unwillingness for cooperation of experts with various backgrounds. The Telašćica Nature Park is a perfect example, where nature experts do not cooperate with colleagues with humanistic background; current research projects illustrated the fact. If the natural facts are inseparable from cultural-social human qualities, than Sali and the Park region are one entity, according to self perception of people from Sali and to materialization of the (future) scientific and expert endeavor.

The Telašćica Nature Park management is in charge of protecting its natural wealth and environment (although somewhat altered by man) and the so called cultural heritage of that area. Such heritage is reconstructed (and presented) with a material and cultural approach which includes immobile heritage⁸ (dwellings) *in situ*, which stands

⁸ Archaeological finds: liburnian graves, limestones, quarries and roman *vila rustica* (<http://www.telascica.hr/arheoloski-nalazi.php>). Sacral buildings: St Anthony's church, remains of St John's and St Victor's

as a silent witness of the past. However, the lack of reflection on social segment of the past, behind objects or artifacts, leads to an incomplete comprehension of events of that past. Thus the past can be served in a simplified telling and make some visitors think that the history has become heritage – safe, well protected, and above all, sterile (Urry, 1996). But the purpose of this article is to illustrate an intimate relationship of the Sali people with water, and the stories associated with it may be considered as intangible heritage of Sali and the Telašćica Nature Park.

In the „water culture“ of Sali a diverse inventory of water supply practices is disclosed, due to the prevailing hydro geo-morphological and climate characteristics of the Sali region, that is, that there are no major water springs, or open water flows, while summer rain fall is scarce.⁹ Natural amounts of drinking water have always been modest, people had to use the water carefully and be practical with it, which is noticeable even today. Public water supply in the past mainly relied on artificially created ponds, and two public tanks used at the beginning of the 20th century. In every field in ¹⁰ in Telašćica one pond was intended for irrigation, drinking water for livestock, and for households during dry season if the village pond went dry. Today it is a matter of ‘tradition’ and ‘past times’, but ways of life based on such water infrastructure are still present. If we try not to get nostalgic and romantic, we could see that infrastructure through the heritage prism. Technological culture of water supply, a result of the basic human need for water and materialization of the human know how, creativity and especially knowledge, is the most tangible manifestation of intangible cultural heritage, which includes knowledge on water utilization in everyday life, in agriculture; knowing materials and being familiar with technical knowledge on building water tanks, pumps, another (Hazler, 2005a: 156, 157).

Ponds in the Telašćica fields had been built on proper, water resistant soil, which was covered with clay or ‘*črmalj*’ (red soil mixed with glassy grind rock or salt (Oštrić, 1997: 340) to make the pond bottom. Considering that these ponds were not primarily meant for drinking water, but for irrigation and water for livestock, they did not have stone walls around them, as a pond in Sali near the village had, for example (Picture 1). That pond is a true Sali ‘antique’, although its exact date of creation is not known for sure,¹¹ and according to many, „the most important and beautiful public construction“, (Oštrić, 1997: 337):

„Building had a shape of an irregular circle ... „three canals lead to it for rain water drainage from the fields. At the entrance of the canal to the pond there is an iron bar, to prevent bigger debris from entering the pond. The inside of the pond is divided into more chambers, with a hole in the bottom, through which water went to lower levels after pumping, to clean the tank from the layer

churches (<http://www.telascica.hr/sakralni-objekti.php>). A plague marking the oldest mention of fishery in Croatia (<http://www.telascica.hr/ribarstvo.php>).

⁹ Average of cca 791 mm of rain falls in Sali annually (Patarčić, 2003).

¹⁰ Dolac, Dugopolje, Stivanje polje, Kruševo polje, Čuh polje, and so on.

¹¹ Mentioned in 1666. In one of the Sali parochial registers Libar lašov, mostly written in Croatian Glagolitic script.

of earth. There is a set of winding stone stairs on the left side, which lead to the bottom of the tank. There is a sinkhole in the bottom, covered with a load of lead. Divisions of the tank are named after type of boats which they somewhat resemble: *leut*, *gajeta*, *guc*, etc. The walls are made of stone blocks and. Opposite to the door was a hollow for water fetching, because the tank closed “(Oštrič, 1997: 337).

That record of the material culture of Sali still has not been validated within cultural heritage framework, the same goes for public tanks built of stone and cement (*gušterne*), in which water dripped through a special filter from rain collectors, big stone and cement plates. Water had been fetched through an opening with a wooden bucket on a rope fixed on a sheave. Such tanks were also known as *pijacal* and, same as ponds, they had a wider social role. Both had been built in the Austro-Hungarian times, the first (near Strmac) in 1882 and 1883. and the second one (on Draza) in 1911. The latter *pijacal* is an example of inadequate care and recognition on the side of local government, which allowed its destruction, and building of a home for the elderly in its place. Muršič (2005b: 31) demonstrates the political impact on heritage matters, saying: „cultural heritage is present only and exclusively in a political sphere and even slightly institutionalized community. It is not a category which should be recognized as a value by individuals. “

Sali, however, had at its disposal ‘private’ water, and not just water from public and common supplies. Private tanks in Sali, with rain water collectors from roofs and cement yard plates, had been built near or in the house (placed under the kitchen floor), with a stone or concrete opening with a metal top, through which water had been fetched with a wooden bucket, which required special skills. Water was dispatched to tanks by stone or (later) tin grooves. The first such tanks were built in the 16th and the 18th century (tanks in the Gverini (picture 2) and Petriciolo’s houses) (Stagličić, 1997).

In the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century they were still rare in Sali because the cement was very expensive, and until the 1950s they had been built regularly next to the old house or as part of new houses. In the Telaščica Park area it is possible to come across houses in the fields abandoned and in ruin, since the cattle keeping ceased to be an economic activity. (Fabrio and others, 2008). Many of them have own system of self supply with water (stone or cement tanks), in which the rainfall poured from the stone or concrete collectors. Open tanks were built rarely and usually next to the house, for livestock to drink water. These houses are not considered as part of the Sali traditional cultural heritage presentation.

Such traditional knowledge (of building, maintenance and use) has not been materialized as such, but rather is a segment of general and specialized knowledge which an individual or a community possess in their conscience and use in their everyday work and conduct« (Hazler, 2005a: 158). Some other aspects of cultural oral heritage of Sali, relate will be looked at later. We shall briefly touch upon ethno-scientific aspects of water treatment and traditional practice of preserving water quality. It used to be believed (and some still do) that water has a self-purification quality.

»I say the water is alive. Put the water in a tank and hit hard on the tank once in every week and the water will keep healthy. Because if the water moves during a day or a week it purifies itself. It is in its nature to have such ability. (Milena Dominis, Sali)

Such understanding of water (echoing the universal, literal and symbolic concept of water as a purifier and regenerator of life, of substance, and of itself) and treating it accordingly, a practice of placing an eel in the pond (every pond had its eel) where such a ‚domestic‘ animal would eat all the ‚live pollution‘ such as insects and their larvae.

In the continuation of the article reminiscent of some social traditions of Sali, which revolved around water will be illustrated. Village social structure influenced in some cases by water will be touched upon, as well as folk and religious elements, and social-sex defined roles related to water.

Water as a cohesive element in the Sali community

From the oral testimonies on the rural community of Sali, we find out that the water springs were a common concern of all inhabitants when they started to be considered as a *common property*¹² (Rogers and Hall, 2003). In that light Ostrom (Rogers and Hall, 2003) writes about a specific community of people who share water sources, are bonded by socio-economic, political and ecological bonds. Water in Sali was considered a common village property, and cared for it accordingly; it had been ‚poured‘ to traditional and non-coded system of social rules and obligations, which had manifested in cultural expectations, not in written rules (Rogers and Hall, 2003).

Although the rules which had regulated water policy had not been the written ones, they had been obeyed never the less, three of them especially so:

1. *Water for everyone.* The people from Sali proudly stress the fact that in their history when it came to water, the common interest came first, and in spite the fact that water springs might have been on a private property, it was treated as a „common asset.“
2. *Common nature of public works.* The people from Sali had been involved in communal activities, such as „building and maintenance of village roads, ports, moles and ponds, and other necessary infrastructure. These jobs were obligatory and rotated among families. They had been done for no salary (Finka, 1981).
3. *Proper use of drinking water.* Water fetching was strictly regulated, especially in the summer periods. Ponds with drinking water near villages had not been used for laundry and bathing, even face washing was strictly forbidden. They usually had stone

¹² „A managing group had been established which had a right of expelling non-members and decide on the rules of inclusion. Individual members of managing groups have rights and duties considering the use and mantaning of property, thus having the right to manage the water sources.“ (Rogers i Hall, 2003: 19).

fences to prevent livestock from drinking. In the 19th century common tanks were introduced, also utilized according to traditional, non-written rules. Water had been distributed by the guard in charge (*'pudar'*), who would supervise the daily share one family had been allowed to fetch (cca 20 l – a size of a wooden bucket called *'kabao'*). Municipal council had started issuing water coupons later, to guarantee equal distribution. Common water management used to imply direct material interaction with water springs and cooperation in terms of its maintenance and usage. Over the time, The Sali cohabitation with water began to change. The water started to flow from public to private spheres, finding its way to the village households. Until the prices of cement from Dalmatian factories went down, only a few rich households in Sali could have afforded the home water tank („kapnica“), which became essential in daily life. They had been guarded and maintained with great care (the lid on the top was always kept locked). New regulations had been applied on the home water tanks as well; the water became a private matter of concern for local population. In the „water biography“ of Sali it has not been the only change, which have occurred as a result of modern times outside perception of traditional culture and will be touched upon in the closing paragraph. The following part will present the ways of water which had marked certain places and decision making entities.

Waterways in households

Traditionally, and not exclusively for Sali, water management – physical fetching and transport to households and regular maintenance of water– was firmly in the hands of women. Spheres of life defined as feminine, which strategically provide identity and re(produce) asymmetrical relations of sexes and of power and authority (Setha Low, 2003: 24). House, yard and garden – the most commonly articulated as belonging to women and their roles in domestic life – in the past also included water flows and sources supervised by women, while village ponds/tanks and *pijaca*, public water sources, were the centers of social meetings for women, around which social life revolved, women would meet and exchange news and strengthen their social relations. They maintained a powerful female political and social sphere by doing so (Coles and Wallace, 2005: 12).

Water and water related activities in Sali used to be embodied and symbolized in a female, water carrying character. Daily water supply chores were mainly a female duty, water for cooking, washing and personal hygiene was carried home from public ponds and tanks. In times of dry seasons they would carry water from the distant field ponds, in Telašćica, which took several hours of walk, a duty still remember with nostalgia and a pinch of bitterness by some older inhabitants. They would fetch the water and carry the wooden bucket on their heads with a special pillow support (*'spara'*). Water was fetched early in the morning, and before that the house was cleaned in order for dust to settle and not go in the water. The folk saying in Sali was *'dvor pomesti i vode donesti'* ('to clean the house and bring the water'). Water was kept in the

wooden bucket (if the household run out of it during the day, women would go once again before evening) in the kitchen, and next to it and enamel (tin or aluminum also, but more rarely) spoon for water fetching. On the tank's lid there was always a clean dish for fetching water. If a man was to fetch the water, he would filled two wooden flat barrels ('učije') or goat skins ('mihove' mješine), carried by donkeys.

The water was used with great care, every drop was precious (a saying goes 'guard it as a drop of water on your palm'). According to some witnesses, women could do miracles with a limited amount of water at their disposal. They had to cook, clean, wash laundry, all water including activities, water sometimes was replaced by the sea water for the washing activities. All these chores required numerous skills and crafts which have changed over the time, with arrival of domestic appliances.

“How the mother washed the laundry
 Washed, and beaten it on the wooden board
 From above
 With her hands and thighs pressing and her back bent
 So many sheets her hands washed
 While her they bled”.

(Ankica Piasevoli, 1995: 17)

Maljik, fairy and Lady Dažjenica

Life of the people from Sali has always been determined by their placement in natural environment, with which they had woven strong bonds and had developed a specific approach to the world and the nature itself. We shall touch upon their folk legends and believes (superstitions), as well as their religious approach to water.

From the oral testimonies available, there used to be a series of supernatural creatures which locals believed in, preserving some of the elements of the pre-Christian era. They include 'maljik', *fairies*, *warevolves*, *hornmen*, 'peteročići' and so on. They 'had occupied' natural environment and man had to share it with them (Kropej, 2005: 45). They had been considered dangerous, and were believed to have supernatural powers, and presented a danger to men (Grbić, 2004: 459). In Sali, the scary stories of old times included a scary creature called „maljik“, a creature whom they had been meeting in the most unusual „dramatic circumstances (Grbić, 2004: 474). According to some villagers from Sali, it had often hid near a pond or a house tank, which implies that it was the creature with which parents scared their children in order to prevent them from going to potentially dangerous places

People from Sali also believed to other esoteric creatures, such as long haired fairies dressed in white who would meet at the village pond to dance. According to Botica, „those were the *water fairies*, which live by the rivers, lakes, springs, ponds Such fairies who come out of water to dance, were most harmful, according to folk believes. They

are also most beautiful, free in body displaying and could 'madden' a man" (Botica, 1990: 34-35).

Such interpretation echoes the today's secular interpretations of super natural appearances among local population, however does not concern this article.

Agriculture and fishing were the main sources of economic prosperity of Sali all the way to the mid 20th century. Peasants' care for crops became a subject of prayers, and each season had some related sacral festivities. In the spring they held '*rogacioni*' praying days, „with holding of processions and praying to God to bless their hardship in the field and in the sea.“ (Grandov, 1962). Such folk religious beliefs were not a part of the universal catholic rituals. They had been introduced by the church to attract certain profile of people, but a certain link can be established between 'outside church' practices and those which had replaced some of the non-Christian rituals and (Kerševan 1989: 12-13).

From the point of view of this article, a recorded village procession is interesting, written down by the Sali historian Šime Grandov in his chronicles in 1962.

“In some years, during dry seasons and summers, the Sali folk organized processions to beg the Lord to grant them precious rain. The picture of the Lady of Conception would be carried from the big church in a procession to the St. Rok, praying with rosaries, and leaving it there until the rain fell. Every day prayers with rosaries would be said before the picture, for merciful God to send the rain. When the prayers were granted, the picture would be carried back to the big church singing God, we celebrate you to thank you for your gifts ('Tebe Boga hvalimo, u znak zahvalnosti, na primljenim darovima').

According to testimony of some witnesses, that Lady was called the Lady of Rain (Gospa *Dažjenica*)¹³ (picture 3) because her picture had been carried through the fields singing All Saints litanies or praying for rain: “Lord, cover the sky with clouds, send the rain to grow the crops and grass, to help people”. The power of praying and believing that the rain would fall is best illustrated by a teller: “They followed the procession, but did not take umbrellas”. On the other hand, a story from the 1960s is still told, of a main altar painting of the Lady with the child was on an exhibition of Croatian art in Paris, and was replaced by the Lady of Rain at the altar. That was a very rainy year.

It can be said that such procession is one demonstration of loyalty to Saint Mary, as the Mother of Christ is the main saint of Sali and has been dedicated the Parochial church with four altars dedicated to St Mary (Church of Ascending, the Lady of Carmen, the Lady of Ruzar and Lourdes, and in the beginning of the 20th century also the Lady of Conception) (Filipi, 1981: 58). The Sali people address her as 'My Lady' (*Gospe moja*) and see her as the 'strongest protecting saint' to whom they pray and wow. The festivity of the Lady's Ascend to Heaven, '*Vela Gospe*', is very important in Sali.

¹³ *Dažd* – a pre-Slavic Indo-european word for *dew skies* and a pre-Slavic word for *rain* (Gluhak, 2004). In Sali dialect a word *daž* or *dažd* is used for rain and verb *dažiti* for raining.

According to Belaj (1991), St. Mary's main virtue is readiness to help, while Christian notices similar tendencies at analyzing the St. Mary's cult, whose resonances could be also sensed in Sali. In some European countries shrines and churches devoted to Jesus Christ have been started to be replaced by shrines and churches devoted to the Virgin. Names such as Saint Mary have been replaced by the likes of *Nuestra Señora* in Spain, and in Croatian example *My Lady (Gospe moja)*, giving the Virgin even more significance, and to whom they had prayed and whom they had perceived as a link between them and her son (Wolf, 1969).

* * *

Complexity and demands of modern life (industrialization and tourism development) in the second half of the 20th century have considerably changed the Sali experience with water. The water had been brought on water carrying boats from Zadar, and, recently, the village had been connected to the local water tank from the Žmanski lakes. It has, as a natural source, become a government's liquid commodity, and as such, a commodity ready for the market. Water management of today has been entrusted to a small group of people and thus separated from everyday life of water users. Care of local people for water and immediate interaction with it is seemingly a matter of the past, and water is being alienated from its direct users, who are now days, in the time of marketing water like other commodities, seen as 'customers' and 'buyers' of water. If in the history a set of unwritten rules regulated traditional activities relating to water supported the folk knowledge, materialized in the local practices and meanings credited to water, than today's expertise is embodied in the corpus of laws and regulations about water, executed through the managing body of the Sali local government. Social and sex-divided relations in the water management sphere have changed as a result of introducing new technology of collecting, transporting, distributing and maintenance of water. Men – engineers, decision makers, communal workers ...slowly take these matters into their hands.

The story of Sali water supply continues. The promises of attaching the water system of the place to the underwater water supply system of Zadar gives hope to people and to the mellow talking politicians extra points at the elections. With such news on the horizon, the global story of sustainable development enters Sali, and with it a need for rational water usage, just about when the people of Sali get ready for a larger water utilization. What impact would such infrastructure changes have on the local way of life and spiritual culture is yet to be seen. We should unveil the trails of the past in order to understand our own and acknowledge the diversity of another's. However, in order to materialize the Sali past, which had been imprinted in the protected area of the Telašćica Nature Park, and present it as cultural heritage, it needs to be recognized and valued by the local community. Scientists, experts and institutions as such should come second.

Translated by Marija Kondres