

EVERYDAY LIFE IN SABORSKO AND SURROUNDINGS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

This study explores the everyday life of the people in Saborsko and nearby villages (Lička Jesenica, Begovac, Blata) from 1941 to the early 21st century, using oral history and interviews. The area lies between Lika and Kordun, yet the inhabitants identify culturally and linguistically as Ličani, regardless of religious or ethnic background.

Historically, both Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs settled in the area during the 17th and 18th centuries. The population lived in extended families, often under one roof, with distinct gender and generational roles. Family heads managed property and work assignments, and children shared responsibilities from a young age.

Agriculture and livestock were the economic backbone, complemented by seasonal forest labor (kirijašenje), sawmills, and employment in the local railway and the Plaški cellulose factory. Electricity arrived in the late 1960s, and trade was limited but sufficient. Medical services were rudimentary; births happened at home, often without professional assistance, and traditional healing practices persisted.

Children rarely received affection and were heavily engaged in domestic and agricultural tasks. Marriages were mostly arranged within local communities, and courtship occurred during cultural gatherings and religious festivities. Both Catholic and Orthodox traditions marked significant life events, though religious practices varied across time.

Serbs and Croats generally coexisted peacefully until the war in the 1990s. The 1991–1995 conflict disrupted life drastically. Saborsko, a majority-Croat village, was attacked and occupied. Many residents were killed or displaced. Croatian refugees found shelter across the country, while Serbian residents fled to Serbia during Operation Storm in 1995. Both sides suffered great personal and material losses.

Post-war return was slow and difficult, and the community, now aged and shrinking, struggles with economic and demographic decline. Despite the area's proximity to Plitvice Lakes National Park, its future remains uncertain.

Key words: Saborsko; everyday life; oral history; Lička Jesenica; 20th Century