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**FADED AND REVIVED – FOLK DRAMA,
PASSION PLAYS AND CUSTOMS
IN THE NERETVA VALLEY**

Folklore theatre is one of the forms of oral literary expression, manifesting itself in the form of merged staging, play, acting and performance. Ten manuscript collections from the mid-20th century document field recordings of folklore material and oral literature in the Neretva Valley region. Only two provide information about folk dramatic forms that are occasionally performed. Both manuscript collections were compiled by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin in 1964. The paper examines these two manuscript collections and presents the dramatic forms that were enacted in villages and towns throughout the Neretva Valley. Particular attention is given to carnival festivities and the dramatic forms that appear in them, as well as to Catholic passion plays and rituals that have been preserved in this region.

Keywords: *folklore theatre, passion plays, carnival, folk drama, oral literature*

1. Introduction

Information on folk dramatic plays and forms of folk theatre in the Neretva Valley can be found in manuscript collections, the materials of which were compiled in the mid-20th century. Of a total of ten manuscript collections, only two provide information on past customs that encompass elements of folk theatre. These are the manuscript collection *Folklorna građa neretljanske krajine* (eng. Folk Material from the Neretva Region), compiled in 1964 and submitted to the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin under archival number 729. The second manuscript collection, *Karnevalski tekstovi iz Metkovića i Opuzena* (eng. Carnival Texts

from Metković and Opuzen), was also submitted by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin in 1964, under inventory number 730.

The earliest known manuscript collections containing transcribed oral songs from the Neretva Valley date back to the 19th century. Due to their content, these collections remain significant for the study of oral lyric poetry from the region. It was only in the 19th century that such manuscript collections began to appear, as a result of the collecting efforts of oral literature and folklore researchers. The collections consist of recorded oral lyric songs and their structural features, with the first such manuscript collection being created between 1860 and 1875, and compiled by Mihovil Pavlinović under the title *Narodne pjesme iz Dalmacije, Bosne i Hercegovine* (eng. Folk Songs from Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina). Comprising a total of 281 pages, the collection contains 127 transcriptions of oral lyric and epic songs from Metković, Imotski, Makarska, and Vranjic. The original manuscript is preserved at the Committee for Folk Life and Customs of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ONŽO) in Zagreb, under the shelf mark 143. Mihovil Pavlinović is also the author of another manuscript collection titled *Narodne pjesme iz Dalmacije i drugih krajeva* (eng. Folk Songs from Dalmatia and Other Regions), which is also housed at the Committee for Folk Life and Customs in Zagreb, under the shelf mark 28. Like the previous collection, this one was also compiled over a 15-year period, between 1860 and 1875.

A manuscript collection of oral lyric and epic songs from the year 1888 was submitted by Ante Franjin Alačević. This extensive collection, comprising 782 pages, is preserved at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research under inventory number 313, titled *Narodne pjesme iz Drvenika* (eng. Folk Songs from Drvenik). The manuscript is a transcription of three volumes originally recorded by three generations of the Alačević family from the Makarska littoral: Ante Franjin (the grandfather), his sons Frane and Jerko, and his grandson Miroslav. The original copy of the complete Alačević manuscript collection, titled *Pismar narodni* (eng. Folk Songbook), is held by the Committee for Folk Life and Customs in Zagreb, under the shelf mark 177a (Bošković-Stulli, 1987: 12).

In addition to several recordings of oral lyric poetry made by Ljuba Simić, Stjepan Šešelj, and Ivan Slamnig, oral literature-based texts were collected on two occasions by collaborators of the Institute for Folklore Research, formerly known as the Institute of Folk Art. Alongside them, the collection of oral traditions in the Neretva region, along with the Pelješac Peninsula, was significantly contributed by figures such as Maja Bošković-Stulli, Olinko Delorko, Stjepan Stepanov, Nikola Bonifačić Rožin, Josip Miličević, Ivan Ivančan, and Živko Kljaković. In addition to documenting oral literary heritage, these

researchers also collected ethnological materials, took photographs, studied melodies, and described dances and songs. All of this material is preserved in the archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb. Of particular interest is the work of Živko Kljaković, who produced over two hundred drawings during field research, with a selection of these illustrations being included in the book *U kralja od Norina: Priče, pjesme, zagonetke i poslovice s Neretve* (eng. *The King of Norin: Stories, Songs, Riddles and Proverbs from the Neretva*) by Maja Bošković-Stulli. The recorded texts were preserved in manuscript form at the Committee for Folk Life and Customs of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb, as well as in the manuscripts of the Institute for Folklore Research in Zagreb, now known as the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research. As previously mentioned, the mission to collect oral literary and folkloric material from the Neretva Valley was carried out on two occasions in the mid-20th century and it resulted in exceptionally valuable findings, now housed at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research.¹ Significant contributors to the preservation, appreciation, and dissemination of oral literary heritage and folk tradition, have been the immensely fruitful, personal, and passionate involvement of: Vid Bagur, with his field research and the integration of traditional dances into the Culture and Art Society of Metković (KUD Metković), and Radojka Bagur, whose life's work involved the study, sewing, and crafting of traditional Metković and Neretva folk costumes with her students since 1959 and beyond. This legacy is most clearly manifested in the activities of KUD Metković over the past sixty years. Radojka Bagur's many years of practical, research, and scholarly work culminated in the publication of the book *Nošnja u dolini Neretve kroz stoljeća* (eng. *Neretva Valley Costume Practices through Centuries*) from 2015.

During the period of post-war transformation in the Neretva Valley, when rural populations were establishing strong connections with developing urban centers such as Metković and Opuzen, many elements of customary

¹ Through fieldwork conducted in Metković, I obtained information indicating that a small number of students from Metković and its surrounding area have, over the past thirty years, written seminar papers, undergraduate theses, and final projects focused on collecting oral literary content from within their families and circles of acquaintances. Many of these works are preserved in the personal archives of former students and their families. In addition, several ethno-enthusiasts have independently collected both tangible and intangible cultural materials, and their contributions should be considered in future research. These independent collectors are generally older individuals, although there are also a few younger people deeply devoted to traditional customs—who, out of a passion for oral stories and songs, enthusiastically gather various forms of oral literature. Time will ultimately reveal the value of their dedication to oral literature and to the cultural heritage of the Neretva region.

practice were transmitted into the towns, where they continued their cultural life. The coexistence, interrelation, and mutual dependence of urban and rural culture in the Neretva Valley are documented in two ethnographic films by Obrad Gluščević: *Ljudi s Neretve* (eng. People of the Neretva) from 1966, and *Brđani i donjani* (eng. The Highlanders and the Lowlanders) from 1969. These films clearly illustrate how the urban environments of Metković and Opuzen were deeply shaped by the influence of rural populations that had settled there. In fact, attempting to draw a clear boundary between the rural and the urban in the Neretva Valley is a challenging and, arguably, impractical task, given the extent of their integration.

These ongoing connections between the urban and the rural in this region can be examined precisely through manuscript collections that preserve ancient motifs originating from village life: oral epic songs, folktales, fairy tales, legends, beliefs, and customs. Although the data in these manuscripts were most often recorded in 1964, they clearly bear witness to the vitality of ancient ideas transmitted through traditional forms of oral literature, of which only fragments remain in active use today. Some of these fragments still hold power and continue to spark interest among the local population (such as the tale of the King of Norin, the history of Neretvan pirates, or the folk theatre of carnival masquerades), but the majority of oral literary motifs are slipping into quiet oblivion, gradually disappearing from collective cultural practice and becoming matters of individual interest. As in other parts of Croatia, this region has lost the living transmission of oral literary forms such as traditional lyric (folk) songs and communal circle dances (*kolo*). Today, these forms survive only within cultural and artistic societies, through which they have acquired the status of museum heritage that echoes from the past. Nevertheless, the Neretva Valley still maintains a strong connection to tradition and to everything inherited through ancestral lineage. Perhaps the deeply rooted coexistence with agriculture (even among urban populations) continues to inspire a sense of pride in cultivating the land and in the cultural strata passed down from earlier generations.

2. Folkloric Dramatic Texts and Customs in Metković

It is well known that carnival festivities have endured among the various traditional customs preserved in urban environments across Croatia, and the same holds true for towns in the Neretva Valley, where carnival celebrations continue to be held annually with widespread participation and the organizational support of local municipalities. The focus of this study is the artistic productivity of the people, who lend a new dimension to customary practice through their creative expression.

The earliest recorded reference to masquerade-like carnival festivities (*maškare*) in Metković dates back to 1879; however, it is entirely reasonable to assume that such masquerade traditions took place in Metković and its surrounding rural areas for centuries prior to this first mention (*Hrvatski karnevalist*, 2009: 36). Supporting this is one of the earliest references to carnival celebrations in Dalmatia, mentioned by Marko Marulić in his poem *Poklad i korizma* (eng. Carnival and Lent) (Božić-Bužančić, 1982: 165). It should be noted that *maškare* constitute an ancient customary practice whose messages and mask forms may have evolved over time, yet whose function and purpose have remained largely unchanged through the centuries. The lack of older records, documentation, and the still unexplored archival materials on carnival festivities in Metković limits current research primarily to the 20th century and onward into the present day.

Materials, information, and evidence concerning the carnival festivities held in Metković have been collected from a range of available sources and are presented here in the form of an analysis of documentation and data gathered through oral transmission. In the process of collecting material for the writing of this study, generous and gracious assistance was provided by key figures, organizers, and participants in the Metković carnival tradition, who contributed significantly by supplying archival material, documentation, photo albums, and perhaps most importantly, first-hand accounts, interpretations, and recollections of past events. Joško Jelaš, the son of the late Jakov Jelaš, made an outstanding contribution by making available documents, handwritten notes, and notebooks belonging to his late father, who was among the early initiators of carnival customs in Metković at the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, a rich family photo album, also provided by Joško Jelaš, served as valuable visual confirmation of the authenticity of testimonies and memories from the early 20th century, all of which were gathered and recorded for the purposes of this research.

An exceptional informational contribution to the writing of this study was also provided by Mario Gluščević, a long-standing active member of the Association *Pokladno gradsko društvo Metković* (eng. Metković Carnival City Society). He has created a wide array of props, uniforms, and masks for the carnival festivities in Metković and generously made available his extensive personal archival collection related to the Society. In addition to offering valuable insights into his personal engagement and role within the carnival community, the sharing of his family photo album that contains images of carnival activities in Metković from the late 20th century proved to be of particular significance. It is also important to highlight the many prop-related artifacts preserved within Mario Gluščević's personal archive; the unique colle-

ction includes handcrafted masks, costumes, and other theatrical accessories, all made by Gluščević himself and used for years in Metković's masquerade festivities, especially within the formal framework of the city's theatrical carnival ceremonies.

Zdravko Obradović, long-time president of KUD Metković, generously provided several family photo albums containing a substantial number of chronologically arranged photographs of official traditional festivities (*Gala zabava*), during which costumed groups (teams) competed for official awards. Of particular significance are photographs depicting the various stages of group costume preparation, offering valuable insight into the process of costume design and production. In addition, numerous photographs—as well as contextual information about the individuals and events captured in them—were made available by Ivo Veraja, a photographer from Metković whose photographic archive rivals even some institutional collections in Croatia. His encyclopedic knowledge of the people, photographs, and local events in Metković proved to be of immense value in the preparation of this study. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to each of these individuals, as their contributions were indispensable. Without their participation, this work would have been considerably poorer and lacking in essential information.

Photographs from 1929 and 1935 bear witness to the early beginnings of what could be described as *proto-carnival festivities*, or a form of nascent carnival activity in Metković. The images depict snow sculptures created by the individuals featured in the photographs themselves. While these sculptures are not directly tied to carnival rituals and celebrations, their importance lies in the fact that several of the individuals pictured in said photos would later emerge as key founders and organizers of carnival festivities in Metković over the following decades. Moreover, the periodical *Pokladnik* (1986) published a piece titled *Time Machine 1929*, which includes the fictional will and testament of Marko Krnjeval, dated at the end as “In Metković, in the month of the cat, 1928” (*Pokladnik*, 1986: 2).

The distinctive individual approach of certain figures along the likes of Jakov Jelaš proved particularly well-suited for engagement in carnival activities. His unique personality marked an earlier phase of the *maškare* in Metković. According to the testimony of Joško Jelaš, Jakov possessed a natural flair for comic effect (*geg*) and humorous trickery (*štos*), which served both as his personal inspiration and as the creative drive behind his participation and organization of carnival events in Metković. Without such a sense of irony and playful satire (*funcutarije*), it would be difficult to infuse freshness and widely appreciated humor into events that define the essence of carnival celebrations. The nature and character of these festivities—shaped by a distinctive spirit of

dišpet (defiant wit) and a pronounced sense of humor—came to define the foundations of Metković's earlier carnival traditions, known locally as *maškare*. The fusion of artistic expression with a refined sense for the humorous and ironic provided a fertile ground for carnival performances, particularly when paired with elements of public spectacle and performative expression.

In the carnival season of 1946/1947, the role of Marko Krnjeval (English equivalent of the Carnival figure) was performed by Jakov Jelaš, who was theatrically “sawn” in a wooden chest by fellow participants Ivica Gluščević and Dr. Bušić. While the Carnival figure (Jakov) was concealed within the chest, the conspirators conspired aloud on how best to finish him off, while at the same time performing a magic trick and enabling the Carnival character to discreetly exit the chest and, from the inside, use a brush and red paint to colour the saw blade. The audience was astonished; contemporary accounts note that some genuinely believed he had been sawed in half, exclaiming: “Why did they condemn him, and on Carnival Day no less? Who will make the next one, now that you’ve destroyed him?” (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 58). Following this dramatic act, the “executioners” performed a séance intended to revive the fallen figure. The medium was portrayed by a woman from Dubrovnik, who pretended to communicate with the spirit of Carnival. She relayed his final message: that he had, in fact, created a substitute Carnival in the form of a doll, which now resided within the chest, sent as a gift from the underworld. The chest was opened, the doll was retrieved, and from its pockets a written version of the Carnival's will was drawn—subsequently read aloud before the gathered crowd (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 59).

Jakov Jelaš himself noted that the central figure of the carnival in Metković was, for the most part, the character of Marko Krnjeval (also spelled Karneval in Croatian). He believed that this name had entered Metković prior to 1905, and that the figure was also referred to as *Plemi*ć and *Krnevalović* (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 57).

Evidence of the organized and formal holding of carnival festivities in Metković is also found in carnival texts and public speeches, such as the will of Marko Krnjeval, which has also been referred to in historical documents as the *Karnevalski tastamenat* (eng. Carnival Testament; 1938) or *Testamenat princa Marka* (eng. Testament of Prince Marko; 1952). The available testamentary texts from 1937, 1938, 1952, and 1953 were written by Jakov Jelaš and are preserved in the private archive of the Jelaš family. The oldest surviving testament, located through archival research, attests to the deliberate efforts of individuals to compose written texts for the theatrical judicial sentencing of Marko Krnjeval, according to the prescribed framework of the carnival tradition. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that carnival

festivities were held continuously over the course of centuries, transmitting their theatrical and performative forms orally, i.e., via oral literature tradition.

It is particularly interesting to observe how the recorded testamentary texts, in both their structural and stylistic features, draw upon the tradition of oral literature. The most frequently used verse form is the *deseterac* (ten-syllable verse), although the form is not consistently maintained, with metrical irregularities occasionally resulting in lines that are one syllable short of a true *deseterac*. In the texts from 1952 and 1953, the *osmerac* (eight-syllable verse) appears frequently, especially in the sections where “Krnje” addresses the people. As with the *deseterac*, there are also metrical inconsistencies within the *osmerac*. These two verse forms (*deseterac* and *osmerac*) constitute some of the most prominent meters in Croatian oral literature. In some parts of the text, a combination of a *deseterac* followed by an *osmerac* can also be found. Nikola Bonifačić Rožin notes that in instances where a connection to ritual still exists, we often encounter verses spoken by the ritual performer (Lozica, 1997: 2011).

In addition, stylistic devices can be observed that are either borrowed from or similar to those found in oral literature. For instance, in the text, Marko bids farewell to the world with the words “*Kad se svama djeliti moram*” (eng. When I must part with you),² where the old word *dijeliti* or *diliti* is used to signify parting. Several instances also reveal dialectal features in the expression, with a simultaneous use of both *ikavian* and *ijekavian* variants:

„*Stigoh sretno gradu Metkoviću*
Da obnovim moju staru sriću“.³

„*Ama braćo baš na oči bjednog,*
Pogledame jeli ovo srića“.⁴

The stylistic characteristics of these testaments are highly consistent and reflect a homogeneous authorial voice, namely that of Jakov Jelaš, who employs similar methods in all the preserved texts. The introductory part of the carnival text from 1938 clearly illustrates said textual features:

² *Testamenat Karnevala*, 1. 3. 1938., str. 1.

³ „I safely arrived in the town of Metković / To renew my old happiness“ - *Testamenat Karnevala*, 1. 3. 1938., str. 3.

⁴ „But brothers, right before the eyes of the wretched, / Look at me, is this what you call happiness?“ - *Testamenat Karnevala*, 1. 3. 1938., str. 6

CARNIVAL TESTAMENT 1/3 1938⁵

*Draga braćo mili nasljednici
Evo ravna godina je dana
Das uputih iz dalekih strana
Tese ukrcah na feratu našu
Sa darovim za zabavu vašu
Kad sam doša kazaše mi izdaleka
Dase radi dole dalje štreka
Samo žalim što dočekati neću
Jer se pome crni dani kreću
Primičese smrt i časi
Kad se svama dijeliti moram
Stog ja hoću da nebudem
Baš za ništo odgovoran
Mojoj smrti viste krivi
Kojste samnom jeli pili
Sada evo trunem venem
Ne pominjuć što pretrpih
Psovke kavge moje žene
Dami nebje onog lika
Štomigaje špricjer dao
Bikarbonat štose zove
Već međ vama nebi stajo
Život mije poslije rata
Bio bućan i pun mira
Ali sada ja skapajem
Žderuć zelja i kumpira
U militar sam bio pozvat
Štosam mnogim narep stao
Pa nek se sad neljute
Što ću ih nagradit pravo
Sjetit ću se onih lica
Nevjernika čudnih šara
Što za vrijeme crnih dana
Dadoše mi dost šamara*

⁵ The original manuscript, titled *Karnevalski Tastamenat za god. 1938. 1/3*, is preserved in the family archive of the Jelaš family in Metković. The text was written by Jakov Jelaš (the father of Joško Jelaš), while the manuscript was kindly made available for review through the courtesy of its owner, Joško Jelaš.

*Spomenut ću i sve ljude
Štose danas broje prvi
A za vrijeme crnih dana
Htjeo svaki da me smrvi
Štoće vama ludi ljudi
Već svak svoj gospodar budi
Držite se svoj u svome
Vjerni pragu vjerni domu
Štoće vama politika
To ničija nije dika
Luda uvijek puna šara
I košta vas mnogo para
Mjesto vam je ko i prije
Pod plaštom se nešto krije
Rad razdora međ ljudmi
Mjesto svaki ugled gubi
Žalosno je tovam braćo
Kad u mistu nema sklada
Pa kakva vam od tud sreća
I narodu koja fajda
Otišla je Mirki stara
A kad idem skupim malo para
Ja na štetu biti neću
Dogodine treba skupit družbu veću
Nami humoristima je danas teško
Servira vam uvijek nešto novo
Ljudi sve već znadu mrmljaju i kažu
Pa što nam taj brblja ovo
Same stvari štosmo stoput čuli
I onda sve bljutavo i banalno
Mi želimo nešto slušat
Nešto neviđeno nešto kolosalno
Lako je to reći daj mi nešto novo
Al iz rukava sipat ja nemogu
Ova ženska moda ubija sve redom
Oženjene ljude a snjima i mene
Ormari su puni robe puni svake vrste
Jer što sve nekupe ove naše žene
Vječno švelje, čipke i razni kostimi
A skunja čas dulja a čas opet kraća*

*Dok muž bijedan snaže puste pare
 Uzdiše i stenje pa račune plaća
 Tek odjednom plane i odbrusi ženi
 Tibi rado živit na veliku nogu
 Ali uzdržavat tebe tako ja nemogu
 Metković nam je turističko misto
 Ali ljudi svi ne misle isto
 Mnogi stranci kad u misto stignu
 Ostanu nam malo pa pobignu
 Oni nešto traže al zaludu
 I sve svrši uz veliku bruku
 U boriće il u privatnu kuću
 Eto tosu zadnja slova
 Štovam pamet pruža moja
 Jer il tako il onako
 Hoće biti vam svakojako.
 (...)
 (Carnival Testament, 1938: 1-3)*

According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Metković had a population of five thousand in the mid-20th century, which significantly favored the relevance and resonance of carnival festivities—especially the reading of Marko Krnjeval’s testament, as the messages intended to reach prominent individuals in the community were widely known and generally accepted by the majority of residents.⁶ Such social and sociological circumstances allowed for a high degree of contextualization of the carnival text, as the people of Metković could easily form a clear mental image of fellow townspeople whose traits, incidents, and misadventures were referenced in the carnival texts. This social element was one of particular importance, given that in today’s circumstances, when Metković has a population of over fifteen thousand, the testament text can no longer achieve the same level of community-wide recognition and affirmation as it did seventy years ago. The transitional period spanning a few decades led to a kind of generational shift among the organizers of the carnival festivities, gradually opening space for younger generations who slowly

⁶ *Number of inhabitants in Metković in 1951.* Data taken from the website of the *Croatian Bureau of Statistics*: https://web.dzs.hr/PXWeb/Table.aspx?layout=tableViewLayout1&px_tableid=Tabela3_19.px&px_path=Naselja%20i%20stanovni%20c5%a1tvo%20Republike%20HrvatskeStanovni%20c5%a1tvoGradovi%20i%20Op%20c4%87ine&px_language=hr&px_db=Naselja%20i%20stanovni%20c5%a1tvo%20Republike%20Hrvatske&rxid=2231adde-4668-4b9a-be55-c749b42e2012 (last visited on May 12, 2022)

but steadily began to take over the organization of the Metković masquerades. This shift was particularly evident during the 1970s and 1980s, when the festivities were led by younger individuals who demonstrated a high level of artistic inclination. In this way, the Metković masquerades entered a new, more contemporary phase of existence, with a more formalized version of the carnival increasingly integrated into the community.

By 1981, Metković had a population of over eleven thousand, and during this period the carnival festivities began to take on a more formal structure, transforming the local humorous “*geg*” into content adapted to the needs of a larger community. As stated in the journal *Hrvatski karnevalist*, “following the path of old folk traditions and a group of enthusiasts, under the leadership of Mr. Mario Ketini and Mr. Mario Gluščević, in February 1989, they gathered people and formed an association which they called the ‘Carnival City Society Metković’” (*Hrvatski karnevalist*, 2009: 36). The organization of the Metković masquerades was then taken over by this newly formed society, which, through subsequent transformations, came to be known as the *Pokladno društvo Metković* (eng. Carnival Society Metković) or *Pokladno metkovsko društvo* (eng. Metković Carnival Society), as cited in public media outlets. In this more recent period, a notable development was the appearance of an organized, formal carnival newspaper titled *Pokladnik: pokladno glasilo za pučki humor i zajebanciju* (eng. The Carnivalist: A Carnival Publication for Folk Humor and Satire), published by KUD Metković. In doing so, the folk theatre (*pučki teatar*) was effectively formalized into a society under the patronage of the city. In this context, it is important to consider the merging of individual artistic and performative expressions of Jakov Jelaš and his companions in the earlier phase, with the artistic and creative expressions of Mario Gluščević and his collaborators in the more recent phase of carnival festivities in Metković. The personal mini-archive owned by Mario Gluščević contains a variety of handcrafted items he personally created. Among them are a wooden chair/throne made exclusively for the carnival, uniforms and hats of the carnival society, the ceremonial necklace of the carnival judge, and similar items. Many of these masquerade props remain preserved, carrying with them stories and anecdotes.

A new symbol for the carnival was also introduced, designed for the needs of the newly formed association and created by Zvonko Panza. Two notable changes on the emblem of the carnival society include the coat of arms of the City of Metković, which was adopted by the “Decision on the Coat of Arms and Flag of the City of Metković” on May 28, 1996, and the emblem of the Federation of European Carnival Cities (FECC). Membership in this European federation represents a significant recognition of the Metković car-

nival organization, which has thus found its place within the broader context of European carnival festivities.

Each year in Metković, a ten-day carnival program takes place, consistently engaging a significant number of local residents. Notably, the large masquerade parade in Metković regularly features participants from surrounding settlements within the Municipality of Metković, such as Vid and Prud. In addition, it has become a long-standing tradition for “gala parties” to be held annually at the Naron Hotel as part of the carnival festivities, with the events featuring group costumes that are then evaluated and awarded official prizes. For the purpose of judging the group costumes, a panel of experts assembles and evaluates the performances and costumes each year, based on which the winning group is selected. The current secretary of KUD Metković, Zdravko Obradović, has generously provided several photo albums documenting group costumes at these gala events from the 1980s to the present. Furthermore, he has made available multi-year records of winning costume groups and participants from the final award evenings held at the Naron Hotel in Metković.

3. Carnavalesque Folk Plays of Dramatic Character

Nikola Bonifačić Rožin, an ethnologist focused on the study of folk theatre in Croatia, devoted part of his research to this phenomenon in the Neretva Valley. As he himself notes, his fieldwork concentrated primarily on “folk dramatic material,” and he inquired about all forms of masquerades—carnival, wedding, and village gatherings (so called *prela*).⁷ His research encompassed various locations, including Metković, Vid, Kula Norinska, Momići, Komin, Opuzen, Desne, Krvavac, Borovci, Nova Sela, Podravnica, and others (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: I). In addition, he paid special attention to collecting information concerning village games performed during social gatherings, some of which exhibit a distinctly dramatic character. He highlighted, for example, a particularly interesting bachelor game from the village of Momići titled *Kako se momci uzimaju u marinu* (eng. How Young Men Are Taken into the Marina). According to his findings, it was customary in Momići for masqueraders to appear at weddings with a donkey, mounted on which was a doll named Marko, serving as a form of congratulation for the newlyweds. He also noted that in the Jerkovac neighborhood of Metković, various games were performed that involved “retrieving” the bride, who was often sought as a “lost apple” (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: II). Furthermore, it is important to mention the Passion plays that take place in Metković, which possess a strong theatrical

⁷ *prelo*, a form of rural sociability; a specific type of evening gathering of village women and girls.

character. On Good Friday, hooded and barefoot *Šimun* carries a large cross during the procession. The traditional figure of *Šimun* also appears in Vid and Vrgorac. Bonifačić Rožin notes that children themselves would stage games in Metković and Opuzen, in which they imitate *Šimun* and the Resurrection of Jesus. Accompanying *Šimun* are the so-called *Žudije*, dressed as Roman soldiers who guard Christ's tomb, play dice in the church, and reenact the scene of casting lots for Jesus's robe, performing a traditional pantomime at the moment of the Gloria (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: II, III).

3.1. Confession

This dramatic play unfolds with two individuals from a neighboring village arriving and announcing that they are offering confessions. They settle into a room, where one plays the role of the priest by draping a white cloth over himself, while the other acts as an assistant. They set up two chairs with a space between them, covering them with a sheet. People are then admitted one by one into the room. The participant who pretends to be confessing invents a minor sin, and the mock priest assigns them a prayer as penance and instructs them to sit between himself and his assistant. When the person sits down to pray, the priest and the assistant abruptly rise, causing the unsuspecting penitent to fall to the ground—much to the amusement and satisfaction of the masquerading priest and his assistant (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 1).⁸

3.2. Shaving with Wood

This dramatic play features a barber who mixes "klak" (lime), places a ladder on the shoulders of the "customer" to immobilize him, begins to sharpen a knife on metal lids, and proceeds to shave, while the customer persistently pulls his head back. The customer has in fact been shaved beforehand, and his face is smeared with charcoal. The barber then shaves him using a wet piece of wood to clean the charcoal from his face (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 2).⁹

⁸ The game was described by Divna Nikoletić from Prisoje near Metković. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 14, 1964, in Metković.

⁹ The game was described by student Ante Medak from Desne. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 14, 1964, in Metković.

3.3. *Grandpa and Grandma*

As noted by Bonifačić Rožin, the game has been performed in the villages of Dubrava, Mali Prolog, Otrić-Seoci, Crveni Grm, Nova Sela, and Borovci. In more recent times, the roles of the grotesque elderly woman and man, *baba* (eng. grandma) and *did* (eng. grandpa), have been performed by young men from Prud, who are regular participants in the grand carnival procession in Metković. Both characters are played by men. The grandma wears the traditional worn clothing of elderly women, including a *modrina* (blue work dress), carries a distaff for spinning wool, and an old-style women's bag. The grandpa character wears ram horns on his head, a bag filled with ashes, bells around his waist, and carries a wooden rifle. From time to time, speaking in altered voices and using vulgar language, they act out quarrels that escalate into physical confrontations. After reconciling, they embrace and roll on the ground, mockingly simulating a sexual act. As they move through the streets, they often stop in front of the church to dance and pray to God. Afterward, the cycle of quarrelling and reconciliation resumes, with the scenes repeating continuously (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 3).¹⁰ In Komin, it was recorded that the grandpa character wore old cowhides with the hair turned outward, and carried a staff resembling that of a shepherd (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 4, 5).¹¹ In Borovci, the grandma and grandpa are accompanied by “children” portrayed by young boys. When visiting a household, the hosts would offer them refreshments and jokingly ask how they managed to have so many children. In response, the grandpa lifts his coat to reveal an artificial, oversized phallus made of red-painted greenwood, while the grandma lifts her skirt to reveal an artificial vulva fashioned from lambskin (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 10).¹² Vladimir Pavlović¹³ noted that the grandpa mask was made of sheep bladder with cutouts for the eyes, nose, and mouth. It was adorned with horns on top and featured a beard and moustache made from additional bladder material and horsehair (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 12).

The grandma and grandpa masks, which originated in rural areas before entering the urban setting, are situated within the context of panspermic

¹⁰ The game was described by student Ivan Grmoja from Dubrave. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 14, 1964, in Metković.

¹¹ Recounted by Ante Dugandžić, 51 years old. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 15, 1964, in Komin.

¹² Recounted by Zvonko Vekić from Borovci. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 16, 1964, in Kula Norinska.

¹³ Vladimir Pavlović was a contemporary Croatian poet from Herzegovina. In addition to poetry, he wrote essays, travelogues, short stories, dramatic texts, and journalistic pieces on cultural and political affairs.

customs, wherein the performers assume an illustrative role on behalf of the community, and by enacting reproductive activity, they symbolically invoke collective fertility. Carnival, in and of itself, is a holiday, a game; one that has traditionally served no purpose beyond its own enactment. On the other hand, one must ask why carnival festivities took place in such specific forms and why certain masks reappear on annual basis. This question becomes especially pertinent when considering that the world of masquerade is a world turned upside down (Burke, 1991: 150). In a similar fashion, Friar Silvestar Kutleša notes: “Carnival is a time of a time of feasting, drinking, and folly” (Kutleša, 1997: 275).

The aforementioned characters are well known throughout Croatia, from Istria to Dalmatia, Lika, and beyond; they can be found across Southeastern Europe and in other parts of the continent as well (Lozica, 1997: 224). Interestingly, for several decades now, individuals from the village of Prud have regularly portrayed and performed the roles of “grandma” and “grandpa”. This is significant because it highlights how this carnival practice has been “pulled” into the urban environment from a rural one; a phenomenon that is quite natural across many layers of society, including within carnival festivities. It is, in fact, true that the core of many European urban carnival traditions can be traced back to rural and “lower” strata of European populations and their ancient customs, from which they ascended to the highest levels of civilization (Gavazzi, 1997: 13).

3.4. Wedding Dramatic Performances

A wedding is an occasion that offers the people space for dramatic expression such as dancing, singing, playing music, acting, and reciting (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964a: 39). During the wedding itself, as well as during courtship and the ceremonial transportation of the bride’s chest of clothing, various actions are performed that contain the inchoate elements of dramatic art (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964a: 42). For example, the prescribed ceremonial procedures during the groom’s arrival with his wedding party to fetch the bride regulate the roles and functions of the main participants. In doing so, the ceremony is clearly structured while simultaneously allowing space for dramatic creativity to emerge. Thus, the bride and groom assume the roles of universal characters, each with specific functions and behavioral codes. The dramatic function is most prominently expressed in the roles of the best men, the standard-bearer, the bride’s parents, and the leader of the wedding party—the *stari svat* or *čavo*, who carries a wooden mallet used to knock on doors when coming to collect the bride. Upon the bride’s arrival at the groom’s house, she would be

handed a male child at the entrance, after which she would then turn around three times with the child in her arms and kiss three thresholds—the bottom one and the two vertical doorposts. She would also kiss the father- and mother-in-law and other members of the groom’s family (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 72). These are roles that preserve both the ritual act and the performative elements of role-playing within a protodramatic structure.

The handing over of the bride and her departure from the parental home is accompanied by a dramatic performance known as the “purchase of the bride.” The roles are clearly defined: the standard-bearer, the best man, and the *stari svat* arrive at the bride’s door and request her on behalf of the groom. Members of her family refuse to hand her over until they are sufficiently compensated or gifted. This form of dramatic play is sometimes taken too seriously by the participants, and jokes or witty remarks may strike too close to home, or greed may exceed the bounds of good taste. Nevertheless, the situation most often unfolds to the amusement of both parties. In some cases, the groom’s envoys claim to be searching for a “lost girl” or are looking for an “apple.” Such a game was recorded in the village of Momići (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964a: 76).¹⁴ The household members then present them with elderly women, other young girls, or even children, all of whom are rejected one by one until the actual bride is brought out. When she finally appears at the doorway, general merriment ensues, often accompanied by singing and celebratory gunfire. In the Cetina region, a similar dramatic game has been recorded under the name “asking for the sheep,” in which the bride is requested in much the same performative manner (Bonifačić Rožin, 1967: 524).

Masqueraders at weddings often take on a buffoonish character and serve to enhance the joy and celebration. The wedding guests are welcomed with a puppet figure of Marko Krnjeval, who is seated on a real donkey. Beneath Marko is a small barrel or wineskin filled with wine, from which a hose is threaded under the donkey’s tail, and through which the wine is poured and offered to the wedding guests. The leader of the masqueraders greets the wedding party and offers wine to the bride and groom with the words: “Congratulations on your wedding in my name, Marko’s, and our crew’s. You must drink” (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964a: 74).¹⁵

¹⁴ Recounted by Dragica Plećaš, born in 1930. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 17, 1964, in Momići.

¹⁵ Recounted by Ante Nikolić, born in 1921. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 17, 1964, in Momići.

3.5. *Other Dramatic Games*

The Emperor – A character named *Geljo-Lule* would be dressed in shabby clothes, a crown placed on his head, and seated in an improvised, run-down carriage hitched to the most pitiful donkey, into whose rear a pepper would be inserted, and which would then drag the jester/fool through the village. The person playing the emperor allowed anything to be done to him and spoke in a so-called “kozarski” or a form of pig Latin. (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 6)¹⁶

Child – A woman dressed as a Gypsy would carry a small dog in her arms while begging during the carnival. The dog represented the young Marko Krnjeval.¹⁷ (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 6)

Travelers – Masqueraders would play the roles of travelers at a wedding taking place during the carnival season. They would perform a wild act, create chaos, and dance. They acted as if they were travelers looking for a place to stay.¹⁸ (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 7)

Elez – Two individuals would play a father and son. The son would constantly shout: “Marry me off, father!” and the father character would respond: “Wait, son, we’ll find a girl.” Then he would hurry around the party asking, “How about this one? This one?” The girls would reject the proposals one after another, while the son kept repeating the same plea. This game was performed in Krvavac and in nearby villages.¹⁹ (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 8)

Elez’s Plowing and Sowing – In the middle of a crowd, Elez would take a long stick, drive it ahead of him, and mimic plowing. Behind him, a character would shout: “Plow, Elez! E, ho, ijo!” Once the plowing was done, someone would say: “Ah, my Elez, now we have to sow the field.” Someone off to the side, unnoticed, would hand him a handful of ashes. Then the character would exclaim: “We must sow, Elez, come on, let’s sow!” At that moment, he would toss the ashes over the crowd, and the people would scatter in surprise.²⁰ (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 9)

Pregnant Woman – It was recorded in Borovci that a man would dress as a woman and create a large belly and breasts out of rags. Sometimes, he wo-

¹⁶ Recounted by Ante Dugandžić, 51 years old. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 15, 1964, in Komin.

¹⁷ Recounted by Ante Dugandžić, 51 years old. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 15, 1964, in Komin.

¹⁸ Recounted by Ante Dugandžić, 51 years old. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 15, 1964, in Komin.

¹⁹ Recounted by Luka Ujdur from Krvavac, 53 years old. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 16, 1964, in Krvavac.

²⁰ Recounted by Luka Ujdur from Krvavac, 53 years old. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 16, 1964, in Krvavac.

uld place a cat or dog inside and release it during a mock childbirth. Someone would bring the “pregnant woman” into a household and ask for assistance with the “delivery.” Everyone would act terrified, and when the cat or dog suddenly appeared, a sense of relief would follow. That would mark the end of the scene.²¹ (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 11)

How Young Men Are Taken into the *Marina* (Military) – The roles are played by three chosen young men who enter a house. One is a clerk with a notebook and pencil, another is a doctor, and the third is hidden under a wooden bench. In the middle of the room, in front of the doctor and the clerk, lies a *sadak* (a part of an older traditional women’s garment made of coarse cloth, a sleeveless cloak). The doctor calls the young men one by one. Each steps onto the *sadak*, and the doctor scolds him for not standing properly. Then the doctor shouts: “Fix marina!” At that moment, the hidden participant yanks the *sadak*, and the young man falls to the floor. The clerk then writes down that the man is now fit for military service. The game was performed in Momići.²² (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 13)

4. Passion Plays in Metković

4.1. *Šimun*

Information about the *Šimun* (eng. Simon) ceremony was recounted to Nikola Bonifačić Rožin by Božo Petrov, who at the time (1964) was the church organist. He once played the role of *Šimun* and several times the centurion. The church play *Šimun* was recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin in Metković, and it takes place on Good Friday when a member of the community secretly dresses up as Simon in the bell tower (portraying the biblical Simon of Cyrene). Simon is dressed in a long black tunic and wears a hood over his face, so his identity remains unknown. All the equipment is church property and is kept in the sacristy. The entire ceremony follows strict rules and is classified as a form of folk theater, particularly as part of the church dramatizations that depict biblical scenes. Simon’s cross stands in front of Christ’s tomb. Just before the procession, the guards bring Simon from the bell tower to the tomb, where he quietly prays under their watch—offering his vow. At the soldier’s signal, one touches him with a spear, and Simon rises. The guards lead him to the cross. The commander (centurion) places the cross on Simon’s shoulder

²¹ Recounted by Zvonko Vekić from Borovci. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 16, 1964, in Kula Norinska.

²² Recounted by Branko Nikolić from Borovci, 15 years old. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 16, 1964, in Kula Norinska.

and leads him under guard through the church to the main doors. Accompanied by four soldiers and the centurion at the head of the procession, Simon carries the cross. On either side, among the guards, two parishioners carry lanterns with lit candles on poles about two meters long. Simon walks barefoot in the procession (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 60). Ivica Gluščević noted that along the way, *Žudije* (Roman guards) pinch, provoke, and taunt Simon in hopes that he will react and reveal his identity (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 69).

In memory of the three falls of the Lord under the cross, the guards stop Simon three times, and each time he lowers the cross from his shoulders and holds it in his hands. At the end of the procession, in front of the church doors, four-part choral hymns are sung, such as *Puče moj* (eng. O My People), *Krist postade poslušan do smrti, smrti na križu* (eng. Christ Became Obedient Unto Death, Even Death on the Cross), and *Miserere* (by Capocio) (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 61). During this time, all the gathered kneel, while the priest (accompanied by a large assembly of clergy under a canopy) elevates the Blessed Sacrament in his hands for the veneration of the faithful. At the conclusion of the ceremony, a soloist sings: “*Forgive, O Lord, forgive your people...*” and after each verse the entire congregation responds: “*For His mercy / is exceedingly great*” (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 61).

At the end of the ceremony, Simon leaves the cross (the centurion takes it and places it in the designated spot) and kneels before the tomb, where he concludes his vow in silent prayer. He performs all of this in the presence of the guard. With a hand gesture, he signals that the prayer is complete. He then returns to the bell tower, changes out of costume, and exits discreetly. Finally, note that “the identity of the person carrying the cross has always been jealously guarded from the very beginning, and it still is today. This tradition has been carried out in Metković for about 150–200 years” (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 62).

4.2. The Guard Ceremony – A Church Play in Metković (Žudije)

It is known that the custom of the guard ceremony, that is, the guarding of Christ’s tomb on Good Friday and Holy Saturday in Metković, was introduced from Loreto, Italy, most likely in 1857, by Ante Gluščević. From Metković, the tradition spread to other parishes in the Neretva Valley and is today recognized throughout Dalmatia. Ivo Mišur notes that the Italian newspaper *Giornale di Roma quotidiano politico e finanziario* published an article on April 8, 1891, titled *La Processione del Venerdi Santo in Metcovich nella Dalmazia* (eng. The Good Friday Procession in Metković, Dalmatia). The article describes a man clad in a black cloak leading the procession that accompanies

the Blessed Sacrament, followed by four fearsome guards (*giudei*) carrying spears. It also outlines the protocol followed by *Žudije* on Holy Saturday.²³

The manuscript collection of Nikola Bonifačić Rožin from 1964 provides a detailed description of the ceremony as practiced in the parish of St. Elijah the Prophet in Metković. After the conclusion of the Holy Thursday Mass, at the moment when the priest takes possession of the ceremonial vestments for the Eucharistic procession and kneels before the high altar, *Žudije* (four guards accompanied by an officer) enter through the bell tower doors and surround the altar. Simultaneously, six regular soldiers enter through the main doors, preceded by four junior officers, and led by the chief officer, together forming a military corridor. Through this corridor, the Eucharistic procession proceeds under the escort of the said guards.

From that moment until the *Gloria* at midnight on Holy Saturday, the soldiers maintain guard at the tomb of Christ. Commands are issued by striking a sword against a shield, and all actions are performed in silence with strict discipline. All rites on Good Friday and Holy Saturday are accompanied by the presence of the guards. On Good Friday, the detachment of soldiers is led by an officer, and on Holy Saturday the guards are rotated in such a way that the tomb is never left unattended. Inside the tomb lies a “wooden corpus of the dead Christ” (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 65). In the evening, just before midnight and the celebration of the Easter Vigil, the guard at the tomb is strengthened in three stages until all sixteen soldiers are assembled. Just before the priest begins to sing the *Gloria*, the officers silently cast dice in front of the tomb, in remembrance of the biblical scene. The remaining soldiers maintain their official posts while the others look on, as the officer announces the result of the dice throw by raising a specific number of fingers. Upon the singing of *Gloria*, all the church bells begin to ring, the organ sounds at full volume, and the guards collapse in front of the tomb (each in his own dramatic fashion), remaining motionless for a few moments. Amid the resonant sound of the organ and bells, part of the guard flees the church in apparent panic, while a few remain lying before the tomb throughout the entire Mass. Toward the end of the Mass, they too rise and flee the church (Bonifačić Rožin, 1964: 66).²⁴

Bonifačić Rožin recorded that children also performed their own version of *Žudije* in a very solemn atmosphere, enacting the full guard ceremony in their home courtyards and on the streets. They would construct a cross for

²³ Mišur, Ivo. (2020.) *Metkovski običaji Velikoga tjedna u talijanskim novinama iz 1891. godine*: <https://likemetkovic.hr/portal/metkovski-obicaji-velikoga-tjedna-u-talijanskim-novinama-iz-1891-godine/> (last visited on February 5, 2025)

²⁴ Recounted by Božo Petrov, church organist. Recorded by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin on November 18, 1964, in Metković.

Simon and carry out the entire ritual from the beginning of Lent. In addition, boys would stage the crucifixion of Jesus, while girls assisted in all the preparations. He also noted that the residents of the village of Vid imitated the *Žudije* tradition from Metković. One particularly striking account tells of a woman who entered the Church of St. Elijah in Metković, approached the guards of Christ's tomb, kissed their garments, and exclaimed: "Glorious holy *Žudije!*"

4.3. Staging of the Passion of Lord Jesus Christ in Borovci

Finally, it is important to highlight the revived tradition and newly established customary practice of staging *Muke Gospodina našega Isusa Krista* (eng. The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ) in the village of Borovci, which was performed for the first time in 2019. While the staging of the Passion has already gained the status of tradition in many parts of Croatia, the initiation of this practice in Borovci serves as a testament to how customs are formed and how they evolve. Just as the *Žudije* tradition in Metković originated from elsewhere and was, at its inception, a novel practice that eventually became part of a century-long tradition, so too can other customary practices take root for future generations, provided there is the will and desire to sustain them. The staging of the Passion in Borovci is organized by the parish of St. Nicholas, the Bishop from Metković, while the director and initiator of this project is Branko Medak. Interestingly, over the centuries, the inhabitants of Borovci gradually settled in Metković, leading to the establishment of the aforementioned parish of St. Nicholas for the purposes of serving the needs of parishioners relocated to the right bank of the Neretva River. It is therefore unsurprising that the performers involved in the Passion Play are primarily residents of Metković with ancestral roots in Borovci. Furthermore, the first staging took place in 2019, marking the jubilee of the 300th anniversary of the parish of St. Elijah the Prophet in Metković and the 50th anniversary of the parish of St. Nicholas the Bishop, also in Metković. The dramatic text is composed of passages from the four Gospels, and according to Branko Medak (the director), the Passion text was originally provided by the Guardian of the Franciscan Monastery in Imotski, serving as the foundational script for the performance with some modifications. The involvement of the local community is substantial, with around two hundred individuals participating in the organization and enactment. Spiritual guidance was also provided by the parish vicar of St. Nicholas in Metković, Don Miroslav Rubić, along with Sister Marijana Cvitanović.

This dramatic rendering of a biblical narrative is becoming part of a new tradition not only for the village but also for the broader Neretva Valley.

Observing the declining presence of traditional oral literary forms, one notices that as some practices fade, new ones emerge in their place. This phenomenon affirms the enduring human need for artistic expression and creation, particularly when it comes to spiritual inspiration.

5. Conclusion

Dramatic forms in the Neretva Valley have largely faded, or they have been forgotten; however, those connected to the ceremonial liturgical rites of Passion heritage continue to exist firmly, remaining almost unchanged. The reasons for this persistence lie in the transformation of customary practices, during which dramatic forms were once performed spontaneously or casually through community organization. These occasional dramatic enactments were most commonly associated with carnival or wedding festivities, manifesting themselves as expressions of boisterous humor. Roles were often characterized by exaggeration and lasciviousness, while wedding-related dramatic forms tended to follow the hierarchical structure of characters and the solemnity of the occasion. Such wedding dramas are most apparent in the symbolic transition of the bride from her natal family into the family she is marrying into, with the transition being accompanied by dramatic performances designed to turn a formal ritual act into a joyful celebration. It may be speculated that these dramatic expressions were intentionally anchored to moments of sorrow within the family that the bride is leaving, as she enters a new household. The example of the staging of *The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ* demonstrates how new beginnings within a community can give rise to the development of traditional practices, with dramatic form at their core. Passion dramatic forms in the Neretva Valley are closely tied to spirituality and serve as an accompanying element to liturgical ceremonies. For this reason, established customary practices are difficult to alter, and they persist in a constant, repetitive form, governed by strict rules that rely on biblical texts and liturgy.

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Denis VEKIĆ

**IŠČEZLO I OŽIVLJENO – PUČKE DRAMSKE I PASIONSKE
IGRE I OBIČAJI U NERETVANSKOJ DOLINI**

Folklorno kazalište je jedan od oblika pojavnosti usmenoknjiževnog teksta i manifestira se u obliku spoja inscenacije, igre, glume i izvedbe. Deset rukopisnih zbirki iz sredine 20. stoljeća donose zapise terenskih sakupljanja folklorne građe i usmene književnosti na području doline Neretve. Samo dvije donose informacije o pučkim dramskim oblicima koji se prigodno izvode. Ovaj rukopisne zbirke je izradio Nikola Bonifačić Rožin 1964. godine. Ovaj rad proučava te dvije rukopisne zbirke i iznosi dramske oblike koji su se odvijali u selima i gradovima diljem doline Neretve. Pozornost je posvećena pokladnim svečanostima i dramskim oblicima koji se u njima javljaju. Također, pozornost je posvećena i katoličkim pasionskim dramskim izvedbama i običajima na ovom području.

Ključne riječi: *folklorno kazalište, pasija, poklade, pučka drama, usmena književnost*