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Palčava šiša Stoljeće i pol obitelji Čop iz pograničnog sela Plešce¹

Prikazujući povijest obitelji Čop iz sela Plešce autor progovara o turističkoj ponudi Gorskoga kotara u razdoblju od sredine 19. stoljeća do današnjih dana. Kuća Čopovih, u narodu zvana „Palčava šiša“, bila je tijekom spomenutog razdoblja istovremeno obiteljska kuća, gostionica, trgovina i sjedište društvenog života toga područja. S obzirom da su stjecajem povoljnih povijesnih okolnosti sačuvani izvorna građnja iz sredine i druge polovine 19. st. te dijelovi unutarnje dekoracije, pokućstvo, peći, bogata knjižnica i opširna zbirka dokumenata, predloženo je da se „Palčava šiša“ proglasi kulturnim spomenikom.

Ključne riječi: «Palčava šiša», Čop, obitelj, Plešce (Gorski kotar), obiteljska povijest, kulturni turizam

Ovogodišnje putovanje povodom savjetovanja o etnološkom naslijeđu i kulturnoj predodžbi Slovenaca u Hrvatskoj², vodilo nas je graničnim dijelovima hrvatske općine Čabar, većinom na području koje je nekoć pripadalo najstarijoj župi u Gorskome kotaru – Gerovu. Jedna od postaja na tom putu bila je i kuća obitelji Čop, zvana “Palčava šiša”, u Pleščima. Običeno područje sjeverozapadnog dijela Gorskog kotara, u kojem još živi legenda o Petru Klepcu koji je svojom nadnaravnim moćima progonio Turke iz doline te po-

¹ Pod naslovom «Palčava šiša» - Poldrugo stoeletje družine Čop iz obmejne vasi Plešce, članak je već objavljen u *Glasniku Slovenskega etnološkega društva* 4; 45/2005., a ovdje ga prenosimo s dopuštenjem izdavača.

² Savjetovanje pod nazivom Etnološka dediščina in kulturna podoba Slovencev na Hrvaškem/Etnološko nasljedstvo i kulturni krajobraz Slovenaca u Hrvatskoj održano je u Zagrebu, 7.10.2005, u prostorima Slovenskog doma. Sudjelovali su etnolozi, povjesničari, slavisti i drugi stručnjaci iz Slovenije i Hrvatske. Savjetovanje je, kao zadnje u nizu sličnih u susjednim zemljama, organiziralo Slovensko etnološko društvo (op. ur.)

magao potrebitima u nevolji, feudalni su posjednici većinom naselili stanovništvom iz slovenskih krajeva, koje se s vremenom pohrvatilo. O njihovu porijeklu govore sačuvana prezimena, običaji i narječje, koje je hrvatski jezikoslovac Nikola Majnarić odredio kao slovensko narječje.

Kroz te planinske krajeve od davnina je vodio važan trgovački put koji je preko Loške doline povezivao unutrašnjost Kranjske s Kvarnerom. Od tog se puta iza Svete gore, na kojoj stoji hodočasnička crkva Majke Božje od Karmela poznata u južnoj Sloveniji, Hrvatskom primorju i Gorskom kotaru, odvaja nekadašnji karavanski put prema dolini Kupe i Osilnici, koji se nastavlja do Broda na Kupi te dalje prema Kočevju, Beloj Krajini i središnjoj Hrvatskoj. Unatoč razvoju željezare u Čabru, koju je sredinom 17. stoljeća osnovao hrvatski plemić Petar Zrinski, te uslijed toga nastale potrebe za seljačkim i radničkim zaleđem, okolica rječice Čabranke na hrvatskoj je strani sve do druge polovine 18. stoljeća, ponajprije zbog opasnosti od poplava, uglavnom bila naseljena po brdima, vrlo rijetko u samoj dolini.

Nakon gospodarskog zastoja i katastrofalne poplave, koja je zahvatila pogone željezare početkom 18. stoljeća, kada je, prema sačuvanim zapisima, cijela dolina bila samo blato, novi je vlasnik, nakon nekoliko desetljeća, započeo intenzivne radove na regulaciji rječice te uređenju novih putova. Tako je u drugoj polovini 18. stoljeća postavljen drveni most preko Kupe u Gašparcima, koji je omogućio cestovno povezivanje preko Kupe na hrvatskoj, potom na slovenskoj strani do Osilnice te ponovno na hrvatskoj strani do sela Plešče. Otuda se nastavljao teže provozan put do Čabra. Upravo je taj put potaknuo razvoj sela Plešče, gdje se naselilo više trgovaca, koji su trgovali robom namijenjenom opskrbi Čabra, zaleđa te područja prema Kranjskoj. Regulacija Čabranke omogućila je korištenje većih obradivih površina te razvoj nekoliko većih gospodarstava u tom dijelu doline. Važnu ulogu u razvoju sela Plešče, osobito u 19. stoljeću, imao je vrlo velik broj stanovnika u zaleđu. Još i danas okolno stanovništvo naziva stanovnike doline "brđanima" jer su ranije uglavnom naseljavali okolne obronke. Nekadašnji stanovnici sela Plešče bili su većinom trgovci, gostioničari, obrtnici ili veći zemljoposjednici, dok su ostali dio činili manji poljodjelci i napoličari. Zlatno razdoblje selo je doživjelo nakon propasti željezare u Čabru, sudeći prema graditeljskoj baštini, otprilike u drugoj trećini 19. stoljeća. Nakon toga je kraj, iza Prvog a osobito nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata, zbog intenzivnog iseljavanja, dijelio sudbinu recesije zajedno s drugim područjima Gorskog kotara. Danas je pretežno naseljeno još samo područje doline.

Kuća obitelji Čop, velika stara kamena zgrada, poznata kao "Palčava šiša", stoji u središtu sela nasuprot župne crkve Svetog Trojstva. Izgrađena je 1856. godine za posjednika, trgovca i gostioničara Ivana Čopa i njegovu suprugu Lenku rođenu Kvaternik, o čemu svjedoče tri obrađena kamena portala, na kojima je uz godinu gradnje i njihova imena uklesan i Isusov monogram. Prezime Čop prvotno se spominje u 18. stoljeću u susjednom selu Gerovo, na drugoj strani Svete gore nalazimo ga već sredinom 16. stoljeća, a u Čabru se spominje sredinom 17. stoljeća.

Prema predaji, Čopovi su sa svoje šestero djece došli 1856. godine iz slovenskog Babnog polja, sela na pradavnom trgovačkom putu, koji je vodio iz unutrašnjosti

Kranjske prema Kvarneru. Babno polje leži na rubu kraškog polja, na međi između austrijskog i mađarskog dijela, gdje je za sušnih ljeta nedostajalo vode. Upravo se te godine u njegovoj okolini raširila teška epidemija kolere, zbog koje je u nekoliko mjeseci poumirala skoro polovina stanovništva.

Dolaskom u Plešce, zbito naselje na terasastom nasipu pleškog potoka, uz graničnu rječicu Čabranku, gdje je čiste vode bilo napretek, kupili su od rođaka staru drvenu Palčavu kuću na kućnom broju 6, nedaleko od ceste te su tik ispred nje, nasuprot crkvenog ulaza, počeli graditi novu kuću na kućnom broju 7. Nakon njene izgradnje, staru su kuću srušili. Ostaci njezinih zidova danas se mogu vidjeti u dvorištu popločanom kamenom. Od starog Palčava gospodarstva ostao je samo dio zida gospodarske zgrade, koji je uzidan u zid susjednog štaglja, te spada u najstariju sačuvanu graditeljsku baštinu u selu. O točnom početku gradnje "Palčave šiše" još uvijek svjedoči sačuvana građevinska dozvola.

Palčava kuća izgrađena je od velikog obrađenog kamenja sakupljena u okolini, s kamenim portalima i prozorskim okvirima, dubokim podrumima te križno nadsvođenim prizemljem. Uz tradicionalnu trodijelnu podjelu – dva kata nad podrumskim prostorom, koja je karakteristična za starije kuće Gorskog kotara, na katu je dodana „gospodska etaža“. Kuća je u početku imala crnu kuhinju s ostavom, kako u prizemlju, gdje su osim "kuće" bile i gostionica i trgovina, tako i na katu na kojem su bile spavaće sobe članova obitelji. Od samog početka postojao je i salon, građanska dnevna i reprezentativna soba za gospodu, kakve do tada nije bilo ni u jednoj kući u okolini, te odvojena gospodarova pisarna – "kanclija". U potkrovlju je bila jedna od spavaćih soba za ukućane te dvije manje sobice – "štibce". Kuća je imala prve i jedine zidane zahode u selu, koji su na oba kata sačuvani u izvornom obliku.

Palčava kuća izgrađena je prije revolucionarnih promjena u svakodnevnom životu naših predaka i prije nego što su se u građevinarstvu počela koristiti tehnička dostignuća, koja su uslijedila u drugoj polovini 19. stoljeća. Kao i sve veće kuće u okolini, gradili su je talijanski majstori, koji su za vrijeme izgradnje južne željeznice sa svojim radnicima odlazili na veća gradilišta u tom dijelu države. Tlocrt te sva ostala temeljna arhitektonska podjela i elementi izrađeni su u klasičnim odnosima, koji proizlaze iz zlatnog reza. Izgrađena je na klasičan način iz lijepo obrađenog i pomno izabranog kamenja. Prema pripovijedanju, kamenje su dovozili zapregama s dva para volova iz okolice pune dvije godine. Procijenjeno je da najteži kamen, otkriven kod obnove u sjevernom zidu kuće, teži više od 450 kilograma, pa je za njegovo dizanje bilo potrebno najmanje dvanaest jakih radnika.

Priča se da su radnici za vrijeme gradnje, čuvši od susjeda da Palčavi neće imati dovoljno novaca da plate njihov rad na tako velikoj građevini, prestali s radom. No, kada je Ivan Čop obećao da će im za svaku sedmicu unaprijed platiti u zlatu, morali su se pobrinuti da izgrade kuću na najbolji mogući način.

Sredinom druge polovine 19. stoljeća u životu naših predaka došlo je do velikih promjena. Za rasvjetu su počeli koristiti petrolej, napredniji su za kuhanje koristili štednjake, a s izgradnjom željeznice procvala je trgovina. Trgovačka roba postala je

dostupnija, ljudi su u potrazi za dobitkom počeli putovati po svijetu te donositi u rodni kraj nove ideje i priče o životu u dalekim krajevima, imućniji su putem kataloga mogli naručivati ono o čemu su raniji naraštaji u udaljenijim krajevima samo sanjali. Za trgovačkim se poslovima iz Plešca odlazilo u Kočevje, Rijeku, Rakek, Postojnu, Ljubljano, Zagreb pa i dalje – do Graca i Beča.

Zbog navedenih razloga, negdje oko 1880. godine, došlo je do prvog preuređenja stambene zgrade, koje je vodio Ivanov nasljednik Anton Čop, načelnik općine Plešce, a potom dugogodišnji poslanik Čabranskog okruga u županijskoj skupštini. Preuređene su obje crne kuhinje. Ona iz prizemlja preseljena je zajedno s novim zidanim štednjakom u “hišo”. Na njen račun dvostruko je povećan te u cijelosti lučno ozidan prostor trgovine, kako bi se osiguralo više prostora za trgovačku robu. Na gospodskom katu kuća je dobila novu, veću “kanceliju” s rešetkama na prozorima, a preuređen je i salon. Zidovi i stropovi reprezentativnih soba dekorativno su oslikani, a dekoracije su slijedile tadašnju modu bogatih gradskih interijera. Trgovina i posao cvjetali su. Čopovi su kupovali imanja, lučno ozidali prostore u štaglju, kupili susjednu kuću, u čijem su prizemlju smjestili općinsku pisarnu. Kupili su još neke gospodarske zgrade te otvorili mesnicu u kojoj su zaposlili mesara. Pratete su se s veseljem sjećale potonjeg koji je radio do Prvog svjetskog rata: bio je grbav te je s drugim slugama spavao u prizemlju kuće na velikoj “mentrgi” (stolu za miješenje krušnog tijesta) te tako glasno hrkao da su ga djeca dolazila slušati.

Krajem devedesetih godina, Antonu je pri porodu trećega mrtvorodenog djeteta umrla prva žena Fani, prema pripovijedanju suseljana, živahna žena s Krasa te ujedno gospodska kći trgovca i pekara iz Postojne. U zadnjim trenucima njenog života, nosili su je u očaju oko crkve, no nije joj bilo spasa.

Do drugoga većeg preuređenja kuće došlo je nekoliko godina nakon druge Antono-ve ženidbe, u početku izgradnje nove ceste kroz dolinu između Plešca i Čabra 1894. godine, što je nakon dugih stoljeća konačno omogućilo sigurnije i brže povezivanje Čabra s dolinom Kupe, Delnicama i Kočevjem. Tada su dogradili novo krilo zgrade s velikim podrumom, novom kuhinjom i novim salonom na katu, kojeg danas više nema. Gostionicu su proširili na dva prostora. U novoizgrađenom dijelu izvedena je prva betonska ploča sa željeznim nosačima u Plešcu. Izradili su je majstori koji su inače radili na cestogradnji. Život je postao još udobniji. Kuća je imala ne samo nov salon, već i izdvojenu blagovaonicu. Kod preuređenja je zanimljivo to da je pokušstvo u kuću većinom dolazilo s nevjestinim mirazom, a samo se manji dio kupovao. Staro kvalitetno pokušstvo i opremu koristili su kod izmjena prostora i pri selidbama. Za razliku od gradskih kuća, u svakoj reprezentativnoj sobi bila je i postelja, namije-njena ukućanima ili gostima. Peć od lijevanog željeza iz Dvorske ljevaonice s motivom Dijane, kupljena za salon još 1856., bila je tijekom godina postavljena na čak pet različitih mjesta u kući.

U kući su, uz teretna kola, sanjke i zaprege te četiri konja, imali i kočiju s kožnim krovom, lake kočije i sanjke s krovom za prijevoz putnika. Anton Čop imao je bijelog konja kojim ga je jednom tjedno sluga vozio u Čabar na večeru k velikom županu. S

drugom ženom Julijom, rođenom u bogatoj trgovačkoj obitelji u Kočevju i školovanom na djevojačkoj školi u Beču, proveo je medeni mjesec u Veneciji te posjećivao gospodske zabave u Čabru. Imali su i nasljednike – sedmero djece koja su se školovala u gradskim školama u Čabru i Kočevju, klasičnoj gimnaziji u Senju i učilištu u Zagrebu te trgovačkoj školi u Zagrebu i Gracu. Umrlo je dvoje djece. Mlađi je sin umro u prvim godinama života, dok je druga kćer oboljela od sušice za školovanja u Kočevju.

Nakon Prvoga svjetskog rata uslijedile su gospodarske krize. Posjed i upravljanje njime preuzeo je nakon završenog školovanja sin Zvonimir. U prvo je vrijeme išlo bolje, a nakon svjetske krize dvadesetih godina lošije. Tada su odustali od mesnice, pa se stanje poboljšalo. Godine 1934. izgorio je štagalj. Unatoč blizini drugih zgrada, požar se nije proširio jer su upravo te godine vatrogasci kupili novu, snažniju ručnu vatrogasnu crpku. Obnovili su krovšte te zasadili voćnjak jabukama i kruškama. Još ranije, osobito tridesetih godina 20. stoljeća, mnogo su ulagali u razvoj turizma; za boravak su opremili i susjednu kuću u kojoj je do tada živio općinski pisar. Budući da su kuću oglašavali u dnevnim tiskovinama, na ljetovanje su dolazile bogate liječničke, odvjetničke i profesorske obitelji iz Zagreba i Beograda, pa i kazališni glumci. Rado su šetati, planinarili, išli u lov i ribolov te se kupali u Čabranci i Kupi. Muški su u salonu debatirali s gospodarom. Cijenili su i njihovu dobru kuhinju, u kojoj su se svakodnevno pripravljala nova jela, a iza svakog obroka na stolu je bilo i svježeg deserta. Uvelike su kuglali, kartali i plesali. U gostionici se uvijek nalazio po koji instrument, a u njoj su se svaku večer sastajali imućniji seljaci, učitelj, župnik i dr. Palčava je kuća početkom tridesetih postala čuvena po organizaciji plesova, na koje su dolazili glazbenici i plesači iz bliže i dalje okolice. Plesove su u gostionici organizirali sve do sredine pedesetih godina, kada su je zatvorili. U kući se još uvijek čuva prospekt klimatskih lječilišta Kraljevine Jugoslavije u kojem se mogu pročitati podaci o Plešcu, tik uz one o Plitvičkim jezerima.

Zvonimir Čop, Antonov sin, isto tako načelnik općine, inicijator osnivanja vatrogasnog društva, načitan čovjek i nadaleko poznat kao izvanredno dobar govornik, planirao je novo preuređenje zgrade. Trebalo je proširiti gostioničarski dio, zbog turističkih planova izgraditi nove moderne zahode i kupaonicu, no tragična ga je prometna nesreća 1938. u tome spriječila. Na povratku s putovanja, na kojem je kupio robu za gostionicu i trgovinu, na samo sedam kilometara od doma, pod natovarenim kamionom urušio se drveni most usmrтивši i njega i njegova prijatelja, trgovca iz Rakeka.

Na imanju je ostala udovica Berta, među suseljanima do smrti zvana "Palčava gaspa", s dvjema malim djevojčicama. Premda su slijedile gospodarske krize, svjetski rat, nacionalizacija, osnivanje zadruga te druge poslijeratne teškoće, izvanrednom je energijom održala i imanje i kuću.

Iako je za vrijeme Drugoga svjetskog rata u susjednoj kući (isto u Čopovom vlasništvu) bila talijanska vojarna, a u samoj obiteljskoj kući živio talijanski vojni liječnik s pomoćnikom, Berta je cijelo vrijeme sudjelovala u narodnooslobodilačkom pokretu. Palčavom su kočijom u susjedno selo Osilnicu na slovenskoj strani, mimo vojne kon-

trole, vozili čak i ranjene partizane na previjanje. Nakon prvih talijanskih ofenziva, kada su Talijani spalili sela i zaseoke na obroncima doline te deportirali velik broj ljudi, u Palčavu su se kuću preselili brojni prijatelji iz okolice sa svojim obiteljima te ostali u njoj više mjeseci. Svaki su tren očekivali progon ili paljenje sela, no, na sreću, to se nije dogodilo. Talijansku kolonu, kojom su zadnji seljani trebali biti odagnani u logor, napali su partizani, a nedugo potom Italija je kapitulirala. Došli su Nijemci te sa sobom odnijeli sve što je bilo vrednije u kući: srebrninu, ukrasne predmete, gramofon, harmoniku itd. Nakon kapitulacije Italije i po povratku deportiranih iz okolnih sela, u kući je ponekad bilo i više od tridesetak beskućnika. Pri povratku u svoje, najnužnije popravljene domove, dobivali su staro pokućstvo, koje u kući više nisu trebali, odjeću te različitu drugu staru robu. Stara mama Berta uvijek je rado pomagala ljudima. Zahvaljujući njezinim poznanstvima dosta se siromašne djece iz tih krajeva školovalo nakon rata. Isto uz pomoć svojih poznanika nastojala je da se u selu otvori prvi industrijski pogon. Nakon više od sto godina rada Palčava trgovina, kao i gostionica zatvorene su pedesetih godina. Najbolje njive "otkupljene" su po niskoj cijeni, a nacionalizirana je i druga kuća koja je kasnije vraćena. Unatoč svih tih teškoća, stara mama Berta za sve je suseljane do kraja svojih dana – umrla je u 89. godini – ostala posljednja "Palčava gaspa".

Prošla su tako i ta vremena. Kćeri su otišle na studij te odselile – jedna u Ljubljanu, a druga je sreću našla čak u Kanadi. Obitelj se proširila, pa su se nasljednici počeli zanimati za kuću na drugačiji način. Prije petnaest godina, učinili su kod obnove prvi veći korak. Još dok je stara mama bila živa, srušen je dio dograđen prije sto godina. Tim je potezom unutrašnjost kuće u najvećoj mjeri dobila prvotni oblik od prije stoljeća i pol. Veći dio fasade, unatoč obnovi, još je uvijek izvoran – zaglađena vapnena žbuka stara više od sto i pedeset godina, obnovljeni su secesijski profili oko prozora te bidermajerska rozeta iznad glavnog ulaza. Obnovljena je i fasada gospodarske zgrade. Prije pet godina izgorio je susjedni štagalj koji je, udaljen nekoliko metara, stajao između Palčave kuće i štaglja. U požaru, zahvaljujući požrtvovnosti kako hrvatskih tako i slovenskih vatrogasaca iz Plešča i susjednih sela, kuća nije bila teže oštećena. Izgorio je samo dio krova na štaglju, koji je ubrzo potom obnovljen.

Od prve je obnove obitelj polako uređivala unutrašnjost i predmete koji su ostali u kući ili su naknadno nabavljeni s raznih mjesta u selu i okolici. Već tada su zbog vrijednosti zgrade razmišljali o prijedlogu da se kuća proglasi kulturnim dobrom. Prijedlog je čak upućen nekadašnjem Regionalnom zavodu za zaštitu spomenika kulture u Rijeci. Zbog rata u Hrvatskoj te reorganizacije spomeničke službe, administrativni mlinovi kretali su se tako polako pa je tek prije dvije godine, za obilaska kustosa zagrebačkog Etnografskog muzeja te odgovornih iz Uprave za zaštitu kulturne dediščine (Uprava za zaštitu kulturne baštine), predloženo da se kulturnim dobrom proglasi ne samo zgrada, nego i cjelina sa štagljem, dvorištem te zbirkom predmeta. U kući su sačuvani te se stalno obnavljaju brojni ostaci unutarnje zidne i stropne dekoracije. Sačuvano je većinom i kućno i sobno pokućstvo te peći, bogata knjižnica i velika zbirka dokumenata. Ove godine dovršena je rekonstrukcija trgovine s potpunom izvornom opremom iz sredine i druge polovine 19. stoljeća. Prema dostupnim informacijama,

to je jedna od najstarijih trgovina sačuvanih *in situ* u ovom dijelu Europe. Pripremili su prezentaciju dijela gostionice te povijesti kuće, a za iduću godinu planiraju rekonstrukciju salona s izvornim pokućstvom te obnovljenim dekoracijama zidova i stropova iz osamdesetih godina 19. stoljeća.

Obnova je prerasla u širok obiteljski projekt u kojem sudjeluju već tri naraštaja. Zanimljivo je i to da većinu aktivnosti, od istraživanja do završnih radova, izvode sasvim sami. Samo pri složenijim radovima pomažu im seoski majstori. Tako se s godinama strast sadašnjeg nasljednika, predstavnika petog naraštaja obitelji Čop iz Plešca, pomnim proučavanjem literature, obilascima sličnih europskih i američkih muzeja te razgovorima sa stručnjacima iz različitih područja, pretvorila u ozbiljnu djelatnost.

Unutrašnjost kuće obitelj i nadalje pažljivo uređuje, premda sada s ozbiljnom namjerom da se 2006. godine otvori za javnost. Izložiti će se sva građa te predstaviti lijepi interijeri iz druge polovine 19. stoljeća te prikazati, glazbom i pripovijedanjem na narječju, nematerijalna baština tog kraja. Bit će to, po našem mišljenju, izvanredno vrijedan doprinos ovim krajevima, te istodobno i povod za njihovo turističko oživljavanje. Kuća je svojom poviješću i zbirkama rijedak spomen na prisutnost i prepletanje triju etničkih skupina na tom području – Hrvata, Slovenaca i kočevskih Nijemaca.

Slični projekti teško zažive samo osobnim angažmanom pa se vlasnici stalno trude u lokalnih zajednica s obje strane granice, kao i šire zajednice Gorskog kotara, Primorsko-goranske županije, Hrvatske i Slovenije, pobuditi interes za uređenje i prezentaciju kuće te njezino uključivanje u kulturni i turistički razvoj područja.

Tako je o kući i projektu već objavljeno nekoliko članaka u hrvatskom i slovenskom tisku, vlasnici su sudjelovali i u nekoliko radijskih emisija, a snimljen je i samostalni prilog za HTV. Kuću su obišli članovi Hrvatskog etnološkog društva, europskog udruženja ECOVAST za razvoj pokrajina i malih gradova, KEC-a – međunarodnog projekta za zaštitu Krasa, te Slovensko etnološko društvo s velikim brojem stručnjaka, ne samo etnologa, za vrijeme izleta tijekom ovogodišnjeg savjetovanja u Hrvatskoj. Kuću i zbirke obišli su župani i članovi općinskih savjeta, predstavnici turističkih društava iz okolice i mnogi drugi. Nasljednici obitelji Čop dobili su podršku za prijave na različite natječaje te se trude uključiti hrvatske i slovenske stručnjake u projekte povezane s tim područjem. Najzad se u gornjokupskoj i čabranskoj dolini otvara godinama planirana turistička zona Republike Hrvatske i Republike Slovenije, što će području, unatoč izvanredno neugodnom prekidu višestoljetnoga malograničnoga prometnog režima kroz dolinu, ipak pružiti veću mogućnost turističkog razvoja.

Nažalost, do normalizacije graničnog prijelaza u dolini u Zamostu te ponovnog otvaranja nekadašnje glavne ceste kroz dolinu, stanovništvo tog dijela Gorskog kotara bit će razdvojeno od slovenskih susjeda, i obrnuto. Prijelaz, nakon više od sedam stoljeća od kada su tuda tekli trgovački putovi između pojedinih pokrajina obje države i naroda, ima status malograničnog prijelaza što, osim gospodarskog razvoja, izrazito ograničava i prijelaz osoba, željnih posjeta prekrasnom dijelu prirode njihove do-

movine. Most na nekadašnjoj glavnoj cesti kroz dolinu u Gašparcima, nakon stotinu godina, otvoren je samo za malogranični osobni promet.

Unatoč preprekama, pokažite volju i posjetite “Palčavu šišu” i njenu okolicu. Dobrodošli ste i neće vam biti žao, jer ćete posjetiti izvanredno lijep i etnološki zanimljiv dio Hrvatske i Slovenije³.

Sa slovenskog prevela Matea Hotujac

³ Zbirka u Plešcima službeno je otvorena 9. rujna 2006. godine i do sada ju je, prema autorovim saznanjima, posjetilo više od 800 ljudi (op. ur.).

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Palčava šiša

A Century and a Half of the Čop Family from the Border Village of Plešce¹

By representing the history of the Čop family from the village of Plešce, the author discusses the tourist offer of the region of Gorski Kotar in the period from the middle of the 19th century till today. The house of the Čop family, called 'Palčava šiša', was during the above mentioned period a family house, a pub, a shop and a center of social life of this region. Fortunately, due to historical circumstances, original building from the middle and second half of the 19th century were preserved, together with the parts of interior decorations, furniture, furnaces, rich library and a collection of documents, and because of these reasons the house was suggested for protection as a cultural monument.

Key words: «Palčava šiša», Čop, family, Plešce (Gorski kotar), family history, cultural tourism

The journey to this year's conference on the ethnological heritage and cultural image of Slovenes in Croatia², led us across the border region of Čabar, mostly inhabited by Croatian population,

¹ This article was published in the *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva* 4; 45/2005, under the title 'Palčava Šiša - Poldrugo stoletje družine Čop iz obmejne vasi Plešce', and it is published here with the permission of the publishers.

² A round table entitled *Etnološka dediščina in kulturna podoba Slovencev na Hrvaškem*/Ethnological heritage and cultural landscape of Slovenes in Croatia was organized on October 7, 2005 in Zagreb, in the premises of the Slovenski dom. Many ethnologists, historians, experts in Slavic languages and other experts from Slovenia and Croatia participated in it. This round table was the last one of a number of similar meetings which were organized by the Slovene ethnological society.

and once forming a part of the ancient parish of Gorski Kotar – the parish of Gerovo. One stop on our journey was also the house of the family Čop, locally named “Palčava šiša”, from Plešče. The region of the north-western part of Gorski Kotar which we visited, and in which the legend of Peter Klepec, who banished the Turk’s from the valley with his supernatural powers and helped to the people in need, still lives, was colonized by the feudal landowners with Slovene population who, in the course of time, became more and more Croatian. Their family names still testify of their origin, customs and dialect, which Croatian philologist, Nikola Majnarič, defined as Slovenian dialect decades ago.

A very important trade route led from the ancient times across this mountain region, connecting the hinterland of Kranjska, across Loška valley with Kvarner. From that road towards Sveta gora, on which throughout south Slovenia, Croatian Primorje (Hrvatsko Primorje) and Gorski Kotar we can find well known pilgrim church Carmel of the Holly Mary, branched away old travelling road towards the valley of Kupa and Osilnica, reaching as far as Brod at Kupa (Brod na Kupi), forward on to Kočevje, Bela Krajina and central Croatia. In spite of the steel plant development in Čabar, which was established in the middle of the 17th century by Croatian nobleman Petar Zrinjski, which gave rise to the need for the peasants and worker’s hinterland, the countryside of Čabranka at the Croatian side was, to the second part of the 18th century, colonized predominantly along the slopes and very rare in the valley, primarily because of the torrential character of Čabranka,.

After the economy standstill and catastrophic flood, which struck the steel plant at the beginning of the 18th century, when the whole valley, according to the preserved reports, was nothing but mud, the new owner started, some decades after, intensive activities for the regulation of the river and setting of the new roads. So, in the second half of the 18th century the wooden bridge was built across Kupa in Gašparci, which enabled a road connection between Kupa on Croatian, and then Slovenian, side to Osilnice and forward again on the Croatian side to the village Plešče. From that place onwards, a bad road led forward to Čabar. Just that fact necessitated the development of the village Plešče, where a number of merchants settled down re-selling goods intended for the provision of Čabar and hinterland, as well as for the provision of Kranjska. The regulation of Čabranka subsequently enabled utilization of more cultivated areas and development of some larger farms in that part of the valley.

The important role in the development of the village of Plešče in the 19th century had, above all, a large number of inhabitants in hinterland. Even today the surrounding countrymen call the valley people “the slopers”, because in the earlier times they mostly lived at the slopes of the valley. The former settlers of the village of Plešče were mostly merchants, innkeepers, tradesmen or landlords, or sometimes, smaller peasants or cottage farmers. The golden age of the village can be linked to the period after the steel plant in Čabar went in ruin, which, by the accounts, happened around the second two thirds of the 19th century. After that, at the end of the First, and especially after the end of the Second World War, because of the intensive emigration

of the people, the country had to share the fate of regression with other regions of Gorski Kotar. Today, only the valley is partly inhabited.

The house of the Čop family, the big ancient stone structure, locally named "Palčava šiša", is standing in the centre of the village, opposite the parish church of the Holly Trinity. It was built in the year 1856 by the house owner, merchant and innkeeper Ivan Čop and his wife Lenka, born Kvaternik, as can be confirmed by three nicely cut stone portals, which, besides the engraved date, also bear their names, and the monogram of the Jesus Christ. The family name Čop was mentioned for the first time in the valley in the 18th century at the nearby village of Gerovo. On the other side of Sveta gora it was recorded as early as the middle of the 16th century; as well as the middle of the 17th century in Čabar.

According to the story, the family Čop came with their children, all together six of them, in the year 1856 from Slovenian Babno polje, a village situated on the ancient trade road, which led from the interior of Kranjska to Kvarner. Babno polje is located at the verge of karst field, at the border between Austria and Hungary, where, at dry summer season, water was short. Just in that year raging epidemic of cholera occurred nearby, on account of which nearly half of the population died in some months.

Upon arrival at Plešče, a cloddy settlement on the terraced soil of the stream of Plešče, along boundary rivulet Čabranka with plenty of pure water, they purchased, from some relatives, the old wooden Palčava house with the house number six, standing away from the road, and immediately, opposite the church entrance, started to build the new house, with house number seven. After the construction was finished, the old house was demolished so that only traces of walls remained, which can be seen even today in the stony pavement of the backyard. Of the old Palčava household remained only a trace of the farmhouse wall, which was built in the wall of the adjoining barn and was among the oldest preserved house remnants in the village. The preserved building permit can still confirm the accurate beginning and the time of construction of the "Palčava šiša".

Palčava house is constructed from large properly cut stones, collected in countryside, with stone portals and window frames, deep cellars and arched ground floor. Beside the traditional tripartite division of the house space on two floors, characteristic for the older houses in Gorski Kotar, which were based on the cellar project, it had one storey added, typical for houses of higher classes. In the beginning the house had a black kitchen with the storage and the inn and the shop were situated on the ground floor next to the "house". On the first floor the bedrooms for the family members were situated; from the very beginning, the parlour was the representative middle-class room for gentlemen, not known until that time at any house nearby. The office of the house lord was separated – "kanclija". One of the bedrooms for the family was on the garret, next to the two smaller rooms, "štiblca". The house had the first and the only built-in toilets in the village. On both floors they are preserved in original form.

Palčava house was build before the great revolutions in everyday lives of our predecessors and before they started to use the new technical achievements that followed in the second half of the 19th century. As all other major structures in surrounding countryside it was build by Italian masters, who travelled with their shifts to all larger construction sites in this part of the country, during intermissions in the construction of the south railway. The ground plan, all other architectural distribution and elements are completed in classicist proportions, which arise from the golden mean. It was still constructed in a classical way, from nicely chiselled and carefully selected stones; according to some stories, the stones were transported from the countryside for whole two years, with two pairs of oxen. The heaviest stone, discovered at the renovation of the northern wall of the house, was estimated at 450 kilograms, for hoisting it, at least the twelve powerful men were necessary.

According to another story, once upon a time the workers heard from the neighbours that Palčavi, in one way or the other, would not have enough money to pay their work on such large construction, so they stopped working. However, Ivan Čop arrived and made arrangements to pay them in gold every week in advance so they agreed to finish the construction in the best possible way.

In the middle of the 19th century the life of our predecessors came to substantial changes. Petroleum was used for lightning, the more progressive ones were using kitchen-ranges, on account of the railway development, trade business was flourishing. The merchandise became more accessible, people started to travel abroad searching for profit and in return bringing the news about living abroad; the catalogue sales allowed to the well being to give a commission for the goods which the former generations in remote places merely only dreamed of. After the business, the people from Plešće travelled to Kočevje, Rijeka, Rakek, Postojna, Ljubljana, Zagreb and even as far as Graz or Vienna.

These events resulted in the first rearrangements of the housing structure around the year 1880, when the house was already managed by Anton Čop, the mayor of community Plešće, afterwards a long lasting representative of the Čabar county in the district assembly, who was Ivan's successor. Both black kitchens were abandoned; the one on the ground floor together with the new built-in stove was moved into the "house". Because of that, the store became twice as big and completely vaulted to insure more space for the shop. On the 'noble' floor the house got new, larger "kanclija" (house lord's office) with barred windows, and even the parlour was reshaped. The walls and ceilings in representative rooms were decorative painted; the decorations followed the latest fashion in interior design of that time, employed by wealthy citizens. The trade and business were flourishing. The Čop family was buying estates, vaulted the ground spaces in the barn, bought the nearby house on the ground floor of which they established municipal office, some other farming structures and opened a fully employed butchery. Old aunties remembered the butcher with gaiety, been working there before the First World War: he was hunchbacked and slept together with other servants on the ground floor, on the big kitchen table for preparing bread dough (*mentrga*), snoring so loud that the children were coming to listen to him.

In the late nineties, Anton's first wife Fani died with the third stillborn child. According to village tales, she was a vivid Kras woman, a noble daughter of the merchant and baker from Postojna. To her last breath, delivering the third stillborn child, she was carried in despair around the church, but there was no hope.

The second larger rearrangement of the house came some years after the second Anton's marriage, at the very beginning of the building of the new valley road between Plešci and Čabar in the year of 1894. The road, after long centuries, finally made possible a safer and faster connection from the small town of Čabar towards Kupa valley, Delnice and Kočevje. At that time they added to a building a new house wing with a big cellar, new kitchen and a parlour on the floor; the latter does not exist any more. The inn was separated into two spaces. At the building of the new house wing, a concrete deck with steel beams was used for the first time in the village of Plešci. The skilled workers made it, working at that same time on the road objects. The living became more comfortable, the house had more than one parlour and even the dining room was separated. It is interesting to point out that during the house restorations, the new furniture arrived to the house for the most part only through the bride's dowry at the marriage, only a little was bought aside. The second-hand-quality furniture and equipment were used at changing or moving to other living spaces. Unlike in other local houses, there was a bed in every representative room, intended for family members as well as for guests. The stoves in cast iron, made by the Courts Foundry, with the motive of Diana – already bought for the parlour in the year 1856 – were placed over the years on as many as the five different places around the house.

At the house, among farming wagons, sledges and carriages and four horses, they still had a carriage with a leather roof, light carriage and a roofed sledges for the conveyance of people. Anton Čop had a white horse, and once a week a stableman took him, on his horse, to supper with the great burgomaster of Čabar. With his second wife Julija, born in a wealthy family in Kočevje and educated at the girls' school in Vienna, he spend a honeymoon in Venice and attended the noble pastimes in Čabar. They had heirs: their seven children were educated in local schools in Čabar and Kočevje, the classical grammar school in Senj, the University of Zagreb and the business school in Zagreb and Graz. Two children had passed away, the younger one in his prime other daughter was taken away by tuberculosis during her education in Kočevje.

After the First World War the economic crisis followed, the real estate and all the property were inherited by their son Zvonimir after he finished his education. At first it went well, after the World crisis it went bad, in that time they gave up the butchery, and it went well again. In 1934 a barn was burnt to the ground by a misfortune; however, the nearby house structures were spared, because just that year a new, more powerful, hand fire pump was bought. The roof was renovated and the orchard was planted with apples and pears. Already before, and particularly during the 1930-ies, they were investing a lot in tourism development, so they equipped a nearby house, where community clerk used to live. Wealthy doctors, lawyers and professors' fami-

lies from Zagreb and Belgrade were arriving to spend the summer in the country. The house was advertised in daily papers; even actors were arriving. They gladly went for walks, mountaineering, hunting or fishing and swimming in Čabranka and Kupa. The men debated with the landlord in the parlour. They appreciated also their good cuisine, for new dishes were prepared for every meal, and fresh sweets were always on the table after the meals. They bawled, played cards and danced a lot, some instrument was always at disposal in the inn, and every evening, some distinguished peasants, a teacher, parish priest and others, used to gather in. The Palčava house, in the beginning of the 1930-ies became so famous in the surrounding regions for its dancing parties that even musicians and dancers from all over the region used to arrive. The dancing parties were organised in the inn until the middle of the 1950-ies, when it was closed. In the house there is still preserved a brochure of the climatologic holiday resorts of the Yugoslav Kingdom, where it is possible to find information about Plešće side by side to the information about Plitvice lakes.

Zvonimir Čop, the son of Anton, also the mayor of the community himself, initiator and founder of the fire brigade, an educated man widely well known as extraordinarily good orator, planed the new rearrangement of the building himself. He was planning to expand the inn section, to construct new and modern toilets with bathrooms because of the tourism projects. However a tragic traffic accident prevented the realization of this plan in 1938. On returning home from the business trip, some seven kilometres before his home village, the wooden bridge colapsed under the fully loaded truck and buried him and his friend, a merchant from Rakek.

The widow Berta remained alone at the estate, known to her very end among the village people as "Palčava gaspa", with her two little daughters. Although the economy crisis followed: the World War, nationalizations, cooperatives and other after-wartime troubles, she kept the husbandry as well as the house with her exceptional energy.

During the Second World War, although the Italian barrack was in the nearby house (just so owned by the Čop family) and in the very same house the military doctor and his assistant were established, the widow Berta was all the time in collaboration with the resistance movement. Passing by military posts they transported even wounded partisans for bandaging to the nearby village of Osilnica on the Slovenian side, using Palčavas' carriage. After the first Italian offensives when Italians burnt villages and hamlets at the slopes of the valley and mass-deported people, their friends with families from nearby regions moved to the house and stayed there for several months. They expected deportation or burning of village any minute, but fortunately it did not happen. The Italian military troops with which the last villagers expected to be deported were attacked by partisans and destroyed. Shortly after came the capitulation of Italia. The Germans came and plundered everything of the value that remained in the house: silver, decorations, gramophone, accordion etc. After the Italian capitulation and the return of the deported people from the nearby villages, sometimes over thirty homeless persons stayed in the house. Leaving to their poorly rearranged burnt homes, they were given furniture, clothing and all kinds of old goods, not needed in the house. Granny Berta always gladly helped people, on the

account on her acquaintanceship a great deal of needy children took to schooling after the war, with her friends, she endeavoured to open the first industrial plant in the village. Till the end of the war the Palčava store was closed, around the 1950-ies, after more than a hundred years of working, the inn was closed. The best fields were "bought" at the low price; the second house was nationalized and later returned to the family. In spite of all the troubles, granny Berta was, for all her villagers to the end of her days – she deceased at the age of eighty-nine - the last and only "Palčava gaspa".

The time passed by, the daughters went to studies and left - one of them to Ljubljana, another found her happiness as far as Canada - the family spread around. The successors had started to take interest in the house in different ways. At the reconstruction fifteen years ago they did the first major step. Even during the granny Berta lifetime, they pulled down the part which was added to the house a century ago. Intervention gave to the house almost the same appearance like it was a century and a half before. Larger part of the front, in spite of renovation, is still original, meaning the polished plaster a century and a half old; secession profiles around windows and Biedermeier rosette above the main entrance were renovated. The outbuilding front was renovated too. Five years ago, the nearby barn which stood between the house and the barn, burnt away just a few meters from the house. Only for the unselfish efforts of the Croatian and Slovenian firemen from the home and nearby villages, the house was not badly damaged. Just the part of the barn roof was burnt down, but was restored shortly afterwards.

From the very first renovation the family slowly arranged the interior and objects that stayed in the house or were found all around in the village or nearby surroundings. As early as that time, because of the value of the house, the family took into consideration to proclaim the building as cultural monument. The proposal was dispatched to former Regional Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Monuments in Rijeka. The administration mills, because of the state of war in Croatia and cultural monuments service reorganization, milled slowly. Only two years ago, during the visit of the curators from Zagreb Ethnological Museum and the responsible people from the Direction for Culture Heritage Protection, not only the house but also the whole estate with barn, farmyard and artefact collection were suggested for protection. Numerous remnants of the interior mural and ceiling decoration are conserved in the house, together with original building and room furniture, stoves, ample library and extensive document collection. This year the reconstruction of the store was completed with original equipment from the middle and second half of the 19th century. According to accessible information, this is one of the oldest completely preserved stores in this part of Europe in situ. The presentation of the hotel trade and the building history are prepared. The reconstruction of the parlour with original furniture and renovation of the wall and ceiling decoration from the 1880-ies are in preparation for the next year.

The renewal outgrew into the extensive family project in which three generations are included. It is interesting that the most activity from research to the final work

they perform unaided. Only at some more difficult tasks they use the help from the village skilled workers. So the hobby of the present successor, the representative of the fifth generation of the Čop family from Plešče, who plans to study literature, visits to the similar museums throughout Europe and America together with different field expert discussions, developed into a real activity throughout the years.

The family still arranges the interior of the house carefully, with earnest intension to open it to the public in the year of 2006. With all the material to exhibit: beautiful interior from the second half of the 19th century as well as with other heritage artefacts from this surrounding, music and dialectal story telling, it will be, at the very least, a valuable and extraordinary contribution to this locality and, at the same time, an occasion for revival of the fresh tourist trade. The house with its history and collections is in the same time one of the extraordinary memories of the mutual collaboration and cultural interaction of all three ethnic groups from this area: Croats, Slovenians and Germans from Kočevje.

Similar projects scarcely come to life merely with employment of private organisation. For this reason, the family members all the time strive for the fact that renovation of the house, its presentation and incorporation in cultural as well as tourist development of the region, should become the interest of the local community too, as well as of the wider community of Gorski Kotar, the Primorsko-goranska region, and of Croatia and Slovenia themselves.

Some articles about the house and the project were published in Croatian and Slovenian press during the last year, the proprietors took part in some radio and TV broadcasts, even an independent contribution was recorded for HTV (Croatian television). The house was visited by the members of the Croatian Ethnological Society, the European association ECOVAST for the Small Towns and the Countryside Development, KEC – the International Project for Protection of the Kras, also the Slovenian Ethnological Society, while many experts, not only ethnologists, visited the house during this years' conference in Croatia. The house and collections were visited by the mayors and members of community councils, by the representatives of the surrounding tourist associations and many others. The successors of the Čop family were encouraged to register for different public competitions. They spare no pains to collaborate with Croatian and Slovenian experts in projects connected with the region. Moreover, a joint free tourist zone in the upper Kupa and Čabar valley is opening, planed some years ago by the Republics of Croatia and Slovenia, which, in spite of the blunt interruption of the centenarian passable road through the valley between both states and nations, on the account of the border regime in the past few years, will make the major tourist progress possible.

The population in this part of Gorski Kotar will, unfortunately, stay separated from their Slovenian neighbours, in the same manner as Slovenians from their Croatian neighbours, until the return to normality of the frontier cross point in the valley at Zamost and to the reopening of the main road through the valley. After seven centuries or more, the frontier crossing, from which ever since the commercial trails went,

has the status of border crossing, which besides the economic development, powerfully restricts the passage of the people too, who are eager to visit that wonderful part of their homeland. The bridge on the former main road throughout the valley at Gašparci after the centuries is passable only for the personal border traffic.

Despite obstacles, pull yourself together and come to visit "Palčava šiša" and surroundings. You will be welcome and you won't be sorry, for you will visit an extraordinary beautiful as well as an ethnologically interesting part of Croatia and Slovenia.³

Translated by Matea Hotujac

³ The collection in Plešće was opened on September 9, 2006 and until now, according to the author's findings, it was visited by more than 800 people.