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## Dječje igre na otvorenom i blagdansko darivanje djece u Istri

*Ovaj članak nastao je na temelju terenskih istraživanja dječjih igara i godišnjih običaja (Božić i Uskrs) u Istri. Naglasak je stavljen na pojedinačne dječje igre na otvorenom, te darivanje djece u Božićno vrijeme.*

**Ključne riječi:** dječje igre, blagdansko darivanje, Istra

O dječjoj kulturi u Istri malo se toga može naći u stručnoj literaturi ili literaturi uopće. Stoga su podaci za ovaj rad sakupljeni terenskim istraživanjem<sup>1</sup> kroz razgovor s kazivačima uglavnom iz ruralnih sredina. Na upite o igrama i igračkama kazivači rođeni dvadesetih i tridesetih godina 20. st. odgovaraju kako ih baš i nije bilo jer su još kao djeca bili uključeni u podjelu posla i obaveza. «... Nije bilo baš vremena za igru, morali smo delat jer inače bi bili gladni.» (Dukovski, 1997: 75). Kazivači pak rođeni četrdesetih i pedesetih godina 20. st. ističu da su imali vremena za igru. Igračke su sami izrađivali, igre koje su naslijedili od starijih prilagođavali su sebi ili su izmišljali nove. Igra je za djecu svih generacija «najozbiljniji» i bezinteresni zajednički način provođenja vremena te je stoga često nerazumljiva odraslima.

Za svakog čovjeka njegovo djetinjstvo ima posebno značenje. Dječje igre važna su podloga za život kako za pojedinca tako i za zajednicu. Kroz njih se odražava život određene sredine, društveno-gospodarska stanja i zbivanja, te na kraju norme ponašanja.

Prema riječima kazivača, među djecom omiljene su bile zajedničke igre na otvorenom, bilo da se radi o ruralnoj ili urbanoj sredini. Kod tih igara nije se radila poseb-

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<sup>1</sup> Kazivači su bili iz: Motovuna (Elide Močibob, Natalija Fatorić i Anastazija Ivašić), Brkača (Pjero Tomac), Beletić Brijega (Lina Kaligari), Rakotula (Milka Stojinić), Gologorice (Marija Ivić), Karojbe (Ana Močibob), Slokovića (Milna Troš), Katuna Trviškog (Vjekoslava Grubiša), Feštini (Anton i Andela Božac), Meloni (Renata Sandolj), Barban (Dušan Vale). Terenska istraživanja provedena su u nekoliko navrata tijekom 2005. do 2008.

na podjela na muške i ženske, na mlade i starije. Iznimno je bilo igara koje su radije igrale djevojčice ili dječaci.<sup>2</sup> Vladalo je zajedništvo i veća povezanost među djecom. Nekih individualnih izdvajanja gotovo da i nije bilo, za razliku od današnjeg doba kad se djeca okreću individualnim igrama i rasonodama. *Oni kopjuter bi samo gledali po cile dane.*<sup>3</sup>

U ruralnim sredinama djeca su puno vremena provodila na otvorenom, prvenstveno zbog radnih obaveza. Već s napunjenih šest ili sedam godina išlo se čuvati ovce, purane, a s nekoliko godina više i krave. Stoga su vrijeme provedeno na paši nastojali iskoristiti za igre i rasonodu. Pri tome nije trebalo upotrebljavati neke posebne rekvizite jer se koristilo stvari nađene u prirodi (kamen, drvo) ili razbijene zemljane lonce, stare krpe i sl.

## Igre s kamenjem

Dječje igre na polju ili drugom otvorenom prostoru otvaraju mogućnost uključivanja većeg broja sudionika i korištenje prirodnih materijala kao pomagala u igri. Jedan od najčešće upotrebljivanih, uz drvo, jest kamen. To mogu biti nepravilne kamene pločice ili ljepše oblikovani kamenčići, ovisno o vrsti igre.

Igra s pet okruglih kamenčića zvana *maneti*, *sasèti cristina*, *kamenčići*, *pika – paka*<sup>4</sup> bila je igra koju su od proljeća do jesen većinom igrale djevojčice,<sup>5</sup> a ponekad i dječaci. Ova igra, u kojoj je važna spretnost sudionika, igra se u paru ili u više parova. Potrebno je pet okruglih kamenčića i ravna povišena površina, kameni stol ili neka druga čvrsta glatka površina.

Igra se sastoji od dva dijela: u prvome se pet kamenčića naizmjenice baca u zrak i lovi te sakupljaju bodovi, a u drugom se kamenčići slažu u zadane figure da bi se zatim bacali u zrak i lovili.

Djevojčice su rado igrale ovu igru, a kamenčiće su često nosile sa sobom. Reklo se *idemo igrat na manete* ili *gremo dokat na manete*, a ako je igra potrajala, moglo se dogoditi da djeca ozlijede nokte pa bi ih boljeli prsti.

Igra se jednom rukom, a započinje tako da se svih pet kamena malo pomiješa u ruci, a zatim baci na stol. Kad kamenčići padnu, igrač/igračica uzme jedan od njih u ruku i baca ga u zrak. Prije nego što baci taj kamen, suigrač/suigračica odredi kamen koji treba pokupiti s tla. Cilj je igre da se odabrani kamen baca u zrak i dok pada treba

<sup>2</sup> Niže u tekstu *maneti* i *prahćanje*.

<sup>3</sup> P. T. Brkač.

<sup>4</sup> Različiti dijalektalni nazivi za istu igru; *maneti* potječe od tal. riječi *mano* – ruka. A. Mirković spominje i naziv *sasèi ili cristina* (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Kazivačice ističu da je to iz razloga što su one u toj igri bile spretnije od dječaka, pa se oni nisu baš rado igrali s njima jer bi teže pobjeđivali.

pokupiti zadani s poda. Nakon toga kupe se dva po dva kamena, zatim tri pa jedan, a na kraju *kaval* (sva četiri kamena stave se na jednu hrpicu, *cavàl*, tal. = konj, koju treba pokupiti jednom rukom.). Ukoliko je igraču/igračici uspjelo pokupiti sva četiri kamena, osvaja jedan bod, a ako je tijekom igre bilo koji kamen ispao, gubi se bod, a igru nastavlja suigrač/suigračica.

Drugi dio igre nije na bodovanje već je više pokazivanje vještine, tj. svojevrсно najbolje od najboljeg. Ovdje se slažu figure od kamenčića na *roge*, *lepezu/palmu* i *pika paka*.

*Rogi* – prsti ruke se u okomitom položaju stave na pod s tim da su srednji prst i prstenjak sakriveni. Ispred se stave tri kamena (ispred palca, kažiprsta i malog prsta) a iza dva kamena. Zatim se izmakne šaka. Jedan se kamen, koji odredi suigrač, baci u zrak, a ostala četiri treba pokupiti u jednom potezu.

*Palma* – na pod se položi rašireni dlan, a na vrh svakog prsta po jedan kamen. Jedan kamen se baci u zrak, a ostala četiri treba pokupiti u jednom potezu.

Završnu igru *pika paka* slaže onaj tko je izgubio na bodove, a pobjedniku nastoji otežati tako da kamenčiće složi što kompliciranije. Četiri kamena stave se tako da dva i dva budu paralelna i što više razmaknuta kako bi ih se teže pokupilo. Početni kamen se baci u zrak i pokupi se pika (jedan) i paka (drugi) kamen, zatim se kamen ponovo baci i pokupi se drugi par pika i pake, tj. paralelni kamenčići.

Najraširenija je igra s kamenjem na otvorenom u Istri guranje okruglog kamena ili drvene pločice u rupu u zemlji uz pomoć drvene palice<sup>6</sup> – ***prahćanje***, ***prašćanje***, ***pračići***, ***kukali***. Poznata je i kao pastirska igra jer se igrala najviše na polju dok se pasla stoka.

*Prahćanje* je bilo omiljeno među dječacima, a djevojčice bi se rjeđe pridružile. Iznimno, ako ih je bilo više pa bi one igrale zasebno.

Za ovu igru potrebna su najmanje dva igrača, a može ih biti do deset. Svatko od njih ima drvenu palicu<sup>7</sup> koja mu služi za guranje kamena. Igra se na pašnjaku gdje se napravi središnja rupa, *poje* ili *štala*. Na udaljenosti od otprilike dva metra iskopa se i nekoliko manjih rupa, *pičina*, za jednu manje od broja igrača. Uz palicu potrebna je i drvena ili kamena pločica zvana *svinja* ili *prasac*.

Igra započinje tako da se igrači s palicama smjeste kraj jedne od rupa. Jedan igrač nema svoju rupu te je on prijetnja ostalima. Odredi se jedan od igrača koji baci *prasca* što bliže *štali*. Pri tome «... izgovara glasno, kao u nekom obredu: “Slan pek”!» (Ivetac, 1984: 179). Ostali igrači nastoje *prasca* ugurati u *štalu*, a pri tome moraju štititi svoju rupu od igrača koji nema svoju *pičinu*. Ovo je osnova igre, a postoji i niz nepisanih pravila koja su kako kažu sami kazivači dosta komplicirana, a i svaki je kraj imao svoj način igranja odnosno način bodovanja.

<sup>6</sup> Kazivači je uspoređuju s današnjim hokejom na travi.

<sup>7</sup> Drveni štap sa zadebljanim donjim dijelom.

*Velika igra, puno smo igrali pračića – to je bila jedna rupa, imali smo tog pračića, drveni, ne okrugli, podugi onako jajast. Svi smo imali, ako smo igrali deset, bilo je devet rupa. Svaki koji igra mora imati štap koji ima glavu u kraj. I on je mora sebi čuvat rupu, štalu, ali je mora tjerat svinju. Svaki je gleda bacit tebi, al dok si ti njega tukao, onaj što nije imao svoju kućicu, mi smo to zvali kućica, on je moga tebi uzet. Po podu se to guralo. Mi smo to u polju, to se igralo i u dvorištu škole. Imali smo i doma nedjelju popodne, znali su i odrasli doći s nama to igrat.*<sup>8</sup>

Za razliku od igre *prašćanje* koja je gotovo zaboravljena, *pljočkanje* je igra koja je i danas popularna.<sup>9</sup> Njome su djeca diljem Istre najčešće kratila vrijeme na paši. Za ovu igru potrebni su *pljočka* i *balin*. *Pljočka* je plosnati kamen promjera od deset do dvadeset centimetra i debljine od dva do osam centimetara. *Balin* je okrugli ili četvrtasti kamen približne veličine šake kojemu se što bliže bacaju *pljočke*. Igra se na ravnom terenu, a sudjeluje više parova (mogu dječaci i djevojčice). Igrač iz prvog para baci *balin* na tlo koji potom njegov partner gađa *pljočkom*. Nakon što se izredaju i ostali parovi (postupak je isti), provjerava se tko je *pljočku* bacio bliže *balinu*. Pobjednik je onaj par koji je najbliže bacio *pljočku balinu* (ili koji ga je pogodio) te za to dobiva jedan bod, *punat*. Ukupan je pobjednik *pljočkanja* onaj par koji prvi sakupi 11 *punata*. U ovoj igri postoje i izrazi kao: »zajahati« što znači baciti *pljočku* na *balin*, dok je »tura igre« bacanje *pljočki* u jednom smjeru. »Šeko« je kad se *pljočka* ili *balin* zabiju »jušto u glavu«.<sup>10</sup>

Danas se *pljočka* na terenu dugom 16 i širokom 3,5 metra omedenom špagom. Igra se na trinaest dobivenih *punata*. «Igra podrazumijeva i lijepo ponašanje – *pljočke* se ne uzimaju sa suhozida, za vrijeme igranja se ne smije piti, pušiti ni psovati. Sve treba poštivati i međusobno si pomagati te zaigrati uz lijepu pjesmu i dobre stare običaje.»<sup>11</sup>

**Razbijanje lonca** igra je koja se u Barbanu igrala kada je bilo neko pučko slavlje, na trgu ili u središtu mjesta gdje su se sakupili mještani i gosti, ili rjeđe na polju. Broj igrača nije određen, a za igru je potrebno imati: zemljani lonac (može biti stariji ili noviji, ali bitno je da je cijeli), drveni kolac dužine 2,5 do 3,5 m, novac i tamnu platnenu vrpcu.

Lonac se stavi na tlo okrenut naopačke, a ispod njega se stavi novac (novac mogu sakupiti sami igrači ili im ga netko daruje). Igraču koji stoji na udaljenosti od oko dvadeset metara od lonca zavežu se oči tamnom vrpcom, kroz koju ne može vidjeti, doda mu se kolac u ruke te ga netko okrene tri puta. Okretanje se mora izvoditi u suprotnom smjeru (lijevo pa desno) tako da igrač izgubi orijentaciju. Zatim ga osoba koja ga je okretala usmjeri prema loncu. Igrač hoda zavezanih očiju u smjeru lonca i nosi kolac. Ostali ga bodre i govore mu kuda se treba kretati (lijevo, desno, naprijed i sl.). Kad se približi loncu svi viknu *udri* i on udara. Igrač nastoji što je moguće jače uda-

<sup>8</sup> E. M. Kaldir, terenski zapis M. Margetić 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Ponajprije zahvaljujući ljubiteljima starina koji su ovu igru revitalizirali putem raznih turnira u *pljočkanju* koji se održavaju diljem Istre, npr., u Tinjanu, Puli, Zminju i dr. Osnovano je i nekoliko *pljočkarških* klubova.

<sup>10</sup> Točno u glavu, tj. sredinu.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.glasistre.hr/?7dfc8ffd0b1819a2402936a061449b9f,TS,2669,,14796,,187333,,>

riti kako bi razbio lonac, naravno ako ga pogodi. Onaj igrač koji ga uspije razbiti, dobiva za nagradu novac koji se nalazi ispod lonca.

Premda prema materijalu koji se koristi i načinu izvođenja, igra *hitat u jaje*<sup>12</sup> ne pripada skupini igara s kamenjem na otvorenom, ipak ju je vrijedno spomenuti jer je bila raširena na područjima od kuda su kazivači.

Igrala su je djeca i mladi nakon mise gađajući jaja novčićima. Postoji više sličnih varijanti igre *hitat u jaje* – *šćukat jaja*, *pičit* ili *boćanje* jajima. Ovu igru danas djeca više ne igraju, ali postoje mjesta gdje su odrasli obnovili ovaj običaj kao dio zabave za Uskrsnu proslavu.

*Hitat u jaje* igra se u Trvižu nakon ručka ili nakon mise na sam Uskrs ili Uskrsni ponedjeljak. Obično je igraju djeca sa starijom, tj. odraslom osobom koja donese sitnog novca. Mladići koji su dobivali plaću donijeli bi sitan novac, *centeže*, najčešće po 10 centeži. Dijete stavi svoje jaje u kut, a netko stariji ga gađa. Ako ga pogodi, uzima ga, a ako ne, novčić kojim je gađao jaje pripada djetetu.

Djeca u Kaldiru označivala su svoja jaja kako bi ih razlikovala, povezujući ih nekom vrpčicom ili lastikom. Ondje se govorilo *gremo boćat jaja*. Najave se *boćari* (igrači). Na početku igre odredi se kojom kovanicom se gađa (danas je to, npr., 1, 2 ili 5 kn). Jaje se stavi na određenu udaljenost i gađa se. Onaj tko gađa mora pogoditi jaje tako da se novčić zabije. Ako uspije, uzima jaje i novčić. Ako promaši jaje, novac ide vlasniku jaja.

Kazivačica iz Kala kaže: *Za Vazam se je šćukalo jaje, si je ki zaradi koju kunu, ki ga je prvi put pogodi je njegov oni dinar, monida, lira. Da, to nam je bila zabava za Vazam.*

## Darivanje djece u Božićno vrijeme

Vjera i Crkva ostavile su tragove u životu mnogih zajednica. Iako je istarsko društvo u cjelini svoje temelje gradilo na kršćanstvu i njegovim sustavima vrijednosti, to ne znači da je velik broj vjernika prakticirao vjeru odlaskom na misu u crkvu. Nasuprot tome stoji činjenica da se svi katolički blagdani i običaji redovito slave u obiteljima, gotovo bez iznimke. Odlazak u crkvu nedjeljom, naročito u ruralnim sredinama, osim duhovnog imao je i društveni značaj. Davao je osjećaj pripadnosti zajednici jer je to bilo mjesto susreta s rodbinom i prijateljima, ali i prilika za lijepo se obući, za razliku od skromne svakodnevnice.

Opća i poznata pravila ponašanja u određenim životnim situacijama utječu na slijed zbivanja, vrstu ponašanja ili pak ponavljanje ponašanja. Neka od njih propisana su običajem i tradicijom i čine obred koji pripada određenom kraju, obitelji, skupini lju-

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<sup>12</sup> Tradicijska dječja igra gađanja jaja igrala se na sam Uskrs nakon ručka. Ova igra, kao i pljočkanje, doživjela je svoju revitalizaciju. Naime, unazad nekoliko godina na Uskrs se u Savičenti održava turnir Šćukanja jaja.

di. Blagdanski obredi imaju duboki smisao i emocionalno značenje. U njima sudjeluje većina jedne zajednice, prihvaća ih i/ili obnavlja. O pravilima koja vrijede u tim obredima se ne razmišlja, već se ona slijede i poštuju. Eventualne promjene koje nastaju izazivaju zbuđenost, naročito kod djece. Kada djeca poznaju dijelove obreda, ponašanje odraslih i svoju ulogu u njima, mogu shvatiti predvidljivost obreda. Upravo im ta mogućnost predviđanja i poznatost događaja daje osjećaj sigurnosti. Dodatni osjećaj sigurnosti stvara i spoznaja da u nekim dijelovima obreda mogu sami kreirati i izražavati svoje osjećaje kroz uloženi trud. To najčešće dolazi do izražaja u trenucima čestitanja i darivanja. Različiti sadržaji čestitki kao i osobnost djece prigodom čestitanja često budu nagrađivani od onih kojima su namijenjene.

S druge pak strane, darovi koje djeca dobivaju prigodom pojedinih blagdana ne ovise sasvim o njihovom trudu, već o imovinskom stanju obitelji.

Božićno vrijeme počinje 6. prosinca sa Sv. Nikolom, a završava 6. siječnja Befanom kako i kaže narodna izreka u Motovunu: *Giorno della Befania tutte le feste porta via*.<sup>13</sup> Zbog blagdana koji najavljuju Božić, u ovom razdoblju češći su odlasci u crkvu, a djeca se posebno vesele jer je to vrijeme darivanja i intenzivnijeg druženja s obitelji. Ovome pridonosi i to što su tada školski praznici, a zbog zime imaju manje radnih obaveza.

U terenskom istraživanju obuhvaćeni su kazivači koji su rođeni i odrasli u središnjoj Istri hrvatskog i talijanskog govornog područja.<sup>14</sup> Stoga su opisi pojedinih običaja i istih i/ili sličnih igara različiti. Postupci prilikom obilaska su isti, ali se razlikuju tekstovi koje djeca izgovaraju. Treba naglasiti i lokalne razlike ne samo u jeziku, već i u samom obredu koji se često razlikuje od sela do sela. Cilj mu je isti – izricanje dobrih želja i dobivanje darova.

## Sv. Nikola

Sveti Nikola je poznat kao svetac koji daruje djecu i siromahe, a slavi se 6. prosinca. On je zaštitnik djece, pomoraca, djevojaka, siromaha, studenata, farmaceuta, pekara, ribara, zatvorenika, trgovaca, putnika i nekih gradova širom svijeta.

Običaj darivanja djece za Sv. Nikolu, prema riječima kazivača, u Istru dolazi iz susjednih zemalja. Oni su mišljenja da se to više prakticiralo u gradovima nego u selima, a svoju ekspanziju doživljava nakon rata. Po načinu darivanja smatra se najavom Božića i velikih blagdana.

Stariji kazivači iz ruralnih sredina smatraju da je darivanje za Nikolu nešto sasvim novo,<sup>15</sup> dok u Motovunu ističu da se to prakticiralo još u vrijeme Italije. Tada se taj

<sup>13</sup> Befana odnosi sve blagdane!

<sup>14</sup> Motovun i okolica bili su pod vlašću Italije, te se ovdje govorilo talijanskim jezikom.

<sup>15</sup> Uglavnom od Drugoga svjetskog rata pa nadalje, te da je to više bilo u gradovima jer je na selu bila siromaština pa roditelji nisu mogli darivati mnogobrojnu djecu.

blagdan obilježavao i u školi, jer bi ih taj dan ispod klupe dočekaio sitan poklon – kakva voćka ili bombon. Djecu je darivala škola u suradnji s lokalnom zajednicom, a običaj se prakticirao do komunizma. Nakon toga tradicija darivanja održavala se uglavnom u obiteljima.

Kazivači,<sup>16</sup> u čijim se obiteljima darivalo, ističu kako su željno čekali Sv. Nikolu. *A, mi smo bili sretni kad dođe Sv. Nikola. Smo ga čekali, ma odi spati, ako ne ideš spati on ne dođe – tako se govorilo djeci. On dođe, njega niko ne može videti. – dobili bi jabuke, naranče, lješnjake. Žbula – luk – zato jer plače – ono dijete koje se dosta plakalo dobilo bi luk od Nikole. Šiba od vrbe svezana crvenom vrpcom – moja mama je rekla – si bila zločesta i si dobila šibu. Na stol bi se stavio čisti tanjur na kojem Sv. Nikola ostavi darove. Reklo se da on dolazi kroz kamin.*<sup>17</sup>

Ovo je kazivanje izdvojeno stoga što kazivačica navodi da su za darove ostavljali tanjur na stolu. To su potvrdili i drugi stariji kazivači. Oni se slažu da je stavljanje čizmica u prozor novija pojava (nakon četrdesetih i pedesetih godina 20. st.), a kao objašnjenje za tanjur navode činjenicu da čizme jednostavno nisu imali.<sup>18</sup>

Da se do prije Drugoga svjetskog rata djecu nije baš darivalo, uglavnom zbog neimaštine, potvrdila je većina kazivača različitih generacija. Nakon rata, djeca u školi uče o Sv. Nikoli i od tada se to uvodi u obitelji kao dan kada se daruju djeca. U to vrijeme Sv. Nikola postaje samo Nikola.

Spominju se dvije varijante darivanja djece za Nikolu; djecu daruje Nikola sam ili bi ujutro u čizmi našli dar. U prvoj varijanti<sup>19</sup> netko od ukućana (otac ili mlađi muškarac) obukao bi se u crveno, stavio umjetnu brađu i u vreći nosio po kućama darove djeci najčešće rodbini, ili bi se djeca okupila na jednome mjestu te bi ih darivao. Uz njega je išao i Krampus, zločesti pratitelj koji djeci dijeli šibe ili ugljen.

U Katunu Trviškom Nikolu ne prati Krampus, već se spominje Štriga<sup>20</sup> koja plaši djecu kako bi bila dobra.

U drugoj varijanti djeca se ne susreću s Nikolom već bi večer prije očistili *škornju*<sup>21</sup> i stavili je u prozor te ujutro očekivali darove. Nikola dobroj djeci ostavlja jabuke, lješnjake, orahe ili naranču, a onima zločestima u čizmi se našla *baketimica*<sup>22</sup> ili luk za one plačljive. Nikola i Krampus u jednu ruku koristili su roditeljima i kao odgojna metoda. Naime, ukoliko su djeca dobra, dobivaju poklone, a u suprotnom šibu kao opomenu. Stoga su se djeca posebno trudila u dane prije Sv. Nikole, a naročito kada je trebalo pripremiti čizme za prozor. Njih bi se čistilo do visokog sjaja.

<sup>16</sup> Iz Motovuna i Karojbe.

<sup>17</sup> N. F., Motovun, rođena 1923.

<sup>18</sup> Isti podatak dobiven je u okolici Pazina i Beletić Brijega.

<sup>19</sup> Podaci iz Kaldira i Karojbe.

<sup>20</sup> Od tal. Strega = vještica.

<sup>21</sup> Dijalektalni naziv za čizmu.

<sup>22</sup> Šiba ukrašena crvenom trakom.



Kazivači iz Cera, Barbana i Gologorice ističu da je darivanje djece za Nikolu sasvim nova pojava i da prije rata toga nije bilo.

Današnje darivanje djece za Sv. Nikolu znatno se razlikuje u posljednjih dvadesetak godina. Djeca puno očekuju od roditelja na taj dan jer ih je današnji način života, tj. potrošački konsumerizam na to navikao. U blagdansko vrijeme okruženi su primamljivim reklamama u svim medijima. Rijetko se u prozor stavljaju čizmice. Ako se i stavljaju, najčešće su to ukrasne vrećice u obliku čizme.

## Dobra ruka/Buona man

Prvi siječanj nije blagdan, već dan kada se slavi početak Nove godine. Prijelaz iz jedne u drugu godinu uvijek je prilika za nadati se kako će Nova godina biti bolja od stare. Kako bi se to ostvarilo, poželjno je da netko uputi dobre želje i čestitke. U Istri se taj dan nije posebno slavio, tek možda pripremio malo bolji ručak, a u nekim gradovima organizirao se ples, zabava ili sl. Ipak, gledalo se na to tko će prvi čestitati Novu godinu. Sretnim znakom smatralo se ako je prvi čestitar muška osoba, a naročito ako je to muško dijete. Smatralo se velikom žalosti, ali i sramotom, za kuću u koju djeca ne bi došla čestitati.

Djeca su se oduvijek veselila tom danu, između ostalog i stoga što je to nakon Sv. Nikole bila nova prilika za dobivanje darova. Na osnovi terenskih istraživanja mogu se izlučiti dva načina darivanja djece za Novu godinu. Jedan je taj da se djeca, za razliku od darivanja za Sv. Nikolu, kada nije potrebno posebno se truditi da bi se dobio dar, za novogodišnje darivanje moraju udružiti i zajednički obilaziti kuće sumještana. Drugi, jednostavniji način je kada majke i/ili bake daruju djecu.

Prvi način čestitanja Nove godine, uza sakupljanje darova, počeo bi rano ujutro. Naime, oni koji bi došli čestitati među prvima, bolje su prolazili što se darova tiče. *Na Novo lito, rano u jutro, ko ste došla ranije ste dobila već, ko ne ste manje dobila.*<sup>23</sup> Petero do desetero djece okupilo bi se ispred nečije kuće i dogovorilo kuda će krenuti. Govorilo se da se ide nositi ili tražiti Dobru ruku ili Buona man.<sup>24</sup> Svatko je sa sobom ponio malu platnenu torbicu ili čarapu u koju bi sakupljao darove. *O kako ne, smo sa onom čarapom išli po selu. Imali bi čarapu ili neka kaneštra – ovako ko neka torbica od krpi se napravi – mora biti dugačka da nam dosta stane, a čarapa od mame ili tate, a ne naša malena. To smo išli za Novu godinu – Buon principio del Anno.*<sup>25</sup> Umjesto platnene torbice, moglo se nositi košaricu za sakupljanje darova. Kad bi došla pred kuću, djeca čestitari najprije su pozdravili domaćine s *Buon giorno, un principio del Anno*<sup>26</sup> ili *Danas je Novo lito, da nam date dobru ruku*. Zatim govore:

<sup>23</sup> A. I., Motovun.

<sup>24</sup> U području gdje se govorilo talijanski.

<sup>25</sup> R. S., Meloni.

<sup>26</sup> Talijansko govorno područje, Motovun i bliža okolica.



*Santolo mio diletto  
Metti la man sul petto  
Metti la man in casella  
Paghi me la buona man.*<sup>27</sup>

Druga je verzija čestitke:

*Santolo mio diletto,  
Metti la man sul petto,  
Ricordi ti da me  
E della mia sorella.*<sup>28</sup>

Uz ovaj tekst izricale su se i individualne želje za zdravlje i sreću ukućana u Novoj godini, što je ovisilo i o domišljatosti samih čestitara. Nakon toga domaćini bi djeci zahvalili i odgovarali sa: *za dobru ruku, za dobru ruku*. Pri tome ih darivaju lješnjacima, orasima, jabukama, bombonima i, rjeđe, novcem. Ove darove djeca su spremala u torbice, čarape ili košare i kretala dalje. *To ča smo dobili bi pojili, podilili, ako je bilo viška bi ponesli doma.*

U Katunu Trviškom ovaj običaj identičan je onome na Motovunštini. Razlika je u nazivu i tekstu koji su djeca izgovarala. Umjesto traženja *Dobre ruke*, djeca su govorila *idemo pobirati rišilo*.<sup>29</sup> Svatko je donio svoju *boršicu*<sup>30</sup> i krenuli su čestitati Novu godinu u grupi od četiri do šest.

Dolaskom pred kuću govorilo se:

*Dobro jutro, srićno Novo lito,  
smo došli po rišilo  
da bite i k litu!*<sup>31</sup>

Domaćini odgovaraju: «*Daj Bog da, da ste dobra dica!*». Ovom čestitkom, osim izricanja želja za sretnu Novu godinu, djeca domaćinima žele ukazati da bi i iduće godine trebali biti darežljivi. Dolazak djece u kuću smatralo se sretnim i poželjnim. No, bilo je i kuća u kojima nije bilo djece. Spominje se jedna takva obitelj koja je djeci umjesto lješnjaka, jabuka i sl. dala krumpir. Za osvetu ona su time gađali zid te kuće i idućih godina su ih zaobilazili.

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<sup>27</sup> *Kume moj ljubljeni; stavi ruku na prsa; stavi ruku u novčanik; (plati mi) daj mi za dobru ruku*. Ovakav tekst govorio se posebno kumovima i djedovima/bakama jer su djeca očekivala da će od njih dobiti i nešto novaca.

<sup>28</sup> *Kume moj ljubljeni; stavi ruku na prsa; sjeti se mene; i moje sestre*. Od domaćina se očekuje da bude darežljiv.

<sup>29</sup> Sakupljati darove – *rišilo*.

<sup>30</sup> Dijalektalni naziv za torbicu.

<sup>31</sup> V.G., Katun Trviški.

Ovakav način darivanja djece za Novu godinu jednako je bio raširen u ruralnim i urbanim sredinama. Obično bi se najprije obišla rodbina i kumovi, a onda ostali. No, nisu sva djeca voljela ići u čestitare. Kao glavni razlog navodi se nelagoda i sram jer su se osjećali kao da prose. Naročito djeca iz malo bolje stojećih obitelji, dok su, nasuprot njima, djeca iz siromašnih obitelji to jedva dočekala kako bi dobila koji novčić ili slatkiš.

Drugi način darivanja djece za Novu godinu je taj da su majke i bake pekle slatka peciva/kolače u obliku ptice i time darivale djecu u kući, ali i onu djecu koja bi došla u kuću tog dana. Ovo potvrđuju i kazivači iz Cera, Barbana i Gračišća. Napominju da nije bilo nekih posebnih čestitanja Nove godine odnosno da nije bilo čestitara koji su išli po kućama i čestitali. Tek bi si ukućani međusobno i s rodbinom razmijenili dobre želje.

Djeca nisu išla u obilazak, već im se dalo *Dobru ruku* ujutro kad su se probudili. Izraz «dati dobru ruku» u ovom slučaju znači dati dar, poklon, a to je obavezno *tičo*,<sup>32</sup> zatim orasi, lješnjaci, jabuke i sl. što se već imalo u kući. «*Za Novo lito smo jedan drugomu nosili lišnjake, jabuke, orihe ... to ča smo imali. U siromaščini, si poklonija, dar za dobru ruku, ča si ima.*» (Bijažić, 1999: 120)

## La Befana, 6. siječnja

La Befana je talijanska legenda o dobroj vještici.<sup>33</sup> Slavi se na katolički blagdan Sveta tri kralja, 6. siječnja. U Istri je poznata i slavila se u područjima koji su bili pod utjecajem Italije te je postala dio tradicije.

Legenda koja se i danas govori djeci kaže: Tri su mudraca u potrazi za djetetom pokucala na vrata kolibe da pitaju za smjer. Otvorila im je starica s metlom. Nije znala tko su ti živopisno odjeveni muškarci i nije im znala dati upute kako da dođu do Isusa. Oni su joj zahvalili i ljubazno je upitali želi li krenuti s njima u potragu. Odbila je jer je imala previše kućanskih poslova. Kad su oni već poodmakli, osjetila je da je pogriješila i odlučila ih sustići. Tražila ih je, no nije ih uspjela naći. Propustivši priliku da pođe s njima, zaustavljala je svako dijete koje bi sreća i davala mu mali slatkiš u nadi da je baš ono mali Isus. Sad svake godine na večer prije Sveta tri kralja kreće u potragu za Božjim djetetom. Zastaje u kući svakog djeteta i ostavlja dobrima slatkiše u čarapama koje su za to priredila, a zločestim grumen ugljena.<sup>34</sup>

U Motovunu i okolici Befana je bila omiljena među djecom. Zanimljiva je zbog svog izgleda (stara vještica s dobrim osobinama), načina pojavljivanja i dolaska (leti na me-

<sup>32</sup> Slatko pecivo u obliku ptice koje se radilo od tijesta kao za slatki kruh.

<sup>33</sup> Naziv vještice Befane potječe od grčkog naziva za blagdan Isusova rođenja: epifaneia, u doslovnom prijevodu pojavljivanje (Boga). Danas se ista riječ diljem zapadnog svijeta koristi za blagdan triju kraljeva, a u nas je prevedena kao Bogojavljanje.

<sup>34</sup> Preuzeto s: <http://www.shieldmaidens.org/Vhr/udruga/letak/befana.html>

tli) te darivanja, najčešće, slatkiša (kod siromašnijih to su ipak samo lješnjaci, orasi, jabuke i sl.). Od Befane se očekivalo da će donijeti darove pa su djeca večer prije (5. siječnja) vješala čarape nad *ognjišće*, tj. na napu, ili na prozor.

Na blagdan Sveta tri kralja djeca bi se obično okupila poslije podne na dvorištu ili ulici te se igrali uz pjesmicu o Befani. Svatko je sa sobom donio tri lješnjaka, oraaha, bombona i sl. koje je dobio od Befane.

*La Befana vien da notte*

*Con le scarpe tutte rotte*

*Con vestito alla Bebe*

*Viva i tre Re.*<sup>35</sup>

Djeca bi stajala u krugu, okretala se i kad su izgovorila stih *viva i tre re* bacala su u zrak darove što su ih držala u ruci. Onaj tko je bio spretniji pokupio bi više lješnjaka ili bombona. Igra se nastavljala sve dok su imali što bacati i sakupljati.

Osim za darivanje, Befana se koristila i za plašenje djece. Ako bi djeca bila nestašna, prijetilo im se da će ih ona odvesti daleko. *Befana je bila ona je plašila djecu, je bila grda stara, okola škola. Dan prije je došla po ulica ... Išla je po kuće.*<sup>36</sup>

U pojedinim selima u unutrašnjosti Istre gdje se djeca nisu darivala za Befanu, ona je poznata kao starica koja može naškoditi djeci te se u tom značenju koristila kao način zastrašivanja. Sličnu ulogu ima i Štriga koja je zlonamjerna i također može naškoditi djeci, naročito ako ostanu vani po mraku.

## Umjesto zaključka

Dječja kultura Istre zahtijeva još dodatnih istraživanja i analiza. S obzirom na malo zapisane građe na tu temu glavni su izvor informacija kazivači koji nam mogu prenijeti svoja znanja. Mnoge su igre danas gotovo nestale ili ostale tek u segmentima. Jedan od razloga tome je i drugačiji način života kako u gradu tako i na selu. Ruralne sredine gotovo da više nisu ruralne u pravom smislu riječi, jer danas djeca ne moraju raditi na polju i čuvati stoku. Djeca su više okrenuta individualnim igrama i igračkama ili računalima. Ipak, zahvaljujući pojedinim zaljubljenicima u starinu i zavičaj, obnovljene su tradicijske igre kao što je *pljočkanje* ili *hitat u jaje*. Njih doduše igraju odrasli, ali je i sve veći interes djece. S druge pak strane, darivanje djece u blagdansko vrijeme postaje tradicija kupovanja što većih i skupljih poklona koje najčešće nameću svakodnevni trendovi. Tako su jabuke, lješnjake, orahe i ostalo zamijenile Barbi lutke ili Ninje kornjače. Sami smisao čestitanja i izricanja dobrih želja polako gubi osobnu crtu s obzirom na slanje popularnih SMS-ova.

<sup>35</sup> E. M., Kaldir, *Befana dodi po noći, sa crvenim čarapama, u vesti kao Bebe, živjela tri kralja.*

<sup>36</sup> A.I., Motovun.

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## Open Air Children's Games and Holiday Gift Giving of Children in Istria

*This article was a result of the field research of children's games and annual customs (Christmas and Easter) in Istria. The emphasis was placed on individual open air children's games and gift giving of children during Christmas time.*

Key words: children's, games, gift giving, Istria

There were very few data on the culture of childhood in Istria in expert writings or in literature in general. Therefore data for this article were collected through field research<sup>1</sup> and by conducting interviews with informants from the rural regions. When asked about toys and games the informants born in the 1920's and 1930's used to reply that they could not remember any, since they were already as children included in everyday work. "There was no time to play, we had to work, we would be hungry otherwise" (Dukovski 1997:75). The informants born during the 1940's and 1950's claimed that they had time to play. They were making their own toys, adapting to their needs the games they had learned from older children, or inventing the new ones. For children of all generations game is the most "serious" and non-profitable way of spending time together and, hence, is often incomprehensible to adults.

For each person his/her childhood carries a special meaning. Children games are an important basis for the life of an individual and community. They mirror life in a certain community, socio-economic situation and, finally, norms of conduct.

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<sup>1</sup> The informants were from: Motovun (Elide Močibob, Matalija Fatorić and Anastazija Ivašić), from Brkač (Pjero Tomac), Beletić Brijeg (Lina Kagliari), Rakotul (Milka Stojinić), Glogorica (Marija Ivić), Karojba (Ana Močibob), Slokovići (Milna Troš), Katun Trviški (Vjekoslava Grubiša), Feštini (Anton and Andela Božac), Meloni (Renata Sandolj), Barban (Dušan Vale).

According to my informants, the most popular were open air games, in rural and urban settings alike. During those games there were no special divisions on boys and girls or older and younger children. Only exceptionally there were games which were more often played by either girls or boys.<sup>2</sup> Children were more united and bonds between them were stronger. There were no individual separations, unlike today when children turn to individual games and pastimes. *They only want to watch computer all they long.*<sup>3</sup>

In rural regions, children used to spend a lot of time outdoors, primarily because of their various duties. When they were six or seven years old, they had to tend sheep or turkeys and when they were only a few years older, they had to tend cows. Therefore the time they spent on the pastures, they would use for games and pastime. They never required some special items, since they used things they had found in nature (stone, wood) or broken earthenware, old cloths, etc.

## Games with stones

Children's games which took part in the field or at any other open space opened up the possibility of inclusion of large number of participants and usage of natural materials as toys. Most frequently used, next to wood, were stones. Those could be irregular stone slates or beautifully shaped little stones, depending on the type of the game.

A game with five round stones called *maneti*, *sasèti cristina*, *kamenčiči*, *pika-paka*,<sup>4</sup> was a game played from spring to fall mostly by girls,<sup>5</sup> or sometimes even boys. This game, which required from the participants a significant skill, was played in one or more pairs. The necessary items were five small round stones and a flat, raised surface, such as a stone table or some other smooth area.

The game was composed of two parts: in the first part the stones were randomly thrown into the air and caught, for which the points would be calculated, while in the second part the stones were placed in defined positions, thrown into the air and then caught.

The girls loved to play that game and they often carried their stones with them. They would say *idemo igrat na manete* or *gremo dokat na manete*, and if the game lasted for some time, the children would sometimes hurt their nails and their fingers would be sore.

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<sup>2</sup> Later in the text *maneti* and *prahćanje*.

<sup>3</sup> P.T., Brkač

<sup>4</sup> Different dialectal variants for the same game: *maneti*, coming from the Italian word *mano* – hand. A. Mirković also mentioned the name *sasèti* or *cristina* (2005).

<sup>5</sup> My female informants claimed that the reason was that the girls were more skillful at that game than the boys, so the boys would not play with them, since they could win the game easily.

The game was played by one hand, and it would start when the player shuffled all her/his stones in the hand and threw them on the table. When they fell down, the player would take one of them and would throw it into the air. Before throwing the stone, the co-player would determine which stone should the player pick up from the table. The aim of the game was to pick up the chosen stone from the table when the first stone was still in the air. After that, two stones had to be picked up, then three, then one and at the end *kaval* (all four stones were placed on one heap, *cavàl*, Ital.=horse, which should be picked up by one hand). When the player managed to pick up all four stones, she/he won one point, but if she/he had lost any of the stones during the game, one point had been lost, and the game was continued by the co-player.

The second part of the game was all about displaying skill, i.e. a kind of the best of the best. The stones were placed in different positions called *roge*, *lepeza/palma* and *pika paka*.

*Rogi* – fingers of one hand were placed vertically on the surface of the table and third and fourth finger were bent. Three stones were placed in front of the fingers (in front of the thumb, index finger and little finger) and two behind them. Then the hand was removed. One stone, as determined by the co-player, was thrown into the air and the remaining four stones had to be collected in one move.

*Palma* – the hand was placed on the table with all the fingers spread and one stone was placed at the tip of each finger. One stone was thrown into the air and the other four had to be picked up in one move.

The player who lost the game on points initiated the final game *pika paka*, and he/she tried to make the game more difficult for the winner by arranging the stones as complicated as possible. Four stones were positioned in that way that two of them were parallel and placed as far from each other as possible so that they would be more difficult to pick up. The first stone was thrown into the air and two parallel stones, *pika* and *paka* had to be collected, then the stone was thrown again and the player had to pick up the remaining pair of parallel stones.

The most popular open air game with stones in Istria was shoving a round stone or a wooden plate into the hole in the ground using a wooden stick<sup>6</sup> – *prahćanje*, *praščanje*, *pračići*, *kukali*. It was also known as the game of the shepherds since it was usually played on pastures when the cattle was grazing.

*Prahćanje* was favorite among the boys, while the girls would join only occasionally. Exceptionally, when there were more of them, the girls would play separately.

At least two players were necessary for this game and the maximum number of players was ten. Each player had a wooden club<sup>7</sup> which he/she used for shoving the stone. The game was played on the pasture where a central hole was made, called *poje* or *štala*. At the distance of around two meters, several smaller holes, called *pičine*, were

<sup>6</sup> The informants compared it with today's field hockey.

<sup>7</sup> Wooden stick with one thickened end.



also dug, the number of them equaled the number of players minus one. Together with the club, the players also needed a wooden or a stone slate called *svinja* or *prasac*.

The game started when the players carrying clubs were positioned next to one of the holes. One of the players did not have his/her hole so he/she presented the threat to the others. Another player was chosen to throw *prasac* as close to the *štala* as possible. While doing that, he would say out loud, just like in a ritual: “Slan pek!” (Ivetac 1984:179). The rest of the players were then trying to shove *prasac* into the *štala*, simultaneously protecting their holes from the player who did not have his/her *pičina*. Those were the basic rules of the game and there was a number of unwritten rules which were, according to my informants, quite complicated and each region had its specificities regarding the rules of the game or accumulating points.

*A big game, we played pračića a lot – it was one hole, we had that pračić, wooden, not round, more oval. We played all, if there were ten of us, there would be nine holes. Each player had to have a stick with one thick end. And he had to preserve his hole, štala, but also had to shove svinja. Everybody tried to shove it to you, and when you were fighting that one, the one who didn't have kućica, that's how we called it, he could take yours. We shoved it on the floor. We did it in the field, but also we could play it in the schoolyard. We also had it done at home and played on Sunday afternoon, sometimes the adults used to play with us.*<sup>8</sup>

Unlike *praščanje*, which has been almost forgotten, the game of *pljočkanje* is still popular today.<sup>9</sup> It was commonly used throughout Istria by children who were tending cattle to kill time. What was needed for this game were *pljočka* and *balin*. *Pljočka* is a flat stone, ten to twenty centimeters in diameter and two to eight centimeters thick. *Balin* is a round or quadruple stone, large approximately as a fist, and *pljočka* has to be thrown as close as possible to it. The game was played on a flat ground and several pairs (both girls and boys) of players could participate in it. A player from the first pair threw *balin* on the ground which his/her partner then aimed at with *pljočka*. After all the couples took their turn (repeating the same process), it had to be established who threw *pljočka* closest to *balin*.

The winning couple was the one who threw *pljočka* closest to the *balin* (or who hit it), and for that obtained one point, *punat*. The overall winner of the game was the first couple to collect 11 points. In the game there were also expressions like “zajahati” which meant to hit the *balin* with *pljočka*, while “tura igre” referred to throwing *pljočki* in one direction. “Šeko” was when *pljočka* or *balin* were hit “straight to the head”.<sup>10</sup>

Today the game is played on a 16 meters long and 3.5 meters wide terrain fenced off by a rope. The winners have to collect 13 points. “The game includes good manners – *pljočki* should not be taken from drywalls, players are not allowed to drink, smoke

<sup>8</sup> E.M. Kaldir, field notes by M. Margetić 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Primarily thanks to tradition enthusiasts who have revitalized this game through various tournaments in *pljočkanje*, organized throughout Istria, for example, in Tinjan, Pula, Žminj, etc. Several *pljočkanje* teams have also been founded.

<sup>10</sup> Straight to the head, i.e to the centre.

or curse during the game. Players should respect and help each other and the game should be accompanied by a lovely song and good old customs".<sup>11</sup>

*Breaking of pots* was a game which was played in Barban during a village feast, on the main square or in the centre of the village where the local inhabitants and their guests would gather or, less frequently, it could be played somewhere out in the fields. The number of players was not strictly determined and the necessary items were: an earthen pot (it could be old or new, it just had to be whole), a wooden pole from 2,5 to 3,5 meters long, money and dark ribbon.

The pot was placed on the ground with the opening facing down, and money was placed under it (the money was collected by the players themselves or it could be given as a gift). One player who was standing approximately 20 meters from the pot was blindfolded with a dark ribbon through which he/she could not see anything, a pole was handed on to him and somebody turned him around for three times. The turning had to be done in both directions (left, then right), so that the player would become disoriented. Then the person who was turning him shoved him/her in the direction of the pot. The player had to walk in the direction of the pot carrying the pole. The others would cheer and yell directions (left, right, straight ahead, etc.) When the player came close to the pot, everybody would yell *hit it!*, and he/she would do it. The player tried to hit the pot as hard as he/she could in order to break it, given that he/she hit the right place. The player who managed to break the pot would receive the money hidden under it as a reward.

Even though by the material used and the way the game was played, the game called *hitat u jaje*<sup>12</sup> did not belong to open air games with stones, it nevertheless deserved to be mentioned here since it was frequently played in the regions from which my informants came from.

It was played by children and the youngsters after mass by hitting eggs with coins. There were more variants of the same game called – *šćukat jaja*, *pičit* or *boćanje jajima*. The game is not played by children anymore, but there are places where the adults have revitalized this custom and have made it part of entertainment during Easter celebration.

*Hitat u jaje* was played in Trviž after lunch or after mass on Easter Day or Easter Monday. Children used to play with an adult who would bring coins. Young men who were already receiving salary would bring ten cent coins, *centeže*. A child would put his/her egg in the corner and an adult would try to hit it. If the person hit the egg, he/she would take it, but if the person missed the egg, the coin which was tossed belonged to the child.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.glasistre.hr/?7dfc8ffd0b1819a2402936a061449b9f;TS,2669,,14796,,187333>

<sup>12</sup> Traditional children's game of *hitting the eggs* was played on Easter after lunch. This game, as well as *pljočkanje*, has been revitalized. In the last few years a tournament in *Šćukanje jaja* has been organized on Easter Day in the small town of Savičenta.

Children from the village of Kaldir used to mark their eggs, so that they could recognize them, binding them with a small ribbon or a band. They used to say *gremo boćat jaja*. The players (*boćari*) had to be announced. At the beginning of the game, the players determined which coin was to be used for hitting eggs (today the coins are, for example, 1, 2 or 5 kuna coins). The egg was placed at a certain distance and hit. The player hitting the egg had to throw the coin so that it would get stuck in the egg. If he/she managed it, he/she would take both the egg and the coin. If he/she missed the egg, the money went to the egg owner.

One of my informants from the village of Kale explained it in the following way: *For Easter we would play šćukanje jaja, one could earn a coin or two, who hit it first, he got the coin, monida, lira. Yes, that was our fun for Easter.*

## Gift giving of children during Christmas time

Religion and Church left significant trace in the lives of many communities. Even though Istrian society as a whole built its foundations on Christianity and Christian system of values, it did not mean that a large number of believers practiced their faith by attending mass regularly. However, all Catholic holidays and customs were always celebrated inside family circles, almost without exception. Going to the church on Sundays, especially in rural regions, did not have only spiritual but also social significance. It provided a sense of belonging to the community because it was a place where one could meet his friends and relatives, but also an occasion where one could wear nice clothes, unlike modest clothes which were worn everyday.

General and generally known rules of behavior in certain life situations influence the sequence of events, type of behavior or repetition of certain behaviors. Some of them were prescribed by custom or tradition and they composed a ritual belonging to a certain region, family, group of people. Holiday rituals have a deeper meaning and emotional validity. The majority of the members of one community participate in them, accept them and/or revitalize them. The rules which are part of those rituals are never considered, they are simply followed and abided. Possible changes result in confusion, especially with children. When children are familiar with parts of a ritual, with the prescribed behavior of adults and their own role in it, they can comprehend the ritual's predictability. This possibility of prediction and familiarity with events give them the sense of security. Additional sense of security is provided by the knowledge that in certain parts of the ritual they can themselves be creative and express their feelings through the effort they have invested. This is frequently emphasized on the occasions of gift giving and ritual well-wishing. Creative contents in greeting cards as well as children's personal touch while extending seasonal greetings frequently got awarded by those to whom they were intended.

On the other hand, the gifts children received during holidays did not always depend on their effort, but on their family's financial situation.

Christmas time begun on December 6 with St. Nicholas Day and ended on January 6 with Befana, as confirmed in the folk saying from the town of Motovun: *Giorno della Befania tutte le feste porta via!*<sup>13</sup> Because of the holidays which announced the onset of Christmas, people were going to church more frequently and children were especially happy because that was the time of gift giving and spending more time with one's family. Moreover, it was the period of winter school holidays and due to the winter season they had less work to do outside.

My field research included informants who were born and raised in Croatian speaking and Italian speaking parts of central Istria.<sup>14</sup> Therefore the descriptions of certain customs and identical and/or similar games were different. The procedures during processions were the same, but the texts children would chant were different. Local differences, not only in language, but in the ritual itself which was frequently different in different villages, should also be emphasized. The function was, however, the same – to extent good wishes and receive presents.

## St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas was known as the saint and gift giver of children and poor people and was celebrated on December 6. He was also the patron saint of children, seamen, girls, poor people, students, pharmacists, bakers, fishermen, prisoners, tradesmen, travelers and several cities throughout the world.

The custom of giving gifts to children on St. Nicholas Day was, according to my informants, imported to Istria from the neighboring countries. They claimed that it was more practiced in cities than in rural areas and that it gained in popularity after the war. Since it was focused on gift giving, it was considered as a kind of announcement of Christmas and other major holidays.

Older informants from rural areas considered gift giving on St. Nicholas's Day as something completely new,<sup>15</sup> while in Motovun the informants claimed that it was practiced already during Italian government. That holiday was celebrated also in the school, since on that day, children would find a piece of fruit or a candy under their school benches. Those gifts were provided by the school in cooperation with local government and the custom was practiced until communism. After that, the tradition of gift giving was mostly reduced to the family circle.

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<sup>13</sup> "Befana day takes all holidays away".

<sup>14</sup> The town of Motovun and the surrounding area were under Italian government, and people there spoke Italian.

<sup>15</sup> Mostly from the Second World War onwards and mostly in the cities since people in the rural areas were poor and parents could not provide gifts for all the children.

The informants<sup>16</sup> whose families practiced giving gifts, remembered how eagerly they would wait for St. Nicholas's Day. *And we were happy when St. Nicholas came. We waited for it, "go to sleep, if you don't go he won't come" – so they told children. He came, but nobody could see him – we would get apples, oranges, hazelnuts. Onion – because it made you cry – children who were crying a lot would get onion from Nicholas. A willow rod tied with a red ribbon – my mum said – you were naughty and you got a whipping rod. An empty plate was placed on the table on which St. Nicholas would leave the gifts. They said he would come through a fire-place.*<sup>17</sup>

I have singled out this account, since the informant has emphasized the empty plate for collecting gifts which was placed on the table. Some other older informants have confirmed the same. They all agreed that placing boots inside the windows was a new phenomenon (after the 1940's and 1950's), and they explained that the plate was probably used simply because they did not have boots.<sup>18</sup>

Majority of my informants of different generations confirmed that before the World War II children received gifts very rarely, due to poverty. After the war, children learned in school about St. Nicholas and since then it was introduced to their families as the day when children received gifts. At that time, St. Nicholas became simply Nicholas.

Two variants of gift giving linked to Nicholas were mentioned: Nicholas himself brought gifts to children or they would find their gifts in a boot next morning. In the first variant,<sup>19</sup> somebody from the household (a father or a younger man) would dress up in red, put on a fake beard and carried gifts in a big bag to the houses of children, usually relatives, or children would gather at one place and he would present them with gifts there. Krampus accompanied him; he was an evil chaperon who would give children whipping rods and coal.

In the village of Katun Trviški, Nicholas was not accompanied by Krampus, but by Štriga,<sup>20</sup> who was scaring off children so that they would behave.

In the second variant, the children would not meet Nicholas at all, but were obliged to clean their *škornja*<sup>21</sup> the night before and place it at the window, expecting to find gifts in it the next morning. Good children would find apples, hazelnuts, walnuts or an orange and bad ones would find a *baketinica*<sup>22</sup> in their boot or those who were crying a lot would sometimes find an onion. Nicholas and Krampus were also a kind of disciplinary method. If the children behaved well, they would receive gifts and if they misbehaved, they would get a rod as a warning. Therefore the children were very obe-

<sup>16</sup> From Motovun and Karojba.

<sup>17</sup> N.F., Motovun, born in 1923.

<sup>18</sup> The same data was obtained in the region around Pazin and Beletić Brijeg.

<sup>19</sup> Data from Kaldir and Karojba.

<sup>20</sup> From Ital. Strega = witch

<sup>21</sup> Dialectal term for "boot".

<sup>22</sup> A whipping rod decorated with red ribbon.

dient a few days before St. Nicholas's Day and they took special care when preparing boots to be put in the window. They would make them shine.

Informants from Cer, Barban and Glogorica claimed that giving gifts at St. Nicholas's Day was a new phenomenon and that they did not remember if from the past.

Contemporary gift giving of children at St. Nicholas's Day has significantly changed in the last twenty years. Children expect a lot from their parents since today's way of life, i.e. consumerism, has greatly increased their expectations. During holidays, we are constantly surrounded by appealing commercials from media. Nowadays, boots are rarely placed at the windows. If they are placed, those are usually decorative bags shaped like a boot.

## Good hand/Buona man

January 1 is not a religious holiday, but the celebration of the beginning of the New Year. The passage from the old year to the new one was always an opportunity for wishing that the new one would be better than the old one. In order for this to come true, it was desirable that someone should extend good wishes. In Istria that day was not especially celebrated, only lunch used to be more elaborate and in some cities a dance or a party was organized. However, it was important who would be the first person to wish a happy New Year. It was considered lucky if the first well-wisher was a man, especially a male child. It was considered bad luck and a shame for the house if no children would come to wish a happy New Year.

Children were always looking forward to that day, since after St. Nicholas's Day that was another opportunity for receiving gifts. On the basis of my field research, I could differentiate between two ways of gift giving of children at New Year's Day. The first one was that children, unlike gift giving linked to St. Nicholas, when they did not have to put special effort in order to obtain gifts, had to organize themselves and jointly visit each house. The second, simpler way, was when mothers and/or grandmothers would give gifts to the children.

This first type of gift giving linked to wishing a happy New Year would start in the early morning. The children who came first would receive more gifts. *On New Year, early in the morning, if you came earlier, you got more, if not, you got less.*<sup>23</sup> Five to ten children would gather in front of somebody's house and arrange the route. They said they were going to find a Good Hand or Buona Man.<sup>24</sup> Each child carried with him/her a small linen bag or a sock which were used for collecting gifts. *Oh, of course, we went through the village with that sock. We had a sock or koneštra made from cloth – it had to be long so that we could put a lot in it, and the sock was mother's or father's, not our small one. That we did for the New Year – Buon principio del Anno.*<sup>25</sup> Instead of a linen bag, some

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<sup>23</sup> A.I., Motovun

<sup>24</sup> In Italian speaking regions.

<sup>25</sup> R.S., Meloni.

children would carry a small basket. When they would arrive in front of the house, the children would firstly greet the hosts with *Buon giorno, un principio del Anno*.<sup>26</sup> Or *Danas je Novo lito, da nam date dobru ruku*. Then they would say:

*Santolo mio diletto*  
*Metti la man sul petto*  
*Metti la man in casella*  
*Paghi me la buona man.*<sup>27</sup>

Another version of the greeting:

*Santolo mio diletto,*  
*Metti la man sul petto,*  
*Ricordi ti da me*  
*E della mia sorella.*<sup>28</sup>

Next to the text, the well-wishers would also express individual wishes for good health and fortune of the members of the household in the year to come, which frequently depended on the skill of the well-wisher himself/herself. After that, the hosts would thank the children and answer with: *for a good hand, for a good hand*. While doing that, they would also present them with hazelnuts, walnuts, apples, candies and, less frequently, money. Children would put the presents into the bags, socks or baskets and move on. *That what we got we would eat, give away, and what was left we would take home*.

In Katun Trviški this custom was identical to the custom as performed in the area around Motovun. The difference was in the name of the custom and in the spoken text. Instead of asking for a *Good hand*, children would say *idemo pobirati rišilo*.<sup>29</sup> Each would bring his/her *boršica*<sup>30</sup> and, gathered in the groups of four to six, they would walk around the village wishing a happy New Year.

When they arrived in front of the house, they would say:

*Dobro jutro, srično Novo lito,*  
*smo došli po rišilo,*  
*da bite i k litu.*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Italian speaking region, Motovun and the surrounding area.

<sup>27</sup> *My dear godfather, put your hand on your chest, put your hand in your wallet, (pay me) give me for a good hand*. This text was spoken especially to godfathers and grandparents, since children expected to get some money from them.

<sup>28</sup> *My dear godfather, put your hand on your chest, remember me and my sister*. The hosts were expected to be generous.

<sup>29</sup> To collect gifts – rišilo.

<sup>30</sup> Dialectal term for a small bag.

<sup>31</sup> V.G., Katun Trviški



The hosts would reply: *God bless, so you are good children!* With this greeting, besides wishing a happy New Year, the children wanted to urge the hosts to be more generous next year. Arrival of the children into the house was considered fortunate and desirable. However, there were houses without children. My informants mentioned one such family which, instead of hazelnuts, apples, etc., gave children some potatoes. As a revenge, the children threw potatoes at the house and avoided it in the following years.

This type of gift giving of children for the New Year was present in rural and urban regions alike. The children would first visit their relatives and godfathers and godmothers, and then other houses. However, not all the children liked collecting gifts in this way. As the main reason my informants outlined the embarrassment and shame some of them would feel since they felt like beggars. Especially the children from wealthier families while, on the contrary, children from poorer families could hardly wait for that day, since that was an opportunity for them to get a coin or a candy.

The second type of gift giving of children for New Year was done by mothers and grandmothers who would bake sweet bagels/cakes and give them to the children from their household, but also to the children who would visit the house that day. This was confirmed by the informants from Cer, Barban and Gračišće. They also claimed that there were no special ways of extending New Year's greetings or well-wishers who would go around the houses. Families would only extend their good wishes with their relatives.

Children were not making rounds, but were given *Good hand* when they would wake up in the morning. The expression "to give good hand" in this case referred to presenting gifts, which always included a *tičo*,<sup>32</sup> then walnuts, hazelnuts, apples, etc, or whatever was around the house. "*For the New Year we brought to each other hazelnuts, apples, walnuts... what we had. In poverty, you would give, a gift for good hand, whatever you had*" (Bijažić 1999:120).

## La Befana, January 6

La Befana is an Italian legend on a good witch.<sup>33</sup> It was celebrated on the Catholic holiday of Epiphany, on January 6. In Istria it was common in regions which were under Italian government and became a tradition.

The legend which is still told to the children today goes: Three Magi in their search for the little baby knocked on the door of a cabin to ask for directions. An old lady with a broom opened the door. She did not know who were those colorfully dressed

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<sup>32</sup> Sweet bagel shaped like a bird made out of sweetened dough for making bread.

<sup>33</sup> The name of the witch Befana came from the Greek name for the Day of the Birth of Jesus: epifaneia, in direct translation the Appearance (of God). Today the same word is used in the West as the word for, what is in Croatian known as the Day of Magi.

men and neither she knew how to give them directions to baby Jesus. They thanked her and kindly asked if she wanted to join them in their search. She refused since she had too many chores. When they left her, she suddenly realized that she had made a mistake and decided to catch up with them. She was looking for them, but could not find them. Since she missed her opportunity, now she would stop every child she met on the way and gave them candies, hoping that that was baby Jesus. Each year on the night before Epiphany, she starts her search for the Child of God. She stops at the house of every child and leaves candies for good children, or a small lump of coal for the bad ones.<sup>34</sup>

In Motovun and the surrounding area Befana was quite popular among children. She was interesting because of her appearance (old witch with a good heart), the way of arrival (flying a broomstick) and gift giving of, usually, candies (with poorer children more often hazelnuts, walnuts, apples, etc). Befana was expected to bring gifts, so children would hang on their socks over the fireplace, at the fireplace hood or at the window on the evening before (on January 5).

On the afternoon of Epiphany children would gather in the yards or on the street playing games and singing songs on Befana. Everybody brought with them three hazelnuts, walnuts or candies which he/she got from Befana.

*La Befana vien da notte  
Con le scarpe tutte rotte  
Con vestitio alla Bebè  
Viva i tre Re.*<sup>35</sup>

Children were standing in a circle, turning around and when they would sing the last line *viva i tre re*, they would throw into the air the gifts they were holding in their hand. More skillful children would collect more hazelnuts or candies. The game would continue until they had something to throw.

Besides for giving gifts, Befana was used for scaring children. If children would not behave they were threatened that Befana would take them far away. *Befana was the one who was scaring children, she was old and ugly, went around school. The day before she went through the streets...through houses.*<sup>36</sup>

In some villages in the central Istria where Befana was not known as the gift giver, she was known as an old lady who could severely harm children and in that sense was used for frightening them. The same role was ascribed to Štriga who was malicious and could also harm children, especially if they stayed out late in the dark.

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<sup>34</sup> Obtained from <http://www.shieldmaidens.org/Vhr/udruga/letak/befana.html>

<sup>35</sup> E.M., Kaldir, *Befana come by night, with red socks, in a vest like Bebè, long live the Magi.*

<sup>36</sup> A.I., Motovun

## Instead of a conclusion

The culture of childhood in Istria demands additional research and analysis. Since there are very few written sources, the main source of information are the informants who can transfer the knowledge they have. Many games have today disappeared or have been preserved only in segments. One of the reasons is the changed way of life, in urban and rural settings alike. Rural settings have almost stopped being rural in the strict sense of the term, since children today do not have to work in the fields or tend cattle. They are more oriented towards individual games, toys and computers. However, thanks to the individual efforts of tradition lovers, some traditional games such as *pljočkanje* or *hitat u jaje* have been revitalized. Even though they are today played by adults, children are displaying increasing interest. On the other hand, gift giving of children during holidays has turned into a tradition of buying big and expensive gifts imposed by current trends. Hence apples, hazelnuts and walnuts have been replaced by Barbie dolls or Ninja Turtles. Extending seasonal greetings and good wishes has slowly lost the personal touch because of sending popular text messages.

*Translated by Tanja Bukovčan*