

Tihana Kušenić. *Nema gazde bez duboke brazde*. Museum "Staro selo" Kumrovec, 21st April - 20th November 2018

Exhibition Review

Agriculture is one of the oldest trades known to the inhabitants of Hrvatsko zagorje, and it was the oldest industry in this region up until the second half of the 20th century. Agriculture is contingent upon terrain configuration, soil quality, population density, and the traditional way of life in smaller farmsteads. The objective of the exhibition "Nema gazde bez duboke brazde"¹ is to bring the traditional way of working the land in the 19th and 20th centuries closer to visitors by displaying items from the Collection of Tools and Utensils at the Museum "Staro selo" Kumrovec.

The exhibition "Nema gazde bez duboke brazde" by Tihana Kušenić, the museum's curator, was opened on the 21st April 2018 in a gallery at the Museum "Staro selo" Kumrovec as a part of an event called "Procession on St. George's Day".

The exhibition is a result of a yearlong field research conducted in Krapina-Zagorje County in collaboration with the locals who participated as storytellers, and who took part in the demonstration of traditional ploughing with a single furrow plough and a two horse drawn cart (Tomislav Fiket and Josip Ilić) (Fig. 1). The exhibition is complemented by traditions associated with St. George's week which people refer to as the corn-harvesting month, the beginning of spring and other agricultural activities. People traditionally consider St. George to be patron saint of farmers, shepherds, cattle, soil, crop, and vegetation. "Cradle" Ethno Association from Kumrovec, Folk Ensemble Lovro Ježek from Marija Bistrica, and Ivan Perkovac Association from Šenkovec participated in the demonstration of traditions associated with St. George such as bonfire, dancing around the bonfire, and jumping over the fire.

Traditional way of life, terrain configuration and diverse weather conditions were essential parts of rural life. Up until the 20th century agriculture was one of the most important industries in Hrvatsko zagorje. The exhibition is dedicated to the traditional way of working on the land in Hrvatsko zagorje in the 19th and 20th centuries when people mostly lived off agriculture and tried to use whatever they could produce and make themselves in everyday life. Approximately 50 objects from the Collection of Tools and Utensils kept in a depot at the Museum "Staro selo" Kumrovec are displayed in this exhibition. The objects displayed all relate to agriculture as the primary economic branch present in a traditional way of life. Tools typical for traditional craftsmanship in Hrvatsko zagorje are also displayed. There are 1359 objects in this Collection and most of them are on permanent display at the Museum "Staro selo" Kumrovec.

The exhibition is divided into five parts: In the first part, at the very entrance into the gallery, various tools can be seen, such as a spade *štihača*, a shovel *pobirača*, which

1 Croatian proverb, meaning similar to: Then plough deep, while sluggards sleep, and you shall have corn to sell and to keep.

was used to scoop soil, a hoe, a rake, a spade *trebežnica*, which was used for digging up hardened soil, and a pitchfork. People used all of these tools to work gardens and fields, many are still used nowadays. The hoe *trnokop* is especially interesting - farmers used it for working inaccessible and craggy land, for example in vineyards. In addition to these tools, parts of a wheel from a wooden cart are displayed, as well as tools which were used by blacksmiths and wheelwrights for building wooden carts and wheels. Wheelwrights mostly used acacia wood for making tools due to its solidity, elasticity, durability and moisture-resistance. Oak wood was rarely used as there was not many oak trees in this area.

The second part described the process which begins with ploughing soil and ends with preparations for sowing. Soil which stands in for a field was hauled into the gallery. On it there is a single furrow plough, *pljug*, and a two furrow plough, *orača*, a harrow, *brana*, a single row seed drill, and a two row seed drill. Underneath the two-furrow plough, *orača*, a *podsmukva* was placed which was used for transportation, and on the plough there was an *otka* which was used for weeding while ploughing.

Telege for cows are attached to the wall, as well as *hamoti* for horses. During ploughing and ground levelling two cows or two horses were reined in if work was demanding, especially if it was necessary to dig out a deeper furrow. For sowing, earthing, and hoeing one horse was enough. *Samica* - a single yoke was used for these activities. In addition to the agricultural tools from the 19th century, tools made of metal were also displayed - a metal seed drill, and a metal double harrow which came into use in the 20th century, both of which were made by expert blacksmiths.

The walls were lined with paintings and pin-boards with photos - ploughing in various parts of Hrvatsko zagorje is depicted. I would like to pay special attention to a large painting, a wallpaper in which ploughing is illustrated faithfully, and which shows a group of patrons who all helped each other - the so called *moba*. This was one way of mutual aid, especially when there was a lot to do; farmers partnered up or formed cooperatives in order to carry out all activities, for example to transport crops from the field, to transport fertilizer or manure to the field, to plough, etc. (Fig. 2). Furthermore, there was another kind of mutual aid - people called it *sprega*, *sprež* or *suvez* - for example, if a deep furrow was to be ploughed and the farmer did not have two cows, his neighbour lent him his cow.

The third part is conceptually conceived as an overview of traditions around St. George. Pictures of previous events organised to mark St. George's Day are displayed on pin-boards at the Museum "Staro selo" Kumrovec.

The fourth part is dedicated to harvest and harvest traditions which were an essential part of life in Hrvatsko zagorje. These traditions are still maintained thanks to numerous associations and folk ensembles, which demonstrate these practices in various events. Lyrics of *popevke*, traditional songs sung at harvest, display of harvesting and the process of tying and arranging bundles are also displayed on pin-boards (Fig. 3). Displayed objects include: a grain sifting machine, a *cepić* - a grain beater, a wooden strainer, a hand-held scythe, a three teeth rake used for spreading hay and straw, a

wooden tripod stool with an iron anvil for hammering down the blade of a scythe to make it thinner, and a wooden bowl in which whetstone for whetting a scythe was placed. The whetstone bowl was usually crafted from a horn, but also from thin tin. When farmers went to fields they tied the whetstone bowl around their waste in case the scythe needed to be whet.

The last part of the exhibition covers food and diet. The author displayed a part of a traditional house, *hiža*, of Hrvatsko zagorje. In one part of the room there is a wooden table on which casts in the form of bread and scone are placed, as well as bowls with corn flour and wheat flour. Bags for storing flour made of linen or hemp are also displayed, and so are millstone, *žrmlje*, an indispensable item in every household, which was usually located in the hallway, *lojpa*, or the kitchen, *kuhja*. A brick bread oven is also exhibited, leaning on it is a prong, *vilica*, for inserting the dishes into the oven or taking them out, and a wooden shovel, *lopar*, which was used for putting bread into the oven.

Numerous visitors attended the opening of the exhibition, many of whom are tradition enthusiasts who have been monitoring every segment of the exhibition. The author talked about life in Hrvatsko zagorje after the 1960s - cooperatives fell apart, and the land had to be divided into same size shares within the family. She also touched upon the period of socio-economic growth and the rise of machinery which lead to traditional wooden tools slowly being phased out. She also mentioned various ploughing associations and horse breeders who operate in Krapina-Zagorje County. Through their work and ongoing efforts they cherish and safekeep the traditional way of working the land and pass their knowledge and expertise on to younger generations.

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