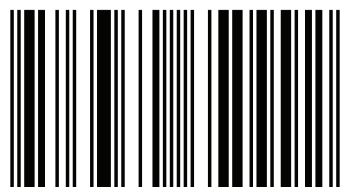


Bunjevci: migrations, traditional heritage, identities

The book consists of nine chapters. The first chapter deals with the impact of migration on the cultural heritage and identity of the Croatian (sub)ethnic group Bunjevci. Next chapter focuses on their rights to belong to the Croatian nation in the region of Bačka (province of Vojvodina, Serbia) within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes between the two World Wars. The following chapter deals with the local community of the Bunjevci, who settled in Croatia at different times in the 20th century. The aim of the next chapter is to introduce certain characteristic features of life in extended families of the Bunjevci in the different regions they have inhabited since the 17th century. The next two chapters deal with Dužijanca, the celebration marking the end of the harvest among Bunjevci in Bačka and the role of ritual traditional clothing in the revitalization of annual customs and rituals. The next two chapters focus on certain specific phenomena in wedding customs of the Bunjevci in the context of the Southeastern Europe. In the final chapter the author gives concluding remarks on the possible origin of the Croatian (sub)ethnic group of Bunjevci.



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Milana Černelić

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Imprint

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Preface

This book has resulted from most of my papers published in English between 1994 and 2016, along with a single paper yet unpublished. At first glance, the papers seem to be unrelated, functioning independently, written after many years of my research of a Croatian subethnic group known as the Bunjevci. This is the name they themselves use, as well as other surrounding subethnic groups. However, all those seemingly separate fragments have been easily put together into a single cohesive unit since all the aspects of their traditional heritage and identity, which the research focussed on, are simply interrelated and interlaced. This subethnic group was shaped by the 17th century migrations – the latter having determined the Bunjevci's destinies and identities. Their traditional heritage, stable in part but at the same time variable, has persisted in various modified forms, often serving as a driver of their self-identification in different regions which the Bunjevci inhabit today, especially the multiethnic ones.

I have been conducting ethnological research of the Bunjevci for over thirty years and this book combines results of my earlier as well as more recent research. It was being carried out particularly intensely from the beginning of the 21st century until recently within two respective projects that I led: *Identity of the Ethnogenesis of the Littoral Bunjevci* (2003–2006) and *Identity and Ethnocultural Shaping of the Bunjevci* (2008–2013).

It can be said that this book summarizes the results of my lifelong research. Since my third book dedicated to the Bunjevci has been published recently, concluding a trilogy along with the two previous books, the final part of this book offers a brief overview of all the subjects covered in detail in the former, as well as the conclusion that has been derived from thorough analyses of ethnocultural shaping of the Bunjevci as a recognizable subethnic group from a historical perspective.

Apart from my own persistence in research, although they both left this world some time ago, I also owe my accomplishments to my parents, whose timeless support I can still feel from a parallel world unfathomable to the conscious mind. In addition, I am grateful to my teachers for passing on basic knowledge of scientific approaches to research and for their encouragement to tackle the challenges of scientific work, to particular colleagues of mine who offered their support, and to my associates on the two mentioned projects – for their significant contribution to the research of the Bunjevci's traditional heritage and identity.

Today I too encourage my students to take this thorny path, which has led to their field research, realised within the two mentioned projects, being published in scientific journals, several monographs and reviews. I have supported them in this manner

not solely for the sake of their careers, since not all of them continued along that path, but, primarily, for the sake of new understandings which contribute to the benefit and advance of humanity. This book aims to make a small contribution to those general goals, to be a single piece in the mosaic of a quest for knowledge and truth obtained from the recent understandings.

1. The impact of migration on the cultural heritage and identity of the Croatian (sub)ethnic group Bunjevci¹

The introductory chapter of the book deals with the (sub)ethnic group Bunjevci, today inhabiting different territories of Southeastern Europe, as a result of the mobility on the Balkans throughout the 17th century.

1.1. Introduction: who are Bunjevci?

In order to answer this question a short historic survey of the (sub)ethnic group Bunjevci should be provided. The ethnonym Bunjevci stands for a group of ethnic Croats, originating from Dalmatia, southeastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the 17th century they migrated to the regions of Primorje (the Croatian Littoral), Lika and Gorski kotar, situated in western Croatia, and to the Danube area in the north (the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, today the territories of Hungary and Serbia), thus forming three basic branches of the ethnic group of Bunjevci known as Dalmatia, Primorje/Lika and Danube area Bunjevci (Dalmatinski, Primorsko-lički, Podunavski Bunjevci), which could be further distinguished at a local or a regional level (Černelić 2006:13). (Fig. 1). Migrations, wars, rebellions and conversions are all dynamic factors that have formed the ethnic identity of Bunjevci. Migrations had first formed the identities of Bunjevci of uneven intensity only to finally disunite the group of Bunjevci. Apart from the three branches mentioned above, historians also mention west-Bosnian (Ottoman) branch of Bunjevci, comprised of the groups which settled in Dalmatia before the 17th century (Šarić 2008: 20). (Fig. 1) Waves of migration differed in terms of their time span and cause:

“Migrations of Bunjevci were part of the Ottoman colonization policies (so called ‘sürgün’), as well as the migrations of outlaw bands of ‘Uskoks’ in the Triplex Confinium (the tri-border region: Tromeđa), while the relocation to the Danube area can be seen as a form of penal transportations”. (ibid. 35)

The utmost mobility of this population has continued to the present period.

¹ This chapter is my modified and updated article titled The Impact of Migration on the Cultural Heritage and Identity: The Example of the Croatian (Sub)Ethnic Group Bunjevci. In: *Migrations and Identity. Historical, Cultural and Linguistic Dimensions of Mobility in the Balkans*. Ed. Petko Hristov. Sofia: Paradigma, 163-179, (2012).

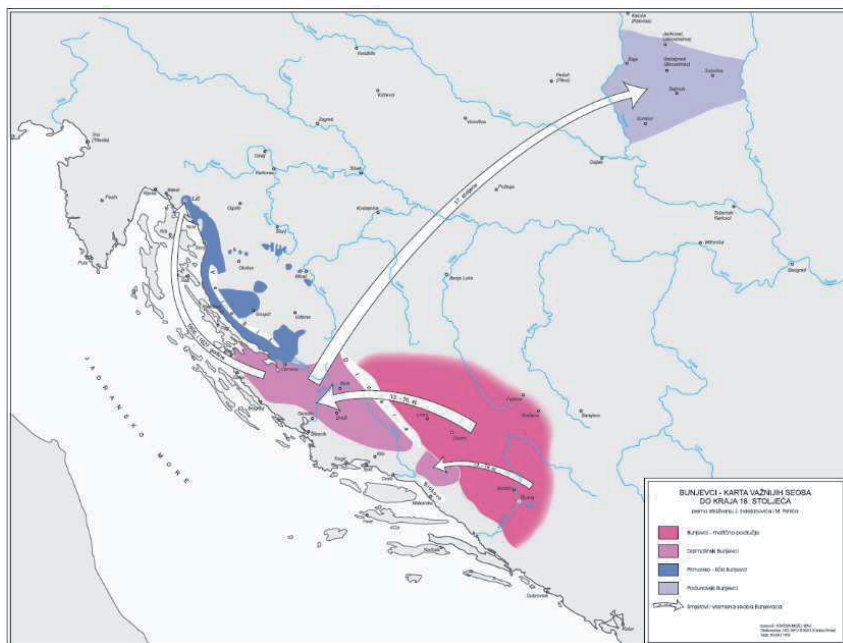


Figure 1. Map of the expansion and migration routes of Bunjevci from the 13th to the 16th century and in the 17th century.²

Primorje/Lika Bunjevci have inhabited the region of the Croatian Littoral, mountain slopes of Velika Kapela and Velebit, that is, the area from Krmpote (the hinterland of Novi Vinodolski) stretching all the way to the borderline with North Dalmatia (St. Mary Magdalene). The migrations of Bunjevci to this area occurred in several stages – in accordance with the Ottoman offensives from the 16th to the 17th century (Pavičić 1962; ibid. 1966; Pavelić 1991; Pavličević 1989a). The first migration of Bunjevci to the area of the Croatian Littoral (or Primorje) took place in 1605 and continued by 1647 in several waves. They settled in Lič and in Senj hinterland (Ledenice, Krmpote - Sv. Jakov, Krivi Put, Senjska draga), and some also crossed over to the island of Pag and to Istria (Pavličević 1989a:155). Coming from North Dalmatia they were settling in the Croatian Littoral area in several stages. They were also gradually descending mountain settlements such as Lič, Sv. Jakov (Krmpota)

² The map is based on the research of Jovan Erdeljanović. 1930. *O poreklu Bunjevaca*. Beograd: Sv. Sava. and M. Petrić. 1966. Prilog proučavanju porijekla Bunjevaca. *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u Sarajevu*, n. s. 20/21, pp. 309-382. It was constructed for the purpose of the Ethnographic collection of the Littoral Bunjevci, the Senj Town Museum, 2006. The original of the map belongs to the Senj Town Museum (designed by Csaba Pinter - Eko-Info Studio, Sisak, Croatia).

and Veljun towards the Velebit foothills (or Podgorje). Immigration to the coastal slope of Velebit occurred in large part during the War of Candia (1645 - 1669), during which the whole of Dalmatia from Makarska Littoral to Novigrad was in the grip of fierce battles and war devastation (Mayhew 2008:185-226). Following the defeat of Turks in Lika (1683-1687), greater part of the Littoral (Primorje) Bunjevci moved to Lika inhabiting Pazarište, Smiljan, Gospićko polje (Gospić Field), Široka Kula, Ričice and Hotuča valleys, where they encountered the other migration currents of Bunjevci (Rogić 1966:320).

Changing from the generic term (Vlach), the name Bunjevac itself must have been developed as an ethnonym in the Ottoman Frontier of Klis/Lika area (around Dinara and Velebit mountains) in the mid-16th century, and it can be grasped only within the context of ethno-confessionalization of Vlach countries and religious division into confessionally opposed groups: Vlach-Orthodox (Rascian) and Vlach-Catholic (Bunjevac) (Cf. Šarić 2008:25-26). Written record of the name Bunjevci first appeared in the second half of the 18th century (ibid. 28). Some historians have adopted the name Old-Croatian Vlachs for Catholic Morlachs in Dalmatia, who differ from the Balkan Vlachs in the interior by their language and origin (Mirdita 1995: 78). These are actually groups of Bunjevci who have continually resided in the tri-border region – so called Triplex Confinium since 1520 (the latter being the meeting-point of the three empires: the Ottoman, Venetian and Habsburg), but the respective government apparatuses did not differentiate between them and the rest of the groups originating from the socio-historical stratum; for the Ottoman rulers they were just part of Vlach social stratum, Venetian government knew them as none other than Catholic Morlachs (Morlachi del rito Latino) throughout the whole period of the early Modern Age, while the Habsburg Military-Frontier government also pointed out the Catholic trait of some of the Vlach settlers, but rarely used the name Bunjevci.³ Apart from the names “uskok” (an outlaw) and “prebjeg” (a turncoat), Bunjevac settlers in the Croatian Littoral, Lika and Krbava were also referred to as Catholic Vlachs (catholische Walachen), sometimes even Catholic Rascians (Rasciani catholici). Not even in the Danube area in the 18th century was the ethnonym Bunjevac used by the Hungarian county government, but, instead, they were recognized as Dalmatians and Catholic Rascians, and sometimes, but more rarely – as Illyrians (Roman Catholics) (Cf. Šarić 2008:27). According to scarce historical sources, the first migrations of Bunjevci to the Danube area already started in the 16th century because,

³ Military Border constituted the borderland of the Habsburg Empire and later the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which acted to stop incursions from the Ottoman Empire. For more about Military Border see two monographs by Gunther E. Rothenberg (1960; 1966) and also Rokсандić 1988; Pavličević 1989a; Kaser 1997; ibid. 2003.

after the Battle of Mohacs in 1526, the Ottoman government repealed Vlachs' special status that they had acquired within the Military Frontier. However, the major migrations occurred in the 17th century in several waves, as a result of dissatisfaction of Vlachs with their new status in the Frontier, as well as a reaction to evergrowing abuse of power in the ranks of provincial governing elite in Sandzak Klis and Sandzak Lika between 1603 and 1620. The Ottoman government was encouraging migrations of Bunjevci to the Danube area – primarily in order to dilute the rebellious masses and stabilize the Frontier situation, and also for the reason of desolation in the territories of Baja, Sombor and Subotica *nahyjahs* (counties) in the aftermath of the Second (“Pannonian”) War, where Turkish started immigrating Bunjevci. According to limited historical sources, some of the areas of emigrations are identified as the territories around Drniš, Vrlika and Livno; nevertheless, the immigration starting point is most likely much wider (Cf. *ibid.* 39-40).

According to latest research the migration of Bunjevci to the Danube area in 1607 was one of the largest individual migrations in our early modern history (approximately 2000 families), and probably the most famous one in the wider area of the western Balkans and Pannonia in the context of the Ottoman policy of population transfer (*sürgün*). This migration was penal deportation with two complementary purposes from the point of view of the Ottoman state: the removal of the disobedient Christian element from the Ottoman-Venetian border in Krka (Lika), Klis and Hercegovina sanjaks (administrative region) and its migration to the devastated areas of the Segedin sanjak (Bačka, a region in the province of Vojvodina), which underwent administrative and territorial reorganization after the end of the Long War (Eğri Eyalet) and demographic renewal. However, unlike the “classical period” of *sürgün* in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, when forced population transfers were planned and organized by the central government, the example of Bunjevci from the beginning of the 17th century shows that the initiative was transferred onto a provincial leader whose actions were often led by some particular interest. It is justified to suppose that the Bunjevci migration in 1607 was the result of an agreement between provincial administrators, where military and strategic (as well as economic) interests of the state, i.e. the *sürgün* system, served only as an excuse for such action, the purpose of which was in reality to fortify the positions of “problematic” sanjak beys (sanjak administrators): the sanjak bey of Krka (Lika) – Halilbeg Memibegović, the sanjak bey of Klis – Mustafabeg Pijalepašić and the sanjak bey of Hercegovina – Mehmedbeg, just like the Bosnian beylerbey Sofi Sinan Pasha. In that sense, the Bunjevci migration is crucially different from earlier Vlach migrations into the Danube region, which were, at least in principle, voluntary, and it also differs from classical *sürgün*,

such as the forced transfer of Turkish nomads – “Kızılbaş” – in the period from 1565 to 1567 from Eastern Anatolia to Budin Eyalet (the Province of Budin). Anyway, the Bunjevci migration of 1607 marked the beginning of chain migration towards the Danube area of Pannonia in the following years and decades and it set the foundations for the existence of the Bunjevci entity in the Danube area, i.e. in Bačka (cf. Šarić 2014).

1.2. Theoretical approaches to the study of Bunjevci identities

Despite their great dispersion in space the Bunjevci communities share some common features: the ethnonym Bunjevac, the language (New Shtokavian dialect), collective memory (legends about the old homeland and the origin of the name), religion (Roman Catholics), as well as certain common cultural features (Černelić and Rajković Iveta 2010:291). Therefore, when it comes to research of the cultural and identification strategies of Bunjevci subethnic group, it is necessary to apply the theoretical concept that can classify their communities in the introspection process and the process of interaction with others. What leads and maintains a community through centuries of changes is confidence and self-respect, the feeling of affiliation and continuity. All the branches of Bunjevci (sub)ethnic group have a common name, consensus about common origin, the feeling of sameness and the feeling of togetherness and belonging (at least each separate branch, to a certain degree, even on the level of the whole group), common history up to a certain period in the past, common elements of tradition and culture, but as a consequence of their dispersion in space, identification processes were different due to various influences that affected each of the branch and even the subgroups within one branch (cf. Černelić 2006:13). Identification processes and practices emphasize the objective dimension (cultural repertoire) and the subjective dimension (emotions and loyalty). Both dimensions are constantly being transformed and never appear in any sort of “the original form”. At the same time, however, they imply the existence of certain constants, i.e. of the belief, thought and statement on the duration and continuum on which rests the basis of togetherness (cf. Grbić 2013).

The holistic approach to the research of their cultural heritage, and the ethnocultural processes through which Bunjevci have been formed as a distinct ethnic group, could contribute to the better understanding of the way in which the identity of an ethnic group has been, and is being, formed, as well as the way in which the manifold identities of each particular branch have been constructed as a result of the migration processes. Therefore, specific theoretical approaches to the study of the identity of the ethnic group of Bunjevci should be applied based on the results of the research of their cultural heritage and identity.

There are various theories on the issue of identity in general, but the specific circumstances that influenced the fate and construction of the identity of the two or three basic branches of the ethnic group of Bunjevci, need to be approached with regard to the context of the historical circumstances of their separation. The specific influence of the environment in which these branches have lived for several centuries after separation should also be taken into consideration (cf. Černelić 2005:26, 29).

I will try to point to the differences in the construction of Bunjevci branches' identities, having in mind both subjective and objective aspects of the construction of their identity, i.e. what they feel about themselves and which elements of traditional heritage they choose in order to express that awareness. Both aspects are important. The objective aspects of the identity should be based on the analysis of certain elements of their cultural heritage, which stand as symbols of the collective identity. I will also point to the perception of each branch's members of certain elements of their common cultural heritage, which is largely the result of their migration mobility. Consequently, the influence of ethnic, cultural, social, historical, political, and ecological factors on the construction of the identity of each Bunjevci branch is important, for they are outlining the differences in the process of construction of their identity, from the subjective as well as from the objective point of view. That is how they perceive their ethnicity and how they manifest some of the specific elements of their cultural heritage (cf. *ibid.* 28-29).

1.3. Identities of Bunjevci branches

The focus is on the two Bunjevci branches, because they have developed a specific relationship between *We* and *Them* in the areas which they inhabited in the 17th century, which is primarily the result of migration as well as their subsequent co-existence with their neighbours for several centuries. As we are dealing with the period of several centuries, both construction and deconstruction of identity have been taking place during these historical processes, which has been manifested differently in both Bunjevci branches. The third Dalmatia region Bunjevci branch is, in fact, not a (sub)ethnic group any more, because they do not use the ethnonym Bunjevci in the same meaning as the other two branches. They are familiar with the ethnonym Bunjevci, but the latter is used in a broader sense and stands only as a synonym for Catholics/Croats, not denoting any specific ethnic group. Thus, in this region the name Bunjevci directly relates to one's religious affiliation, that is, Orthodox Serbs call their Catholic neighbours Bunjevci, often involving a derogatory connotation (cf. Černelić 2007:583). This fact contributes to the hypothesis that the migrational mobility

during and after the 17th century strengthened the feeling of collectivism during the migration processes, as well as in the period after they inhabited new settlements as more or less compact groups.

Political pressuring of Bunjevci in the Danube area has highly influenced the construction of their multiple identities: under the constant pressure to prove their belonging to the Croatian nation in a multicultural environment, they have adopted specific differential markers of their ethnic and cultural identity. Unlike Bunjevci in the Danube area, the Littoral part of the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci branch live in the region inhabited by population of the same nationality and religion, but they differ from the population in their surroundings historically, socially, culturally and linguistically. Bunjevci of the same branch, who settled in the region of Lika, live in multiethnic surroundings of the neighbouring Serb settlements. This fact contributed to the basic difference in the construction of the identity of the population that belongs to the same Bunjevci branch, based on the opposition *We* (Bunjevci/Croats) and *Them* (Vlachs/Serbs). In addition to these differences each branch has developed specific local and regional levels of identity, which makes the whole issue of the identity of Bunjevci even more complex. When dealing with the construction of identity of both Bunjevci branches, the basic differences, as well as the differences within the same branch, should be taken into consideration.

1.3.1. The Primorje (Littoral)/Lika region branch of Bunjevci

Research among the Littoral Bunjevci (inhabiting the hinterland region of Primorje, from the town of Novi Vinodolski to the settlement St Mary Magdalene which is the borderline with Dalmatia) has implied that Littoral Bunjevci branch cannot be considered a compact subethnic group. There are certain differences at regional and local level, considering both the subjective and objective aspects of their identity. Informers among Bunjevci population have pointed to the objective markers of their identity by emphasizing the distinguished elements, markers and symbols of identity, which are mostly expressed in communication and interaction between different communities in coastal and hinterland region of Primorje. In historic perspective it is based on different origins of these groups, as well as on differences in speech, style of life in general, economy, the opposition rural/urban (coast/hinterland) etc. The Littoral Bunjevci inhabit the Primorje hinterland subregions of Krmpote, Krivi Put, Senjsko bilo, Podgorje. Population in each subregion gravitates towards a certain nearby town on the coast, and in accordance with these centres they have defined the borderlines of their own local community: the town of Novi Vinodolski – the region of

Krmpote; the town of Senj – the region of Krivi Put, Senjska Draga and Senjsko Bilo; the towns of St. George (Sv. Juraj), Jablanac, Karlobag – rural hinterland settlements in the region of Podgorje. The borderline is not so linear any more, because the hinterland population migrated to the nearby coastal towns during the last several decades. In these regions the population has multiple identities: subethnic, local and regional, the most common categories of identification being: *Bunjevci*, *Primorci* (Littorals) and *Podgorci* (those from the foothill), but the construction of identity in each subregion is specific. In the region of Podgorje the identification of the population as *Bunjevci* is more or less lost, and that region is in fact the borderline region where different interpretations of the term *Bunjevci* have been set. These terms are sometimes perceived as synonyms, sometimes as binary variants, and there is also a strong rural and urban separation among the population, with expressed opposition to the neighbouring groups such as *Kirci*, *Ličani*, *Boduli/Ćuci*, *Vlasi* (*Vlachs*), *Rkaći*. At the level of rural-urban opposition, *Bunjevci* mostly consider themselves inferior to the Littoral town inhabitants (*Novi Vinodolski*, *Senj*, *St. George*, i.e *Sv. Juraj*), and this is also the way the latter characterize the former. However, it is interesting that *Bunjevci* in *Krmpote* (the northern part of the Littoral) point out some of their own qualities as superior to the coastal inhabitants (for instance: “the inborn intelligence of *Bunjevci*, best students”, etc.), which, in turn, neutralizes the negative attributes assigned to them by the urban social group (“primitive, those who have (just) descended from the mountain, the have-nots, herdsman from the pasture...”) (cf. Škrbić-Alempijević 2003:441-442; cf. Mucko 2008:218-220).

The reason for interlacing of *Bunjevci* identities with those of *Primorje* and *Podgorje*, which are at the same time both geographic and cultural borderlines, can be explained as a phenomenon of interlacing of ethnic, local and regional identities. The *Bunjevci* identity becomes loose in *Podgorje* and there precisely lies the borderline of different perceptions of the term *Bunjevci*. Opposite to the region of *Podgorje*, the population of *Krmpote*, *Krivi Put*, *Senjska draga* and *Senjsko Bilo* are clearly aware of their *Bunjevci* origin and identity (let alone the feeling of inferiority when opposed to the urban population in these regions). This is also the reason why the ethnonym *Bunjevci* in *Podgorje* includes mocking connotations expressed in contrast to the Others in the same environment. The closer we are geographically to the town of *Karlobag*, the more intense the expression of national identity is, and regional and subethnic identities become less important, which can partly be seen as a result of the effects of the Second World War (cf. Černelić and Rajković Iveta 2010:289-291, 302-303).

The levels of all the oppositions and identifications are rather complex, thus it is not possible to explain them in detail in this short survey.⁴

In the region of Lovinac in southern Lika the identity of the population is analyzed on three levels: local, regional, ethnic/national. The awareness of belonging to Bunjevci is shaped by interaction with another group in the surroundings; the ethnonym Bunjevac assumes significance especially in contrast to the ethnonym Vlach, both terms being used as synonyms for religious and national affiliation as a result of the interaction with another group. The term Bunjevci is a marker of identity used for denoting the members of the group by the *Others*. It has a pejorative meaning, with negative connotation. The opposition Bunjevac – Vlach functioned as an identification code until the Second World War when the political situation started to change and when another identificational framework was activated, i.e. nationality, the latter becoming especially powerful during the Croatian War of Independence in the 1990s. Therefore, in the current context only the opposition Croat – Serb functions. However, the relation between the two communities is not as simple as that, in some informers' accounts, three distinctive categories visibly intertwine: religious, subethnic and national. The awareness of belonging to Bunjevci is primarily formed through religious affiliation in interaction with another group, as opposed to the Littoral part of this branch of Bunjevci whose identification is based on the difference in their cultural features (cf. Vugdelija 2010:290, 293-294).

1.3.2. The Danube area Bunjevci branch

The issue of constructing the identity of the Danube area Bunjevci, especially of the part of the branch in Vojvodina (Serbia), is found to be particularly complex.

As mentioned earlier, the branch of the Danube area Bunjevci settled in a multiethnic and multicultural environment and therefore their identity has been constructed in a different way. The construction of their ethnic identity is even more complex and largely determined by specific historical and political factors. The Danube area Bunjevci have been subjected to constant questioning and politicizing of their ethnicity, first having been pressured by Hungarian hegemonic policy, only to be substituted by Serbian later on. While Hungarian potentates neglected their ethnicity, the Serbian manipulated it in different ways. The group of the Danube area Bunjevci who today live in Hungary underwent different ways of political pressuring with the purpose of assimilation of the minorities. Both potentates used different

⁴ For more see: Černelić and Rajković Iveta 2010.

means of manipulation of the ethnicity and the ethnic name of Bunjevci group (such as local newspapers, census – in which their ethnic name is used to denote nationality) throughout a long period of different regimes, in different states (the common state Austro-Hungarian Empire, Hungary, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, SFRY, Serbia and Montenegro and, finally, Serbia), which caused, among many other, also the change in their status from a subethnic group to a national minority. Having been part of Austro-Hungarian Empire, Hungarian authorities practiced to classify ethnic and regional names in the census under the category: people without a nationality (cf. Černelić 2006:198).

The First World War Treaty of Trianon divided the former single cultural and social area of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Croats became citizens of several newly-formed states, which affected the Danube area Bunjevci (a Croatian subethnic group), too. The latter became part of two distinct countries – the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and Hungary. Cultural as well as any other form of life was to be constructed in the changed circumstances of a regime not particularly favourably inclined towards them. In the aftermath of the Second World War there was a brief period of national revival among Croats in Hungary; Croatian schools were set up, the first political organization named Democratic union of South Slavs was established uniting all the Croats in Hungary with Serbs and Slovenes. However, the general ethnocultural development and identity of Croats in Hungary came under influence of political circumstances (e.g. the relations among countries formerly members of the Eastern Bloc).

For a few decades from 1950s ethnocultural development of Croats in Hungary came under negative influence of forced and imposed Yugoslav unity, one instance of which is, for example, the introduction of the Serbo-Croatian standard language in all Croatian schools. In 1960 education in the Croatian language was repealed in rural areas as decided by the Hungarian Ministry of Education. The process of assimilation was also accelerated through imposed collectivization in agriculture, urbanization, as well as both natural and forced modernization. First changes were brought about by the fall of the communist regime, when Croats founded their own political organizations – first the Union of Croats was formed in 1989/1990 and later, in 1995, thanks to the new democratic law, Croatian minority self-government was elected. New cultural and health institutions were set up, e.g. Croatian kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, as well as student dorms in Budapest, Pecs, Santovo, the Scientific Institute of Croats of Hungary, non-profit cultural organization for culture, information and publishing activities – Croatica, and still active August Senoa Croatian Cultural Association and the the Pecs Croatian Theatre. Furthermore, almost all

places inhabited by Croats have their culture and art societies, folklore ensembles or sports associations. In the town of Baja at the Faculty of Teacher Education there is also the Croatian language department. In the years 2011/2012 about twenty students studied the Croatian language there (cf. Grbić Jakopović 2014:205-206). These circumstances had a great impact on the identity of the Bunjevci Croats, especially in such a way that the later change in attitudes towards national minorities in Hungary could not stop the mentioned process of assimilation that had started earlier.

During the 20th century Bunjevci were subject of constant questioning and politicizing of their ethnicity during the existence of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes between the two World Wars (from 1929 the state was renamed into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) in which all nations were considered to belong to a single Yugoslav nation. These questions in different regimes and countries will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

1.4. Objective aspects of Bunjevci branches' identities

At the time of its introduction, the theory of ethnicity by F. Barth – later also endorsed by many other ethnologist, cultural anthropologist, sociologists and others – was “revolutionary” in its proposition that cultural distancing among human communities is not a result of hypothetic geographic or social isolation, but on the contrary – of their interaction. Therefore, according to Barth (1969), the emphasis should be moved from the content of ethnic groups onto their boundaries and processes occurring when a group tries to differentiate itself from the neighbouring one, thus placing the subjective understanding of an individual’s own identity in the focus of the studies of identity as a whole. Inasmuch as this proposition is important in respect of the study of identity, I would like to point out that by excluding the objective cultural content it becomes one-dimensional, offering no insight into other aspects of the process of a group’s identity construction, especially in case of a subethnic group such as Bunjevci – who were scattered in the past away from their original territories (southeastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dalmatia) and divided into two recognizable branches dispersed today on the territories of three countries: Croatia, Serbia and Hungary.

Both branches of Bunjevci base their identity on specific elements of their traditional cultural heritage. I will try to outline the differences in the process of creation of their identity from an objective point of view, which is based on certain specific elements of the cultural heritage of Bunjevci, such as: their traditional clothing and economy. Traditional clothing of Littoral Bunjevci represents one of the distinctive features of their identity, because their

attitude towards the specificities of their own culture is negative. They underestimate the way they dress, because it is considered rural, as compared to the urban clothing style of the population of the town of Senj, which clearly shows the negative attitude they have towards their own culture. In the region of Krasno Field (the bordering region of Primorje and Lika), the active role of the association *Čuvarice ognjišta* Krasno (Keepers of the Hearth - Krasno) contributes to a different attitude towards the traditional clothing in that region. The style of clothing of the Danube area Bunjevci in the region of Bačka is also a symbol of their identity, but unlike the Bunjevci in Primorje region, they show great appreciation for their traditional costume and represent it at numerous festivals and occasions as the symbol of their cultural identity (cf. Černelić 2005:31-35). The major basic industry of Littoral Bunjevci is livestock farming and trade, which has made an important impact on their lives, precisely marking the different features of this branch of Bunjevci as compared to the Others in their surroundings, as well as forging their relationship with the inhabitants of the Littoral towns. In this way symbolic boundaries were created – between Bunjevci living in the hinterland and the domicile inhabitants of the towns. (cf. Škrbić Alempijević 2003:442; cf. Mucko 2008:218-221; 228-235). In the region of Krasno Field, apart from livestock farming, the major industrial branch is forestry, so, many villagers, even today, work for the cheese factory *Runolist* and for two privately owned sawmills. Thus, somewhat better industry perspective largely contributed to preventing depopulation and large-scale economic migrations in this region, in contrast with the other regions inhabited by Littoral-Lika Bunjevci (cf. Černelić 2005:35-37). In the parts of Lika inhabited by Bunjevci the construction of identity was primarily based on the level of religious and ethnic/national opposition (cf. Vugdelija 2010).

The way Bunjevci in Bačka make their living also plays an important part in the process of their identification as against other groups of inhabitants in their surroundings. By breeding and selling cattle they obtained the capital for buying cultivable fertile land and consequently started directing their activities towards agriculture, especially within extended families, wherein a solid economic ground was set for progress and prosperity of many Bunjevac families. The way they earn for a living is reflected in a specific – both residential and farming – estate termed *salaš*. The latter includes a separate residential building and the homestead, with all the farming buildings directly adjoining the cultivable farmland. Apart from owning a *salaš*, most Bunjevci families also had a house in the town, since there was no organized trade, nor were there any administrative or religious institutions in the vicinity of *salaš*. Only following the break-up of extended families, which was steadily gaining

momentum in the early and mid-20th century, did members of these families start breaking off – some staying at *salaš*, and the others moving to the town. (cf. Černelić 2005:37-39)

Specific, and yet different, economic characteristics of the two branches of Bunjevci point to the important role of economic factors in the construction of identity of both Primorje/Lika and Danube Bunjevci, but which influenced, in a different way, their way of life, and made them specifically recognizable and different from the surrounding ethnic groups. In both branches of Bunjevci, a characteristic element is the communication and integration of rural Bunjevci population with the nearest urban centers, but this communication varies significantly between Primorje/Lika and Danube area Bunjevci branches.

The existence of nearly diametrically opposite attitudes – one positive, the other negative – towards symbolic expression of their own identity, in the example of traditional clothing and the main type of industry, arises from different ethnocultural, historical, economic and social influences in surroundings where both Bunjevci branches have developed differently, each in their own way, through a several centuries long period, in different ambience. Whereas Littoral Bunjevci are seen as socially and economically inferior to their neighbours, Bunjevci in Bačka mostly have a solid economic ground based on agriculture. While poverty was one of the main factors of rural-urban migrations of the largest part of Littoral Bunjevci, the economic prosperity of Bunjevci in Bačka has enabled their offsprings' life in the town, providing them with good material bases (cf. Ibid. 39-40).

1.5. Bunjevci's perception of another Bunjevci branch

Members of different branches of Bunjevci have certain awareness of their common origin, but there are different individual interpretations of this fact: from negation or recognition of their common origin ("It is the same tribe"), sometimes they point to their affinity, but often they are not precise in locating the territory occupied by another branch (cf. Černelić 2005:40-43; Vugdelija 2010:228.). In some cases they are not even sure if Littoral Bunjevci and Bunjevci in Lika are related. Very often individuals point to the legends of the (common) origin of Bunjevci. Bunjevci in Voivodina share quite similar perceptions of other branches of Bunjevci. It might be of interest to note that there are many informers who are not aware that, apart from the Danube area, there are also some other regions in Croatia inhabited by a subethnic group of the same name. Primorje/Lika Bunjevci express a feeling of inferiority as opposed to the Danube area Bunjevci, regarding their traditional heritage as poor and worthless, very often in the context of high evaluation of the traditional costume of the

Danube area Bunjevci in Bačka (cf. Škrbić-Alempijević 2003:441-442; Mucko 2008:222-223, 237).⁵ Very often individuals of both Bunjevci branches share a collective memory of their origin, by claiming to have migrated from the River Buna area in Hercegovina in the 17th century. The Danube area Bunjevci give a special attention to the practice of organizing trips to the River Buna, which emphasizes their communal identity in the contemporary socio-political context (cf. Gotal and Vugdelija 2014).

1.6. Final Remarks

The intention of this chapter was to point to Bunjevci branches' identities, with regard to the influence of ethnic, cultural, social, historical, political, and ecological factors on the construction of the identity of each Bunjevci branch, and to outline the differences in the process of creation of their identity, from subjective as well as objective point of view, which are based on the examples of some specific elements of the cultural heritage of Bunjevci. The questions considered in this chapter indicate that the attitude of a group towards their own traditional heritage depends on various external factors. They can have different effects on the construction of the identity of one ethnic group of a common origin, separated at a certain point of time in the past. Therefore, a holistic approach to the research of cultural heritage of Bunjevci, and the ethnocultural processes through which they have been formed as a distinct subethnic group, could contribute to the better understanding of the way in which the identity of an ethnic group has been, and is being, formed, as well as the way in which the manifold identities of each particular branch have been constructed as a result of the migration processes. Nevertheless, the migrations in the 17th century caused separation of the ethnic group of Bunjevci and strongly influenced the ethnocultural and identification processes in each Bunjevci branch. While the awareness of the subethnic identity has been lost in the broader expanse of their potential homeland, in the territories which they have inhabited as a more or less compact group, Bunjevci have undergone specific and turbulent ways of construction and/or deconstruction of their ethnocultural identity. In this chapter I attempted to point to the complexity of these ethnocultural processes and to shed more light on the question of the formation of this subethnic group in the past and the identification processes, both past and present, due to various forms of (de)construction of the identity of each particular branch.

⁵ As mentioned above, Littoral Bunjevci have expressed such a feeling of inferiority towards inhabitants of coastal towns as well.

2. Attempts to deny the Bačka Bunjevci the rights to belong to the Croatian nation ⁶

2.1. Introduction

As an introduction to this chapter the basic information on history and the ethnic structure of the province of Vojvodina should be given, as well as on the ethnic changes in the 20th century in the area.¹

The province of Vojvodina forms a constituent part of the Republic of Serbia. It borders on Hungary in the north, Croatia in the west (mostly along the Danube), Romania in the east and, along the Danube and the Sava rivers, on the Central Serbia in the south. The name Vojvodina appeared for the first time in 1848 referring to the regions of Bačka and Banat (which were the older names of the regions) and a part of the region of Srijem, which was included in Vojvodina after 1860 when it was given the name of Serbian Vojvodina. After the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, its borders slightly changed: the region of Croatian Baranja became a constituent part of Vojvodina, while some territories of Backa and Banat became parts of Hungary and Romania. The whole region of Srijem was placed under the administrative authority of Croatia. After the Second World War, when the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was created, Baranja again became a constituent part of Croatia, with the eastern part of the region of Srijem still attached to Vojvodina. During that period, right up to the moment of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in 1991, Vojvodina existed as an autonomous province within the Republic of Serbia (cf. Čermelić 1994).

After the Slavs settled in the south, the territory of Vojvodina was largely populated by South Slavs, Serbs and Croats, and Hungarians, their respective proportions changing according to the historical circumstances. The area of Vojvodina, as integral part of the Hungarian Kingdom from the 10th century until 1918, was by its position historically predestined for periodical resettlements through the emigration of the inhabitants or their settling and organized colonization. Turkish wars and occupation had caused frequent abandonment of large areas and their resettlement during the relatively peaceful periods. After that time the territory of Vojvodina was largely populated by South Slavs, mainly Serbs and Croats, moving in smaller or larger groups up to the present days. The Šokci, another Croatian subethnic group inhabited the western parts of the region of Bačka along the Danube in the

⁶ This chapter is my modified and updated article: Attempts to Deny the Bunjevci of Bačka (Vojvodina) the Right to Belong to the Croatian Nation. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 42(1-2):175-186 (1997).

15th century, moving in from Bosnia and in the 16th century from Slavonia, where they had settled earlier. The ethnic name Šokci refers to the native Croatian population that inhabited Slavonia, Srijem and the northern regions of Bosnia along the Sava River during Turkish occupations (cf. Pavičić 1953:43-101; Sekulić 1984:122; Rem 1993:18-25). The greatest mass immigration of the South Slavs occurred in the 17th century. Serbs settled in Vojvodina (the well-known migration of the Serbs under the patriarch Arsenije Čarnojević in 1690), as well as Croats, mainly the Bunjevci, the migrations occurring in several big waves, which is covered in more detail in the first chapter (for example, see Ivić 1929:292-297; Pekić 1930; Sekulić 1991:34-47).

In the 18th and the 19th century, the Austrian state initiated and implemented the settlement of a number of German inhabitants and some other nationalities (first of all Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Ruthenians) from the larger territories of the Austrian empire. The mentioned immigration provided the foundation on which the multiethnic structure of Vojvodina had been formed (cf. Jankulov 1961; Žuljić 1989:109, 119; Laušić 1991:184).

The ethnic structure of Vojvodina has changed during the 20th century. After the First World War, the new state government organized colonization of Vojvodina. The new settlers were mainly so-called “dobrovoljci” - volunteers - citizens of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes who had enlisted in the Serbian army up to November 18, 1918, remaining in it until the demobilization. During the Second World War, and in its aftermath up to 1948, there were further ethnic changes in Vojvodina. After the deportation of the German settlers and settling of the inhabitants from the South Slav ethnic territories, the population of Serbs increased from the most numerous inhabitants to the majority. The significant number of Serbian (162,000) and Montenegrin (40,000) colonists greatly contributed to justifying the inclusion of Vojvodina into Serbia owing to its ethnical structure at that time (cf. Žuljić 1989:114, 119; Laušić 1991:190; Laušić 1993:97; Černelić 1994).

2.2. Bunjevci in Vojvodina between the two World Wars

A short account of the basic characteristics of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes offers insight into the political and social context in which the manipulation of the ethnicity of the Bunjevci Croats occurred (also referring in part to another Croatian subethnic group – the Šokci). The period preceding the constitution of the new state was characterized by strong “Magyarization” (Hungarization) of the area. One of the reasons why the Kingdom of SCS had been created was quite certainly the resistance to the Hungarian terror and hegemony. Arpad Lebl concisely summarizes the basic characteristics of both periods. The

following short quote illustrates well the political character of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the mentality of Vojvodina:

"From 1919 to 1941 - a similar element was moving into Vojvodina from the south, mainly from Serbia, and it was the agent of Greater Serbia hegemonic policy, central and centralist reaction, bringing state and private terror in line with the ideology of Greater Serbia, anti-minority chauvinism opposing everything that remotely resembled progress. It had developed a kind of mentality perhaps even dating from the time of the Bach regime or even earlier in Vojvodina - it was opposed to everything that was not domestic: from Vojvodina and coming from above, from the government ... our peoples - below - never felt spontaneous hate towards each other. If it came to that, leading to extermination even, it was the hate planned and then planted by the mentioned agent of the classes in power of the dominant nation, and it was never a spontaneous occurrence. People do not hate each other" (1962:28, 29).

This short quote points to two levels that we should take into consideration, one "above" and the other "below". As an ethnologist and a former inhabitant of Bačka, I have been well acquainted with the "below" level of everyday life of the population, and the very specific feature of the interethnic tolerance in this multiethnic community. This chapter deals with the "above" level, the manipulations from above; with the fact that the Croats in Bačka are devoted to their traditional ethnic name, as well as their religious feelings.

The tendency to neutralize and subordinate the Croats started very soon in the new state, through the so-called "nationalization" of Vojvodina. The term primarily denoted the increase of the Serbian ethnic element in the province, and the true goals were covered up by the expressions such as "South Slavs", "Yugoslav", "our people". The term "Yugoslav Roman Catholics" for non-Orthodox South Slavs, i.e. Croats, appears very indicative in the survey of the history of Serbs in Vojvodina (cf. Popović 1925).

The tendency to neutralize and turn the Bunjevci into Serbs should be considered in the context of the outlined characteristics of the period. The basic means used for the purpose lay in the handling of their traditional ethnic name. Under the cover of the common name "Yugoslav" when referring to the three peoples living in one state, three basic forms of manipulation of the Bunjevci's ethnic name came to light:

1. Neutralization of the Bunjevci by emphasizing their distinctiveness: they are neither Serbs nor Croats, one explanation being that they are the fourth tribe of the single Yugoslav people, and the other one that they are the fourth nation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

2. The Bunjevci can be both Serbs and Croats, which is a matter of individual choice; it

is irrelevant in any case, because both the Serbs and the Croats are in fact Yugoslavs.

3. Denial of the Croatian ethnicity of the Bunjevci and the Šokci, by claiming that the Bunjevci as well as the Šokci were Serbs practising Catholic religion.

Manipulations of the kind can be found in different forms in various published sources, newspapers and scientific articles, especially in the period between 1920 and the early thirties, and again in 1939 and 1940. The survey of these attempts is documented in quotes from all the available sources. These articles caused a reaction in the Bunjevci circles who were certain about their Croatian ethnic origin. Their efforts to oppose the Greater Serbian attempts to deny their belonging to the Croatian nation and to defend it, are shown in extracts from the articles in the local newspapers of Croatian orientation.

The newspapers of the period mainly assumed the same general attitude that the Bunjevci are Yugoslavs. The views on their closer national identity were different. Some of the newspapers emphasized only the importance of the unity of Serbs and Croats, without any further discussion about the ethnicity of the Bunjevci and Šokci (for example, *Glas naroda* “The Voice of the People”). Others opposed the Serbian attempts as well as the efforts of the Bunjevci to declare themselves to be Croats, because “they spread evil seed among us who live together with so many nationalities” (taken from the newspaper *Vojvodina* 1/1927, No. 3, August 14). For example, the newspaper *Narodna reč* (“People’s Word”) condemns everyone who tries to force the Bunjevci to incline either to the Serbs or to the Croats, because such determination could only cause confusion among ordinary people. There is no need for that, because:

“today the Yugoslav idea can be freely manifested. There is no doubt that the Bunjevci are one of the branches of the two tribes of our people, as well as that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes form together one branch of the big Slavic tree” (5/1936, No. 140, January 14th, Ivan Bunjevac in the article “The Attitude of Bunjevci Concerning their Tribal Identity”).

Most of the newspapers of general Yugoslav orientation, have an anti-Croatian attitude, emphasizing the closeness of the Bunjevci to Serbs: the newspaper *Narodna reč/rič* (“People’s Word”), *Subotički glasnik* (“Subotica Herald”), *Bunjevačke novine* (“The Bunjevac Newspaper”), *Smotra* (“Review”). For example, “Subotica Herald“ constantly makes use of the well-known slogan “Serbs and Croats are one and the same people”, accusing Croats for their intention to “Croatize” the Bunjevci. The editors of the Bunjevci Newspaper, in an answer to the accusations by some other local newspapers that they are trying to convert the Bunjevci into Serbs, use the slogan: “The Bunjevci are the Bunjevci and they must remain only the Bunjevci”. Furthermore, they constantly tried to point to the closeness between the

Bunjevci and the Serbs, using, for instance, expressions such as: “The Bunjevci belong to the inseparable moral and cultural sphere of Serbs” (1/1926, No. 37, September 10); “The Bunjevci and the Šokci have considered themselves exactly what they have been from time immemorial, i.e. a Serbian tribe” (4/1927, No. 5, January 28) and so on. They deny the Croatian ethnicity of the Bunjevci by repeating constantly that no Croats live in the town of Subotica. “The Bunjevac Newspaper” appeared again in 1940 without any change in the attitude concerning the question of the nationality of the Bunjevci. In order to deny in every way the Croatian national identity of Bunjevci they submitted the Bunjevci language features to an analysis in the article “Serbian Ijekavian Dialect and the Bunjevac Croats (3/1940, No. 3, March 8). The analysis is based on the theory of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić who proclaimed all Croats who speak “Shtokavian” dialect to be Serbs (1849). Calling Karadžić to mind in this article only underlines the fact that certain Serbian circles had manipulated the ethnic names and the ethnicity of the Bunjevci and Šokci as far back as the mid-19th century. The attempts of Karadžić on the cultural level counterpoised the ideology of Milutin Garašanin on the political level (Stančić 1968-1969; Šidak 1973; Valentić 1993). All the later attempts after the formation of the Kingdom of SCS were simply the extension and reflection of the intentions rooted in the ideology of Karadžić and Garašanin.

The editors of the newspaper “Review” follow the essential idea that the Bunjevci cannot be Croats. In order to prove such claims they quote, among others, Albe M. Kuntić and his work *The Bunjevac to the Bunjevci and about the Bunjevci* from 1925. The author’s basic idea was that the Bunjevci had settled in Bačka under the leadership of the Franciscans from the region of the Buna River, where there had never been any trace of Croats. Their religion was originally Orthodox, and the Franciscans forcibly converted the Bunjevci to Roman Catholicism (1/1936, No. 33, August 21; 1/1936, No. 34, August 28). In the last chapter of the quoted book the author proclaims “a single unified spirit of the Yugoslav nation” (1/1936, No. 35, September 14).

The editors of the newspaper *Naše slovo* have a different attitude to the Bunjevci nationality issue. In their view the Bunjevci are neither Serbs nor Croats. The Bunjevci should not be separated, their national feelings should be a matter of individual choice; it is not a mistake to consider them either Serbs or Croats. The Bunjevci:

“are neither against Serbs nor Croats, because they are the most distinct SerboCroats, and nobody has a right to ban any Bunjevac from saying they are either Serbs or Croats, because it is all the same, anyway” (5/1938, No. 20, April 3, in the article “We are One Nation”). At the same time, they do not blame those who emphasize their Croatian national identity because

they admit that “as a tribe of the Yugoslav nation - we are closest to Croats by religion, alphabet... etc.” (3/1936, No. 141, November 29, in the article “The Croatian Question among the Bunjevci”).

“This question should not be the means of bargaining, each individual should be allowed to decide for themselves what nationality they belong to. If one feels like Croatian, let one be Croatian: if one feels like the Bunjevac, let one be the Bunjevac. It is important for every individual to be aware of their affiliation to the Serbo-Croatian nation” (6/1939, No. 258, November 19, Lazar Stipić in the article “The Truth about the Bunjevci”).

All the quoted writings in the local newspapers seem to reflect the attempts which were initiated in certain Serbian scientific circles, with a single purpose to prove that the Bunjevci and the Šokci are Serbs who have been converted to Catholicism at one point in the past, or, at least, to persuade the members of the two ethnic groups to neglect their Croatian ethnicity. The local review *Književni sever* (“Literary North”) from 1927 was primarily dedicated to the Bunjevci group. Ivo Milić writes that when asked about their ethnicity the Bunjevci do not seem to be able to offer an answer, explaining that when it comes to language they are closer to Serbs, and when it comes to religion to Croats, therefore, they welcome the common South Slavic name (1927: 101). In the article “From the Bunjevci’s Past” Aleksa Ivić takes for granted that the Bunjevci are Catholic Serbs (1927: 103). The author had tried to prove the statement in one of his earlier articles in the same Review, but at that point he used the usual expression often employed at the time: “From the viewpoint of the state, it is all the same whether the Bunjevci accept the Serbian or Croatian name, because those are merely identical names for one and the same people” (1925:164-265). In the ethnographic survey of Vojvodina from the period, Radivoj Simonović claims that the Bunjevci and the Šokci were Serbs forcibly converted into Roman Catholics (1924: 13-16).

Serbian ethnologist Jovan Erdeljanović in his book *On the Origin of the Bunjevci* from 1930 makes the same attempts: in the final chapter one of the conclusions of the book specifies that the Bunjevci are Catholic Serbs. In spite of the shortcomings of the book, it should be said that it made a significant ethnological contribution to the knowledge of the Croatian ethnic group known as the Bunjevci; the final statement of Erdeljanović is neither substantiated nor proven as the text preceding the statement does not offer any foundations, let alone evidence for such a conclusion (1930:394).

All the authors mentioned base their “evidence” on the historical archive sources according to which the Bunjevci and the Šokci were described as Catholic Rascians by Austrian and Hungarian authorities. The term Rac, Rascian is a Hungarian name for a Serb. For

example, Erdeljanović concludes the following: “The Bunjevci have therefore in many respects made the same impression as Orthodox Serbs on Hungarians and Germans” (ibid. 202).

In his review of the book by Petar Pekić *The History of Croats in Vojvodina from the Ancient Times up to 1929*, the Serbian historian already mentioned, Dušan Popović writes the following:

“It is impossible for us to define what is specifically Serbian, and what is specifically Croatian; as far as the Bunjevci are concerned research should be made into the level to which both components have been included. The opinion of Mr. Pekić is that the Bunjevci moved from the cradle of the Croatian state. The Bunjevci have, in fact, arrived from territory that did not belong either to Serbia or to the Croatian state. They are the population originating from the Bosnian territory in the political sense; therefore they represent the population in transition from the Serbian to the Croatian, as well as the Muslims and the Šokci” (1930:325-326).

At the time of the late thirties, when the Bunjevci predominantly became aware of their Croatian origin, some newspapers raised again the same questions about their national identity. One of the authors, a certain Vel. Vujović, goes on along the same lines as his predecessors, repeating the well-known theories about the ethnicity of Bunjevci, such as: “Scientific ethnological research has proven that the Bunjevci in Dalmatia were not natives ... When the Turks occupied those territories, many Croats were driven out, and Turks settled the Orthodox population from Bosnia and Herzegovina there. A large number of those real Serbs in northern and central Dalmatia adopted the Catholic religion under the influence of Rome ... As far as their general characteristics are concerned, the Bunjevci basically have features of pure Serbian origin, blended with Croatian in some aspects such as language, life, customs and character” (*Pančevačka nedelja* – “Pančevo Sunday”, 7/1939, No. 332, December 31, in the article “Who are the Bunjevci”).

Another pamphlet soon appeared, entitled “*The Truth about the Bunjevci and Šokci*”, written by Aleksandar Martinović. Following the idea of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, the author summarizes the well-known Greater Serbian views about: the propaganda of the Catholic church; the Serbian character of the “shtokavian” dialect for example: “Croats have extended the Croatian name to many Catholic Serbs in Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina by the use of the Serbian ‘shtokavian’ dialect supported by the Catholic region”; how Hungarians viewed the Bunjevci and the Šokci national identity and so on. The author offers many senseless “arguments” for the Serbian origin of the Bunjevci and the Šokci ethnic group. Later, D. Aleksijević retells all the recognizable “arguments” in the newspaper *Narodna*

odbrana (“National Defense”). The author gives one more piece of “evidence” for the Serbian origin of Bunjevci, based on the anthropological characteristics of the Bunjevci, which is, in his opinion, one more proof that the Bunjevci as an ethnic group belong to the genuine Serbian anthropological type (15/1940, No. 45. November 10, in the article “Who are the Bunjevci”).

As opposed to Greater Serbian views on the national identity of the Bunjevci group, some other local newspapers insisted on the viewpoint that the Bunjevci are Croats. In many articles the anti-Croatian propaganda on the Bunjevci problem was pointed out with strong insistence on and defense of the Bunjevci’s Croatian national affiliation. The typical examples are *Hrvatske novine* (“Croatian Newspaper”), later renamed *Subotičke novine* (“Subotica Newspaper”), and *Neven* (“Marigold”). *Neven* was the first newspaper that pointed to the attempts to turn the Bunjevci into Serbs evident in the newspapers which printed articles written in the Greater Serbian manner. For example, in the article “The answer to Minister Vesnić” (who claimed that he would not allow anyone to create a separate Bunjevci nation) the anonymous author comments:

“What separate Bunjevci nation? Who is creating it Mr. Minister? Did not the Bunjevci take part in the revolution in 1918 under the Croatian flag, as a symbol of their nationality? Have not the Bunjevci manifested clearly on every occasion that they are who they are, i.e. Croats ... Anyone thinking that is the result of influence of intellectuals or the propaganda can check among the Bunjevci peasants whether they feel they are a separate nation or Croats” (33/1920, No. 280, December 21).

Neven was also the first newspaper that warned its readers, for example: “Some leaders of the tripartite nation cannot give up their hegemonic aims” (33/1920, No. 281, December 22 in the article “Mr. Vesnić and the Bunjevci”). Besides, the editors of *Neven* pointed to the attempts to turn the Bunjevci into Serbs, manifested in the school system and other fields of public life:

“It has become quite clear that we stand in the way of Serbs in achieving their goal, which is: absolute power in all fields of public life. In the ‘Serbian’ Vojvodina Serbs are the only ones to govern, the others are to remain silent” (34/1921, No. 20, January 27, in the article “Let us Understand”).

Another example could be the commentary on the speech of Janko Šimrak, a Parliament representative, in which he held out against Serbian imperialism and hegemony. An unsigned article reads as follows:

“We did not expect to be treated as a conquered province of the fallen Monarchy, to be turned into some subordinate inhabitants and for the Croatian history and Croatian name to be wiped

from the face of the earth ... What is even more embarrassing, they mislead the wider population with false information that Croats are nothing but Catholic Serbs, who have been captured and given the Croatian name by foreigners” (34/1921, No. 37, February 17).

During the period from 1920 to 1923 many articles in *Neven* were censored.

In the later years *Neven* increasingly continued to oppose and criticize the Serbian attempts to deny the Bunjevci the right to belong to the Croatian nation and the tendency to treat them as a separate people:

“We live in the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, not in the state of the Bunjevci. Therefore the creators of our constitution do not regard the Bunjevci as a separate people or tribe, which is quite in accordance. We wonder why some Greater Serbs try to convince us that we are neither Serbs nor Croats, but simply the Bunjevci. Because they want us to become Serbs in the end... We Bunjevci are Croats and Catholics and that is who we shall be as long as there is air on the Earth (37/1925, No. 11, April 16 in the article “Croat Identity, Catholicism and the Bunjevci).

The editors of *Neven* are especially critical of the articles appearing in the “Bunjevac Newspaper”, because the authors insist on trying:

“... by force to persuade the Bunjevci that they cannot be Croats, but only Bunjevci; when they did not manage to turn them into Serbs. Their intention is to separate the Bunjevci from the Croats first and then to trick them into becoming Serbs and accepting ‘the Holy Orthodoxy’ (38/1926, No. II, March 8, in the article “The Bunjevac Separatism”).

Neven also reacted to the similar attempts towards the Šokci. Their attempt to proclaim the Šokci to be Serbs of the Catholic religious denomination is:

“the result of ordinary tribal megalomania ... As members of the Roman Catholic Church the Šokci came from Bosnia, and therefore any statement that the Šokci have abandoned the Orthodox religion under the pressure of certain Hungarian official circles, cannot be accepted as a serious judgment” (39/1927, No. 12, March 24, in the article “Šokci are Also Croats”).

After the period from 1933 to 1936 during which *Neven* was not published, it appeared again on Christmas in 1936. From then up to 1939 the newspaper had a different basic orientation, which now became similar to those newspapers previously opposed to *Neven*. In 1939 the editor of the newspaper, Joso Šokčić, admitted that he had made a mistake in the article “The End of One Delusion” (51/1939, No. 41, December 1).

That was the period when Croatian national affiliation prevailed among the Bunjevci. At that time Serbian propaganda was revived again, as already discussed. “The Subotica Newspaper” warned the reading public. For example, an article published in the newspaper *Hrvatski narod* (“Croatian people”), edited in Zagreb, contained the following:

“Some Greater Serbian circles cannot accept the ethnic facts in the Slavic South. Having lost the battle, which was started by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, supported by the Czech Slavists, some hundred years ago, to prove that three-quarters of Croats - all those who speak the “shtokavian” dialect - are Serbs, they are now trying to break off some peripheral branches of the Croatian people and make them into Serbs. It is especially difficult for Serb chauvinists to admit that the Bunjevci Croats have managed to reject all attempts of artificial and forceful assimilation.” The anonymous author of the article also pointed to the ideas of the already mentioned Vel. Vujović, which he regarded as an expression of the undisguised hatred towards the Bunjevci and a foolish act (21/1940, No. 6, February 9, in the article “Bunjevci and Babbling. The Serbs about the Bunjevci”).

Furthermore, the “Subotica Newspaper” reprinted an article from the newspaper *Srijemski Hrvat* (“The Croat of Srijem”) with a critical approach to the mentioned booklet of A. Martinović *The truth about the Bunjevci and Šokci* with already well-known Greater Serbian ideas, proclaiming the Bunjevci and the Šokci to be Serbs of Catholic religious denomination, primarily on the basis of their being “shtokavian” dialect speakers. An anonymous author of the article rejects these claims with counter arguments, for example: It can be judged only by their old homeland around the Buna River in Herzegovina, in Dalmatia and Lika, from where they moved to inhabit Bačka and Baranja, that they are a branch of the Croatian people”, and besides “they have persisted in trying to demonstrate their Croatian affiliation despite certain regimes which met them with disapproval” (21/1940, No. 25, June 21, in the article “On the Origin of the Bunjevci and the Šokci”).

In the article “Who are the Bunjevci” in the “Subotica Newspaper” Petar Pekić gives a final evaluation of the persistent Serbian attempts, commenting on the article mentioned earlier written by V. D. Aleksijević, who:

“.... on the basis of falsified historical facts wants to impose Serbian nationality on the Bunjevci (...) Why should the public be deluded with such big mystifications? (...) It is high time for Serbs to accept the fact that they cannot turn the Bunjevci into Serbs by force. Those who believe that the Bunjevci do not want to adopt Serbian nationality because they hate Serbs are mistaken. The Bunjevci do not hate Serbs. All they want is that the injustice that they have been suffering since 1920, be corrected” (21/1940, No. 48, November 29).

2.3. Bunjevci in Vojvodina today

The Greater Serbian attempts were neutralized after the Second World War in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia through the officially proclaimed “unity and brotherhood”, with temporary tendencies to be awakened during the existence of the state. In

the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia the question of Croatian national affiliation of Bunjevci subethnic group has not been posed directly, but, by the means of the proclaimed “Yugoslavism”, all the institutions in Vojvodina lost their Croatian mark already in 1956 by a political-administrative ban (cf. Žigmanov 2006:20). The number of Croats in Vojvodina in the nineties of the 20th century, in period of the war between the Republic of Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro, decreased as a result of their deportation, property devastation, creation of the atmosphere of fear and insecurity, threats expressed through media propaganda, etc. All of the mentioned factors lead to mass emigration and a flight into ethnic mimicry. In the given context the policy of “Bunjevci nation” was successfully established. (ibid. 26). At that time, for the first time in their history, all Croatian ethnic groups in Vojvodina were detached from their parent country fellow-citizens by a national border for a longer period of time. Thus a subethnic group is turned into a national minority (ibid. 21). Besides, Croats in Vojvodina waited to receive the status of a national minority for more than ten years after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In the Law on protection of national minorities’ rights and freedoms from 2002 the provided legal definition of a national minority is not a classic definition of a national minority but of an ethnic group, thus levelling out the two substantially different terms and consequently creating a formal legal space for misuse, which has indeed occurred in the case of the subethnic group of Bunjevci. (cf. ibid. 27-30). This was further facilitated by the census possibility in 1991 and 2002 to declare oneself as a member of Bunjevci or Šokci, another Croatian subethnic group in Bačka, for the first time, which renewed the tendency of manipulating ethnicity, and supported the idea of Slobodan Milošević regime to encourage the process of a parallel “construction of a nation” based on the subethnic and regional names of Croats (Černelić 2006:197-199; Žigmanov 2006:22).

In their attempt to place the problem of the identity of Bunjevci in the context of contemporary theories, some authors put Bunjevci in the category of stateless ethnic groups. (cf. Prelić 2007:190). In this way the issue of objective determination of national affiliation of Bunjevci is further obscured and the fact that Bunjevci in Bačka are not an independent ethnic group, but were resettled and dispersed in several branches in the past, is being neglected. In addition, one should not forget that Bunjevci in Croatia, apart from having their own parent country wherein they live, are not troubled by dilemmas of their Croatian national affiliation nor do they consider their affiliation to Bunjevci a certain supranational dimension of identity. On the other hand, Croats in Bačka, the members of this subethnic group, do not deny that they consider themselves Bunjevci at the same time.

In any case, the circumstances surrounding the issue of the identity of Bunjevci are highly complex, most definitely as a result of this subethnic group inhabiting a territory which has been subject to much political and state-building commotion, as well as many changes in the status of autonomy of the province of Vojvodina, the latter being part of different states during the course of history.

Regardless of all those external factors which have (in)directly affected the construction of the identity, the issue of identity is primarily a subjective matter of declaring one's individual affiliation, which need not necessarily be constructed based on the real subjective cultural content, and the awareness of one's identity is liable to changes (cf. Prelić 2007:193-194). In the case of Bunjevci in Bačka there is an issue of politicizing ethnic affiliation of a subethnic group, chiefly based on manipulation of its ethnic name (cf. Černelić 2006:187, 198; Žigmanov 2006:20).

Some of the participants of the scientific conference *Bunjevci in The Context of Time and Space* dealt with the issue of the dual identity of the Bunjevci since the 1990s in the context of politics, state ideology and science. Their papers were published in 2014 in the Conference Proceedings titled the same. S. Bačić in his article *Contemporary Serbian Science about the Bunjevci* presents a review of the standpoints of the most prominent contemporary Serbian authors holding different occupations regarding ethnic and national affiliation of the Bunjevci in Bačka. The author states that this is a political issue par excellence, since the renewal of the interest of Serbian scientists for the issue of Bunjevci in Bačka coincides with the changes in the political scene in Serbia in the late 1980s. This is also confirmed by the analysis of the opinions of the mentioned authors, whose viewpoints are determined by the ideology of Greater Serbia and who show a lack of a deeper understanding of the history of the Bunjevci, only loosely interpret historical processes and fail to reveal any viewpoints held by Croatian scientists. All that results in numerous factual inaccuracies and gives a political tone to the process, supported by key Serbian scientific institutions. The author reminds that such an opinion held by the Serbian scientific community is not a novelty – it is a recovery of the ideas from the time of the Austro-Hungarian rule and Karađorđević Yugoslavia, and its function today is institutionalization of the specific Bunjevci minority who do not feel like Croats, which is part of a wider Serbian policy aimed at fragmenting the minorities (cf. 2014). T. Žigmanov claims that this complex process has seen different dynamics and intensity; it has been generated by numerous subjects and developed in different manners in numerous areas of social life. Apart from certain political measures that were taken, the denial of the Croatian origin of the Bunjevci was further intensified by Serbian scientists. The analysis of

such intentions in part – by nature, types, argumentation, etc. – is presented in his article which reflects upon the contents of the publication resulting from a symposium titled *About the Bunjevci*, held in Subotica in 2006 and organized by the National Council of the Bunjevci National Minority and the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (cf. 2014). M. Bara submits to critical analysis works published in Conference Proceedings – *Ethnolinguistic and Historical Research of the Bunjevci* published by the institute Matica Srpska and NIU Bunjevački informativni centar (the Bunjevci Information Centre). He thereby starts from the point of view that the subethnic basis in one part of Croats from Vojvodina became a point of origin for a renewed project of disintegrating the core of their identity. From the 1990s onwards, the Serbian state and Serbian scientific and cultural institutions have strongly supported the activities of the Bunjevci who do not consider themselves to be Croats, thus actively taking part in the creation of a separate “Bunjevci nation” (cf 2014).

Nevertheless, the influence of political pressures in certain periods during the 20th century and up to the present affected the construction of the identity of a particular ethnic group and, at the beginning of the 21st century, resulted in a renewed polarity within the same (sub) ethnic group. I will attempt to illustrate how these political influences reflect on one of the most important cultural festivities – the celebration of the end of the harvest named *Dužijanica*, which has been a central ethnocultural expression of the Bunjevci identity for the past hundred years in Bačka. Despite the turbulent times and politicization of the ethnic affiliation of Bunjevci, it has survived as a rather stable expression of the Bunjevci Croats’ ethnocultural identity.⁷ The *Dužijanica* is once again under the influence of the political circumstances mentioned above. This has been manifested through different cultural policies concerning the question of the Bunjevci identity in the context of the celebration of the *Dužijanica* since 2001. In that sense the *Dužijanica* represents an example of creation, use and perpetuation of symbolic aspects of traditional culture as an ethnic identity marker, but also of the variations in ethnic attributes. A group of the Bunjevci representatives use that ethnonym as a mark of their national affiliation, denying their belonging to the Croatian nation, thus standing in opposition to the other Bunjevci representatives who declare themselves to be Croats. Such polarization was additionally stimulated by isolation of the ethnonym Bunjevci in form of a special ethnic category in the census of 2002 in Serbia, as well as in the census of 1991 in former Yugoslavia. A good example of the practical procedure of the celebration can be illustrated by the opposition and the controversies between the two associations, both

⁷ I will deal with the *Dužijanica* as a cultural festivity in a separate chapter.

taking part in organizing the celebration of the end of the harvest in the town of Sombor, where the term *Dužionica* is used as a variant of the name for the festivity. The issue can be best explained by a simplified answer to the question – whose tradition is the *Dužionica* – considering its ethnic attribution: that of the Bunjevci or Croatian? For example, due to such a perception, there were two celebrations of the *Dužionica* organized in Sombor in 2002. The controversies around the double celebration of the *Dužijanica* started in the 1990s, as a result of the different identities of the Bunjevci subethnic group (cf. Rubić 2010). Since 2005 there has been a similar situation in the town of Subotica. Each of the opposed groups celebrate their own *Dužijanica*, even though the official organization is basically in the hands of the Bunjevci of Croatian affiliation. A distinct study is required on these oppositions in the identification processes of Bunjevci subethnic group in Vojvodina, as well as on their consequences on the celebration practiced more than hundred years so far, which both of the opposed Bunjevci groups consider as their own heritage. This is, in fact, true. They share a common ethnocultural heritage, however, it is the subjective perception of their ethnic identity that differs. In that context, the traditional celebration can be recognized as a symbol of identity in its broader sense of the subethnic group of Bunjevci; an overlap between the objective aspects (cultural heritage) and the symbolic aspects (taking into consideration different points of view of its participants: their attitudes, ideas, values can shed light on the way the selected segments of cultural heritage correspond to the social and political conceptions. Therefore, it is relevant to consider the influence of different factors: cultural, urban, political, both of civil and Church authorities in these processes, that is, in their interaction at the local level, but also in the context of socio-political influences at the national level (cf. Rubić 2010:249). With such polarized comprehension of the ethnic identification, the research of ethnocultural aspects of the cultural heritage of a particular subethnic group seems to be even more complex.

3. The local community of the Danube area Bunjevci branch in Croatia: developing cultural identity⁸

3.1. Introduction

One branch of the Bunjevci ethnic group today forms a local community in Croatia. As stated in the previous chapter, within former Yugoslavia Vojvodina had the status of autonomous province but in the events leading to the disintegration of that state it lost its autonomy. This has made the position of Croats in the region very difficult. Of all the Bunjevci branches those in Bačka form the most compact ethnic group, probably because they have lived among people of different nationalities for centuries. It is in this multiethnic environment that the Bunjevci have largely preserved and developed the cultural heritage which they brought from their original homeland in the Dinaric mountains and the Adriatic coast (Černelić and Petrović 1998:8). Then again, starting primarily after the Second World War, they brought a part of that heritage to Croatia. The social and political connections of the Bunjevci in Bačka with their fellow countrymen in Croatia were strong, especially after they became part of the same state between 1918 and 1941. Very often some of them obtained a higher level of education in Zagreb, they embraced Croatian political parties as their own, they celebrated thousand years of the Croatian Kingdom in Subotica and Sombor, their intellectuals became members of Croatian cultural and educational societies and institutions, etc. A group of Croats from Bačka (including another ethnic group -- the Šokci) initiated the foundation of the *Society of Croats from Bačka* in the late 1930s in Zagreb which was active by the end of the Second World War. During the Communist regime the society with essentially national characteristics could not survive. In the late 1980s Croats from Vojvodina resumed their activities in Zagreb and created the *Society of Croats from Vojvodina and the Danube region* (Sekulić 1998:10).

3.2. On the *Society of Croats from Vojvodina and the Danube region*

The Bunjevci from Bačka were settling in Croatia at different times during the 20th century, most often as individuals or individual families. I understand the term “*local community*” and I deal with it “*as it is symbolically constructed, as a system of values, norms and moral codes which provides a sense of identity within a bounded whole to its members*”

⁸ This chapter is my slightly modified article: The Local Community of the Ethnic Bunjevci in Croatia: Developing Cultural Identity. In: *Times, Places, Passages. Ethnological Approaches in the New Millennium*. 7th SIEF Conference. Selected Papers, 23-28 April 2001, Budapest: Institute of Ethnology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 121-133 (2004).

(Hamilton, 1985:9). The Bunjevci form a specific local community in Croatia. It is not a compact community concentrated only in certain regions or towns. Individual families are spread all over Croatia, but most of them live in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia and in its vicinity. The influx of the Bunjevci Croats was stronger after 1991, when the state of Yugoslavia disintegrated. Their everyday life does not otherwise differ from that of any other average Croatian family of the same social and educational level. They act as a local community on the occasions of gathering for some common purpose, initiated and organized by their *Society*. Some of these occasions are connected with certain specific ceremonies that are part of their traditional heritage. They spend together the so-called day of *Materice*, which might be translated as Mothers' Day, celebrated on Sunday, two weeks before Christmas. Originally it consisted primarily of children's greetings to their mothers, traditionally said in verses, usually receiving an apple as a gift in turn; a characteristic element of Bunjevac customs is the gift that the mother-in-law gives to her son-in-law, which is especially important in the first year of the marriage. Another occasion for gathering is the *prelo*, a common feast in winter. That traditional custom has become a public ceremony in their homeland, held first of all in their cultural centers – Subotica and Sombor, as well as in some other larger settlements. Both of these specific Bunjevac celebrations were family or social customs practiced in both rural and urban communities at the beginning of the 20th century as well as in earlier times. The reason for a gathering might also be some cultural event, presenting achievements of the eminent Bunjevci both from Bačka and Croatia in art, literature, theatre, film, science, or some political event, primarily connected with the difficult position of Croats in Vojvodina after 1991. The *Society* primarily deals with promoting and integrating the cultural heritage of the Croats from Bačka into the wider Croatian perspective. Their aim is to be recognized in the society of their fellow countrymen in Croatia (Zaić-Kubatović 1998:11).

One of the central events of their common activities, initiated and organized by their *Society* was the exhibition *From the Heritage of the Bunjevci Croats in Bačka* held in 1998. The realization of the exhibition highly depended on the level of preservation of their cultural identity. It was materialized through the items they have brought from Bačka into their new environment in Croatia. In fact, the exhibition was a sort of a test of cultural identity of the Bunjevci who had been living in Croatia for a time. Each of these items changed its function and purpose outside its natural environment. It became a symbol of the identity of its owner. When fragments of the traditional heritage, saved by the Bunjevci families settled in Zagreb and its vicinity, were brought together, the authors of the exhibition were able to achieve a

holistic approach in presentation of the way of life of the Bunjevci from the end of the 19th century to the mid-20th century in Bačka.

3.3. On the exhibition *From the Heritage of the Bunjevci Croats in Bačka*

The exhibition was divided into several thematic units: life on the *salaš*; Christmas and Easter - the two most important Christian holidays; wedding - the central event in the life of the community; costumes and various textile artefacts; objects with religious significance; life in the town; the literary heritage - books and magazines; a collection of paintings and busts of the Bunjevci public figures. The idea underlying the organization of the exhibition was to show interrelatedness of rural and urban life in the Bunjevci communities in Bačka. The initiative for the exhibition came from the board of governors of the *Society of Croats in Vojvodina and the Danube region*. It was followed by field research, gathering and processing of data on individual families and objects in their possession. The first selection of objects was made by the owners, after which a short list was made by the exhibition selectors (Černelić and Petrović 1998:8).⁹

The central institution of rural life in Bačka was the *salaš* - the farm. The *salaš* was comprised of the farmhouse and the farm buildings bordering directly on field crops, as presented in the exhibition in the photograph of the Dulić family *salaš* in Đurđin from the 1940s (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. The Dulić family *salaš*. Photograph by Bolto Dulić, 1940s.

⁹ The selectors were at the same time the co-authors of the exhibition. I was one of them and the other two were an ethnologist, Tihana Petrović, and an art historian, Marija Šercer,.

Life on the *salaš* is portrayed through various objects and photographs. Once the material for the exhibition was collected it became clear that it would be difficult to present urban and rural life separately as there is no clear division between them: many objects used in a *salaš* household are also found in town houses in Sombor and Subotica and *vice versa* - many precious and luxury items are also found on the *salaš*. When the family left the *salaš*, many of these items were taken to the new home in the city. Since the wealth of many Bunjevci families derives from their *salaš* and since this type of farm is precisely typical of rural life in Bačka, the authors decided to present it as a separate and central part of the exhibition. The intention was not to depict life on the *salaš* in all its aspects nor to reconstruct a particular *salaš* but to select typical objects found on the *salaš* in the period between the turn of the century and the 1940s (ibid. 9)

Typical items and tools used by peasants living on a *salaš* during the harvest and in cattle breeding were presented in the entry section – the *salaš* (Fig. 3, 4 and 5). There is a number of older items preserved among the Bunjevci families in Croatia that were originally used in the extended family – the basic social and economic unit, based on kinship relations of its members, which existed in Bačka until the late 19th century and even later. These are, for example: a pipe, a walking stick, a fur cap and a bottle for wine, belonging to the master of the house, serving as the tokens of his authority in the family (Fig. 6). Objects for everyday use on the *salaš* shown in this exhibition include earthenware and china for preparing, serving and preserving food, baskets and hampers made from wicker, straw and husk (Černelić 1998a:26-32).

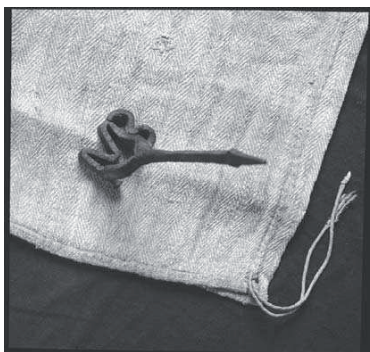


Figure 3. A cowbell with an emblem indicating gentry possession owned by the Brčić-Kostić family from the Verušić salaš territory.

Figure 4. Emblem with initials MB owned by LozijaBalažević-Marinkić from Tavankut. Photographs by Robert Leš 1998.



Figure 5. A wooden shepherd's canteen in possession of the Skenderović family from the Đurđin salaš territory.

*Figure 6. A pipe belonging to grandpa Miško Knezi from Lemeš.
Photographs by Robert Leš 1998.*

I selected a few instances representing the attitude of some Bunjevci individuals to their cultural heritage symbolized by certain traditional items, which they keep in their new homes in a quite different environment. They have become the symbols of their identity.

An interesting object is the so-called *tragač*, wooden wheelbarrow, originally used for transporting various products to the market (Fig. 7). Its owner today is son of Jelena Baličević (born Katančić), who settled in Zagreb in 1946. He was not even born in Bačka, but nevertheless, he keeps this wheelbarrow in the attic, in his house near Zagreb to remind him of his childhood. He often spent his summer holidays in Subotica with his grandparents, who used to push him around in the mentioned wheelbarrow.



*Figure 7. Tragač, a memento of childhood in Subotica.
Photograph by Robert Leš 1998.*

Different ironing devices were also exhibited in the part of the exhibition presenting the life in the living room. There were three types of irons. Some of them were handmade and belonged to the earlier period, but they could all be used simultaneously in one household. One of the exhibits was a model of the so-called *roljka*, which in reality takes a lot of space in the room (Fig. 8). Many Bunjevci families keep this model as a souvenir in their homes. In earlier times the Bunjevci used the battledore (*prakljača*) for ironing, which is a wooden device otherwise used for washing laundry, pulling it over laundry wound up on the roller. Two battledores were saved by the Bunjevci families in Croatia, but there was no original roller. Therefore Pavle Bačlija, the owner of one of the battledores, decided to make one in order to present properly the older way of ironing (Fig. 9). The third device made of iron and heated by charcoal, which was also used in that period, is in fact the prototype of the modern iron (Fig.10).



Figure 8. A model of a mangle (roljka) owned by Jasna Balažević.

Figure 9. An old and worn out battledore with a reconstructed roller.

Figure 10. A charcoal iron.

Photographs by Robert Leš 1998.

The other room in the house was the so-called *čista soba*, which can be translated as a clean or even chaste room. It was the room with the girl's dowry: the bride's trousseau and furniture. The pieces exhibited belong to 19th century stylized furniture, which was the dowry of the grandmother of Jasna Balažević who lived in Zagreb, which she brought to her husband's home in 1909 (Fig. 11).¹⁰ Another important piece of furniture in Bunjevci households is a chest of drawers (*dolaf*), also used for bridal trousseau, belonging to the Brčić-Kostić family. Porcelain petrol lamps and wall clocks were typically part of the *čista soba*, which most Bunjevci families in Croatia inherited from their ancestors. Such pieces of

¹⁰ At the time of the exhibition the furniture was in the apartment in Zagreb belonging to the mother of Jasna Balažević (the latter having married into Prigorje, a region around Zagreb). Jasna Balažević left an inheritance of her family's *salaš* in Tavankut to the Croatian Cultural Artistic Society "Matija Gubec". After she died the furniture was returned to the *salaš*, which has been renovated and is used for the purpose of rural tourism today.

furniture, found in peasant households in the first part of the 20th century, prove the economic prosperity and a high standard of living (Černelić 1998a:31; Šercer 1998:50).



Figure 11. Šifunjer (a wardrobe) and a kanap (a canapé or a sofa), furniture from a salaš in Tavankut. Photograph by Robert Leš, 1998.

Another proof of that is an interesting photograph showing the Opel Kapitän car on the Sarčević family *salaš* (Fig. 12). It was quite an attraction at the time for children living in a typically rural environment (Černelić 1998a:30).

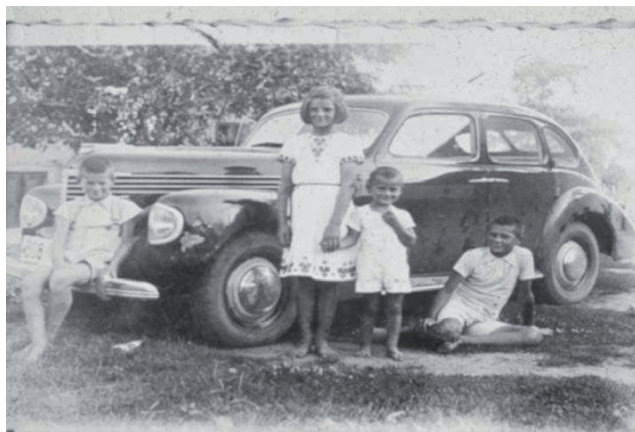
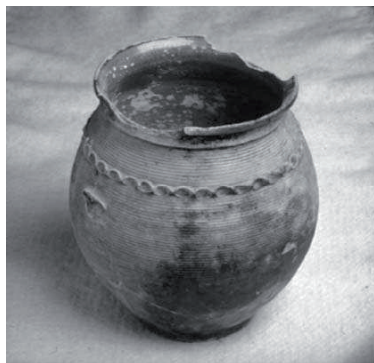


Figure 12. The Opel Kapitän car appearing in salaš in Žednik in 1939. Photograph in possession of the Sarčević family.

Between these two rooms stood the kitchen. Ruža Balažević is the owner of the old earthenware used for preparation of food on the open hearth from the 19th century, which is today used for keeping dried flowers in the hall of her house in Samobor near Zagreb (Fig. 13). She also collected photographs of her family from different periods in the past and framed them all together as a sort of historical family document as well as a dear memory of her ancestors (Černelić 1998a:31).



*Figure 13. An earthen pot used for the open-hearth cooking.
Figure 14. An array of ceramic pots used for keeping jam and
kiselna(soured milk) in the pantry.
Photographs by Robert Leš 1998.*

A part of the exhibition was dedicated to the pantry – an essential room both in the *salaš* household and the town households (Fig. 14). The Cvijin family settled in Croatia in 1993 into a big house. One of the rooms in it they converted into a pantry which served as a storage for different foods and preserves for winter. An interesting item from their pantry is the compote of peaches made in 1958. When they left Subotica they did not intend to eat it but to save it as a memory and link with the way of life in their homeland. Gabrijela Cvijin does all the work in the kitchen of her new home in the same way she used to in Subotica. The tools she uses for the preparation of dough together with eight kinds of variously cut macaroni, each used for preparation of a particular dish, could be seen in the part of the exhibition presenting the kitchen. The details of the pantry and the macaroni samples were among the items mostly appealing to the exhibition visitors (Černelić 1998a:30-31).

Some other interesting instances are the numerous items used in everyday life on the *salaš* and during the harvest, which the widow of Geza Kubatović keeps in her home and country house. Among them there is *čobanja*, a wooden water canteen used for keeping water

cool when working in the field. (Fig. 15.). Mrs Nada Kubatović is not even of Bunjevac origin. She met Geza when he was a student in Zagreb and after their marriage they lived in Đurđin near Subotica until the 1990s (Černelic 1998a:26, 32).

A characteristic piece of her clothing is the homespun apron used in the first half of the 20th century at home only. Every Bunjevci family in Croatia, who participated in the preparation of the exhibition, inherited several woven aprons from their ancestors as well as slippers characteristically embroidered with gold and silver thread (Fig. 16) Those items of clothing may be considered to be symbols of their cultural identity (Petrovic 1998:21, 22). Clothing for various occasions was a separate thematic unit.

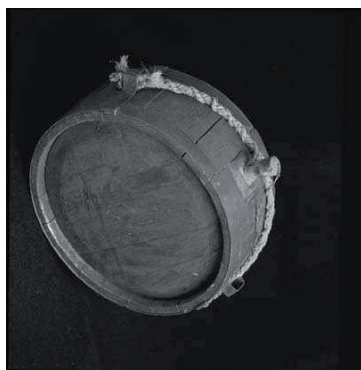


Figure 15. A water canteen (čobanja) in possession of the Kubatović family from Đurđin.

Figure 16. Embroidered slippers.

Photographs by Robert Leš, 1998.

Most Bunjevci families owned both a *salaš* and another house in the village or town. The main reason for this was the fact that there was no organized commerce nor were there any administrative or religious institutions near the *salaš*. The main source of income and economic advance was trade, while the Catholic faith shaped their lives. The Bunjevci are very religious and many artefacts of religious significance could be found in possession of all the families in Croatia who decided to take part in the exhibition. Each such a family owns at least one prayer book belonging to their ancestors. As families divided in the course of time, groups of such farms called *salaš* developed to gradually form rural settlements in the early 20th century. From the end of the 17th century onwards a number of the Bunjevci families were ennobled for their services to the Crown, mainly as members of the military establishment. When Subotica and Sombor were granted the status of free royal towns by

Maria Theresia in the 18th century, some families of the landed gentry settled in the area of the present-day Lemeš, which therefore acquired the characteristics of a rural settlement earlier than other Bunjevci settlements (Černelić and Petrović 1998:9). One of the exhibits was the painted coat of arms of the Vidaković noble family, today kept in the home of the Croatian politician Ivo Škrabalo, a member of the Croatian Parliament, deceased in 2011. (Fig. 17). He also saved a document showing his mother's family genealogy, handwritten by his deceased relative Lajčo Vidaković whose widow also saved a copy of the same painted coat of arms of her husband's family. Those items, as well as fine porcelain, different items used by women and men, musical instruments and various documents form another part of the exhibition (Šercer 1998:49-50).

A separate part of the exhibition was dedicated to the Bunjevci literary heritage - books and magazines, paintings by Bunjevci artists and the busts of Bunjevci public figures made by Bunjevci sculptor Nesto Orčić. Folk art highly characteristic of the Bunjevci are pictures and various other decorative pieces made of straw exclusively by women. They decorate the walls of many families' homes in their homeland as well as in Croatia. A specific example is the cover of a poetry manuscript of a symbolic title *Rasuto vlače* (Scattered Leaves) (Fig. 18). The author of both the collection of poems and its cover is the same woman, who gave the manuscript as a gift to its owner Naco Zelić when he was leaving his homeland (Zelić 1998:51-52).



Figure 17. The coat of arms of the Vidaković noble family from Lemeš.
 Figure 18. The cover of the poetry manuscript by Matija Dulić from Đurđin.
 Photographs by Robert Leš 1998.

Other thematic units of the exhibition: Christmas, Easter and weddings were presented as connecting the part of life on the *salaš* with the life in the town, pointing out at the same time the distinction between life on the *salaš* and in the town, as well as the way that the two are closely tied.

The Bunjevci women already mentioned as artists in straw decoration, also apply the same technique in decorating Easter eggs; this is quite a new tradition and it has become one of the recognizable symbols of their cultural identity, proving at the same time that folk invention can find its ways of expression in modern society as well (Fig.19). In earlier times boys used to visit girls on Easter Monday and pour water over them. Almost a century ago they started to sprinkle them with a perfume or cologne. One of the exhibits is an interesting document of the custom: the boy on the photograph has visited quite a few girls, which can be seen from the many artificial flowers pinned to his suit and the satisfied and proud look on his face. (Fig. 20). The boy also got Easter eggs and some oranges from girls. This custom is still in practice (cf. Černelić 1998b:36; cf. Černelić and Poljaković 2014:176-186).



Figure 19. A characteristic technique of decorating Easter eggs with straw. Photograph by Robert Leš 1998.

Figure 20. A boy on his Easter Monday water-pouring tour (polivač) – Feliks (Vicko) Dulić from Šebešić around 1918. Photograph in possession of Slavica Nadu, born Dulić.

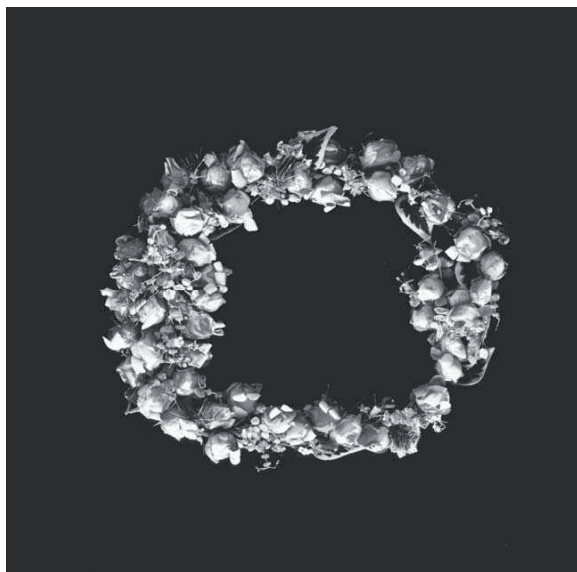
Wedding gifts, clothes, bridal trousseaus and headbands from different periods shape the part of the exhibition devoted to the wedding, as one of the most important events in life. A characteristic traditional engagement gift in the region of Sombor was a special kind of bread, a bottle and glasses for brandy, and an apple decorated with rings and other jewelry carried in a woven bag. (Fig.21) This was the engagement gift to Roza Fratrić from her fiancé in 1956 (cf. Černelić 1998b:36-39). It is interesting to notice how she changed her attitude towards some traditional artefacts she kept in her new home. She and her family had used the woven bag as a doormat in their new home in Zagreb. She cleaned it for the sake of the exhibition and afterwards her family started to show more respect for the particular traditional item. Their attitude towards their traditional heritage is otherwise positive; she and her mother took an active part in preparation of the exhibition. For example, they prepared the traditional bread made for weddings and Christmas and arranged the Christmas Eve table.



*Figure 21. The engagement gift of Roza Fratrić.
Photograph by Robert Leš 1998.*

An interesting object was the bridal headband from the 19th century saved in memory of her ancestors by Slavica Nadu born Dulić (Fig. 22). Most Bunjevci families saved framed wedding photographs together with the bridal headbands and decorations of their ancestors. The bridal headbands had changed several times at the beginning and in the middle of the

20th century, which was quite well documented by the exhibited framed wedding photographs.



*Figure 22. A bridal headband.
Photographs by Robert Leš 1998.*

Quite a number of the exhibited pieces are today incorporated in the living area of the Bunjevci families' homes, such as pieces of furniture, paintings and various items used in everyday life. Some of them are in use even today, but most of them serve only as decorative pieces and fragments of the past of their ancestors. Photographs of several Bunjevci home interiors have been exhibited in order to document their attitude to their own cultural heritage and its function in the new environment.

And finally, the catalogue of the exhibition has an intriguing section titled *Memories*. On the initiative of Tihana Petrović, one of the co-authors of the exhibition, some of the participants, both male and female, decided to write short documentary, historical or ethnographic texts concerning customs and holidays, biographical notes, pieces on education, social and political life.

3.4. Final remarks

All the quoted examples serve to illustrate the close connection between the Bunjevci and their homeland and compatriots in Bačka. There are numerous other examples, all of which could not be mentioned, that would further prove their positive attitude to their cultural heritage. All the families (about twenty all together) who took part in the event were actively involved in its creation and in the end highly satisfied with its realization. Almost all members of the Bunjevci families who participated in the exhibition are well educated. It is interesting to note that they show equal respect for the simple traditional objects as well as for the fine and luxury items which they all, more or less, inherited from their ancestors. The exhibition has at the same time clearly pointed out how the way of life of the Bunjevci Croats has well reflected their belonging to the Central European cultural context (Šercer 1998:50). The exhibition was a special occasion that revealed their cultural heritage in a proper and holistic manner due to their strong awareness of their cultural identity. Those families may be considered the heart and brain of the local community of the Bunjevci ethnic group in Croatia. They are from time to time more or less actively engaged in other events organized by the *Society of Croats in Vojvodina and the Danube region*. Other Bunjevci families are more passive. They participate more or less in different events, but most often not actively. The *Society* is supposed to appeal to all Croatian groups from Vojvodina, but the Bunjevci Croats play the most important and active part in it. The exhibition also aimed to present the traditional heritage of all Croats from Vojvodina, but the other Croatian groups did not offer their support to the initiative. The *Society* otherwise has its less active periods. After the exhibition they have become more passive, but they still do not neglect to organize their usual events, screening of films about their cultural heritage, etc. In December 2015 they were actively involved in organizing the visiting exhibition from Subotica in the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb.

My research concerning Bunjevci cultural heritage and participation in the preparation of the exhibition was at the same time research about their identity. As such, it confirmed A. Cohen's concept of communities: the reality of communities lies in its members' perception of the vitality of its culture. People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity. (cf. 1985.) His conclusion can be well applied to the results of my research on the local community of the Bunjevci Croats who settled in Croatia between the Second World War and the 1990s, leaving their homeland in Bačka.

4. Characteristic features of the *zadruga* (extended family) (co-author Tihana Rubić)¹¹

4.1. Basic interest and starting point

This chapter comparatively deals with particular aspects of life within the *zadruga* (extended family) among the Primorje/Lika and the Danube area Bunjevci in order to introduce certain characteristic features of life in extended families of the Bunjevci in different regions that they have inhabited since 17th century, focusing on: interrelations of family members in the everyday organization of life and work; the role of the master and the mistress – her duties in relation to other female family members; and (in)formal partition as well as some specific transitional forms of family life from the *zadruga* to nuclear families. Our approach aims to observe the *zadruga* phenomenon as a dynamic process rather than a static one, depending on internal as well as external socio-economic factors. We also aim to provide a comparative insight into the *zadruga* phenomenon in two branches of the same subethnic group, which largely reflects the historical and social circumstances in which this type of family life existed and was transformed. Such an approach to the *zadruga* phenomenon was first taken in the 1970s by Eugene Hammel on a larger scale within the southeast-European territories. The focus is placed on the two Bunjevci branches, because integral research on the extended family life patterns has been undertaken within the territories inhabited precisely by these two branches of Bunjevci subethnic group. Initial research was conducted among Dalmatia area Bunjevci in the region of Bukovica in northern Dalmatia (cf. Birt and Černelić 2014).

4.2. Theoretical background

Numerous studies and discussions have been written on the *zadruga* by both Western and indigenous scholars. In this passage, the emphasis is placed on particular authors from both groups who studied extended families/co-operatives, some of whom are lesser-known to the wider scholarly audience but nevertheless important for our interpretation.

During the previous century, there was an emerging interest in family, kinship and social relations in the societies of South-Eastern Europe. Scholars from various disciplinary fields extensively discussed numerous aspects of family and kinship, scholarly interests being in large part directed towards kinship and family structures. “Classical” social research on

¹¹ This chapter is our partly modified article: Characteristic Features of the *Zadruga* (Extended Family) of the Croatian Subethnic Group of Bunjevci. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 61:35-60 (2016).

family and kinship in the territory of South-Eastern Europe (in the Balkans) in the first half of the 20th century contributed profoundly, for example, to knowledge about family and kinship structures in the past, historical family forms and demographic changes. The major segments of the research on family and kinship in South-Eastern Europe can be best summarized in several contributions that have earned international acclaim. Here we will mention only a few that are relevant to our focus of interest. Some of the contributors have been (co)authors of key works on family and social life as well as on South-Slavic social organizations in the Balkans (e.g. Hammel 1975; *Filipović and Hammel* 1982), which set out a wider comparative analysis (model) of households and families in the world.

Interest has continued throughout the last few decades, but has also garnered both the critique and revision of the earlier studies of/by international and indigenous scholars¹². Moreover, the focus of interest has been slightly changed and transferred more towards comparative (temporal and regional) analysis researching past and/or present roles of a family and kin in changing societies (e.g. pre-industrial, industrial, post-socialist).

In the late 19th century, extended families in South-Eastern Europe were interpreted by lawyers, followers of the so called *Historical School of Law*, whose founder was Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779-1861). Their approach during field research was '*ethnographic*' (through gathering data by means of questionnaires) and aimed towards understanding and appreciating *common law*, which they regarded crucial in the process of the legal standardization of rural families (Rihtman-Auguštin 1984:18; Kaser 1997:131; Černelić 2009:304). This approach and methodology created the basis for works by Baltazar Bogišić on legal problems in *extended* and *independent (nuclear)* families, which, until the present, have remained an important starting point for ethnological studies of social life. This author claims that at the time of the disintegration of extended families "a whole range of different forms of families appear" – different in structure but the same in terms of relationship -, which indicates that socio-economic relations enable the renewal of rural extended family relations, although, by the end of the 19th century, due to extended family division, stronger financial relations are forged among family members and personal property gains importance. A lack of understanding with regards to the system of living and relations within rural family forms and kinship relations is considered the main reason for the mistreatment of property and inheritance relations, which resulted in great problems, especially in cases involving the

¹² For example, the approaches and paradigms related to this topic have been extensively discussed in the special issue of *Sociologija sela* [Rural Sociology], one of the high-ranking Croatian scholarly journals in social sciences (the issue No. 43, 1974).

division of family property. Therein Bogišić became aware that it was due to misunderstanding of the rural culture and the subordination of individuals and their personal interests to the community, primarily to their families, but also to wider local community. (Čulinović-Konstantinović 1993:31) In addition, Bogišić underlined the element of collective property as a key feature of an extended family as opposed to a nuclear family. Therefore, common economy and collective property are considered its distinctive features in comparison with a nuclear family. Bogišić pays no attention to the number of family members, focusing only on the following: the structure of family relations, the principles of labour division, the right of inheritance among the members and the collective property.

Collective property was seen as the fundamental feature distinguishing an extended family from a nuclear one, and the extended family was considered a legal and economic community of members by one other ethnologist as well – Milovan Gavazzi - who subscribed to Bogišić's earlier reasoning and also stressed the importance of the principle of indivisible collective property, common economy and the distribution of property among members (1978:82), placing it before the criterion of the number of members.

Gavazzi particularly considered economic and organisational aspects within the *zadruga*, elements of the traditional skills that were developing and taking place inside extended families, and he established a causal relationship between them and the existence of this type of family community. He claims, for example, how weaving skills were excellently “developed and preserved” precisely owing to the existence of the “socio-economic institution of South-Slavic extended family” (1978:62–63). Likewise, he attempted to interpret the origin of South-Slavic extended families and addressed the issue of the extended family in a wider European socio-economic context. (1963; 1978:63)¹³ Apart from this, which is of special importance for our paper, Gavazzi pointed to the diversity of extended families, each one being a separate case, explaining that one could not find

“two extended families with completely identical structures, the same property relations, the same living and working system, not even taking into account the difference in the number of

¹³ Precisely on the initiative of M. Gavazzi, in the 1960s an idea of describing life in individual extended families gained sway, which resulted in research within his project *Rural extended families in the 19th and the 20th century*, and the body of materials on extended families can be found in the archives of the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. The project came out with two volumes of collected papers entitled *Seljačke obiteljske zadruge I* [Rural Extended Families] (Gavazzi 1960) and *Seljačke obiteljske zadruge II* (Obad 1992). In respect of their structure and the focus of interest, descriptions of individual extended families are rather uniform due to the tendency towards further comparative analyses of the time. They contain data on family members (family tree), on the *zadruga* household, on property, on economy and work, management, the organisation of everyday life, the regulation of family members' duties and rights, and on the partition of the *zadruga*.

members and their kinship relations, the quality and quantity of fixed and movable property and other characteristics which are, normally, distinct and unique, differing in each extended family.” (1978:82.)

Already in the 1970s, Eugene Hammel argued that extended family is a process (1974; 1975; cf. Todorova 1986:7; Kazer [Kaser] 2002:40), stressing that, in practice, social phenomena do not function as an invariable continuum (cf. Goody 1972:105). On this basis, critical thinking against earlier studies of the *zadruga* was formed within the Croatian ethnological circle as well, especially during the 1980s. Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin (1984) has given a most explicit critique of descriptions of the *zadrugas* in several Croatian ethnographic monographs from the first half of the 20th century, in which the view of the *zadruga* as a static category was nurtured and perpetuated. *Zadruga* was seen as an ideal type of an extended family wherein there were, allegedly, no greater structural changes. Some have critically noted similar stereotypes perpetuated by Croatian historians during the 20th century. (Leček 2003:312) This idealization of extended family life has been supported by an idea of harmonious functioning within large family units and households in the past, and the lack of unity as the predominant value system was seen as the cause of the breakdown of the *zadrugas*.

However, there are two levels permanently present in the life of the researched families: one of them is value-oriented, imaginary (as it *should* be), and the other one is *real* (the way it *is* in a concrete case) (cf. Rihtman-Auguštin 1984:13–15) – which is similar to Peter Laslett’s differentiation between “familial ideology” and “familial experience”. (cf. 1972:63–85). Within Croatian ethnology, Jasna Čapo Žmegač was also an advocate of the process continuity, relying on the theoretical propositions and research by E. Hammel. She underlined that “(n)uclear (...) families and households in the common property-law system also belong to the *zadruga* type, and potentially, through families’ branching, a household consisting of a husband, wife and children, in which the adult son and his spouse continue living with their parents instead of establishing their own independent household, also develops into an extended family, that is to say a household comprised of several nuclear families, but with no changes to the basic ownership and inheritance structure. In this view, nuclear and expanded families are not two types of families but rather one of the same type in different points of its existence”. (1998:256; cf. Kaser 1997:132) Many studies by the aforementioned Croatian ethnologists (Černelić 1999; *ibid.* 2009; Čapo Žmegač 1998) and historians (Leček 2003) were done exactly in accordance with this critical thinking, having taken an approach that underlines the constant variability of the extended family structure (the

make-up and number of members), as well as social and economic circumstances affecting the structure of families and households.

Thus, extended types of families and households, termed the *zadrugas*, should be seen as variable communities rather than homogenous ones, to a large degree dependent on wider social, local as well as familial circumstances, which ultimately make *zadruga* more a social phenomenon than an institution. (Todorova 1986:7) In the mid-seventies of the 20th century, the interest of French *zadruga* expert Emile Sicard was directed towards the economic importance of Croatian extended families through history. He pointed out the multileveled relations among different authorities within an extended family, and identified the extended family as a primarily household and economic community (shared work and life) and only then a familial community (due to existence of some non-kin relations as well). E. Sicard's text is of an exceptional importance in terms of creating and explicating the multileveled model of various relations among different authorities within an extended family (1974; cf. First-Dilić 1974; Rihtman-Auguštin 2004:24), and in terms of highlighting the economic practices and relations within *zadrugas*.

Communities based on familial or kinship work and common economy had a shared interest in the survival of both individual economy and inheritance in the best interest of the particular household and familial community. Each of these communities were organized in accordance with the current circumstances and interests (in terms of the maximum benefit for the family and household), rather than according to a certain (general, uniform) pattern which would make life and family circumstances within *all* the extended families (more or less) the same. Even today, within a single local community one cannot speak of identical families and households. Thus, when studying families and households we should take into account the constant dynamics of the process and variability of structure within a single family (Čapo Žmegač 1996:185) and many informal practices within families, which do not always strictly adhere to the laws.

Furthermore, when using the concept “cyclical micro-variations“ of household, E. Hammel has taken into consideration different levels of dynamics (not statics) in the structure of households, even those that are seasonal: “households may have a developmental cycle and that there may also be seasonal variations in their structure“ (1972:337; cf. Todorova 1986:7–8) The (non-)survival of extended families is influenced by individual and family reasons, practical interests and *subjective* (cf. Stein Erlich 1964:338–340) reasons, apart from social circumstances, that, depending on the period, may have positive or negative effects on the preservation or partition of a particular extended family – such was an example of the world

agrarian crisis in the second half of the 19th century (cf. Bičanić 1937; cf. Stein Erlich 1964:334–335).

In one theoretical text on the study of family and kinship, French anthropologist Martine Segalen commented on the trap of simplifying general assumptions about families in the past, specifying the very importance of the context and circumstances which had different effects on family and household communities, by stating the following: “depending on whether in the focus of research is the family institution in the context of powerful industrialization (...) or protoindustrialization, one obtains a significantly different picture of family relations” (1997:35). Similarly, M. Todorova had earlier indicated the importance of a holistic approach to *zadruga* as “a complex structure and process alike, possessing a number of diverse valencies, such as kinship, property relations, residence, working arrangements, and so forth. Taken in isolation and elaborated as the sole basis of approach, each of these valencies would produce a one-sided definition and description, which would be valid for as many cases as there would be exceptions” (1986:8). We find the holistic approach to *zadruga* as a complex structure and process rather important and try to apply it throughout our comparative analysis of particular characteristic features of the *zadrugas* of the Bunjevci.

Let us now refer to the typology of households from 1972 – one of the most cited and referred to within a large corpus of works in the field of familial and demographic history. It was the one by Peter Laslett from the extensive volume he edited with Richard Wall. In the introductory contribution to this volume, Laslett did not explicitly mention extended families and/or *zadrugas* (unlike E. Hammel). One can assume that he considered them in the classification and typology, at least because Laslett did conduct research in the territory which is familiar with this institution (Serbia, Belgrade and the neighbouring region). (cf. Laslett and Clarke 1972:375–400) Within Laslett’s typology, the type of “multiple family household” (1974:36–37), in its extended variant, could correspond to the one of an extended family. Nevertheless, Laslett’s typology is oriented towards kinship structure within a household, according to which there are both simple and extended forms of family households (simple family household, extended family household and multiple family household) (ibid. 28–29). However, it does not include the structure of ownership, economic and property relations – and this we find the key differential feature of an extended family (*zadruga*) as opposed to

other forms of families and households. Notwithstanding its indisputable importance for the history of family in the European context, Laslett's typology is not sufficiently precise.¹⁴

4.3. The *zadruga*: common law, legal framework and socio-economic context

In a short review of Bogišić's approach to the study of family we have touched on the importance of common law for the organization of the extended family. Certain lawyers and ethnologists view common law as

“all written and unwritten norms of social behavior, economic, social and family relations (including moral values), which existed and were developed in traditional rural environments, regulating the internal life of these social communities, notwithstanding the existing legal norms of the country. (...) Tradition ensures continuity of cultural heritage in the course of history. Cultural heritage, yet, exists independently of the system of government, but relatively dependently on social system (feudalism, capitalism, socialism), wherein, with certain delay, it shapes more or less new models of relations and behavior” (Čulinović-Konstantinović 1984:52, 53–54).

Alongside the common-law regulation of traditional heritage there are state laws, which were also based, in their origin, on common law and had validated certain common-law norms during a longer period of time in the course of history. In this way, by introducing state laws, legal dualism is fostered. Up to the 19th century, common-law norms affected the process of legislation adjusting the law to national tradition (ibid. 55–56). Until and after 1881, Croatian historian Dragutin Pavličević greatly contributed to the research of extended family legislation within the Military Border with his two books on Croatian extended families, in which he offers detailed insight into legislation of extended families in the 19th and the 20th century. The first law on extended families ever was passed within the Basic Law of the Border in 1807. This law was based on the common law which was in force in Croatian territory within the Military Border at the time, and it was the first attempt at standardizing

¹⁴ Let us briefly mention two earlier critics of P. Laslett's typology (relevant to our scope of interest). The first one is a critique by Bulgarian ethnologist Maria Todorova, who notices that it is mostly “impossible to identify with one or more proposed family types in Laslett's classification”(1986:16) and that Laslett's typology is not “perfectly applicable to the Balkan region”(ibid. 18). She also indicated that the size of household is not sufficient data when it comes to *zadrugas*. Therefore, she proposed shifting the focus on other aspects important for the research, such as “age at marriage, age of birth of first and last child, frequency of remarriage, and many others (ibid., 19). The second one is the critique of a particular simplified classification of European family models into the West and the East (John Hajnal's division between the European and non-European civilizations of Eastern Europe, see Hajnal 1965). Croatian ethnologist J. Čapo Žmegač critically addressed “the geographic distribution of the different family forms” in Laslett's family typology, stating that although Laslett stresses that geographic implications are complex and confusing, and that the whole issue was not researched thoroughly enough, he implies a certain geographic distribution of European family (Laslett 1977:91, 96, 98; according to Čapo Žmegač 1996:183).

extended family life in general (1989b:274). However, after demilitarization of the Military Border, in attempts to legally regulate the extended family issue in civil Croatia, there was a discrepancy between the Civil Law and the extended family (common) law – in all laws passed from 1870 to 1880, especially in respect of property, inheritance and so called women's rights. This resulted in the passage of numerous acts on extended families, which in turn brought about many lawsuits, legal actions and secret partitions, etc. (ibid. 334–335). Attempts at the legal regulation of extended family relations continued up to 1918. Towards the end of the 19th century, extended families were increasingly contrasted to the general situation in the society. The general tendency towards individual production was becoming more and more evident, which is best illustrated by the statistics on the internal partitions of extended families. Basically, all laws on extended families strove towards the preservation of this type of family system. (cf. Čulinović 1953:166–168.) Ethnologist M. Gavazzi also pointed to the legal aspect of the continual existence of extended families, stating that

“the tradition of living within the extended family, together with shared property in South-Slavic rural parts, persistently survived this long owing to the system of taxation in according to which taxes were collected by the ‘chimney smoke’, that is, depending on the number of hearths. Thus, normally, in rural families that had parents with already-grown sons who had already married, their grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren, stayed together as a single community, an extended family – all of them around a single ancestral hearth, and these kinds of systems had existed from the early Middle Ages up to the end of Turkish rule in the Balkans” (1959:11).

However, even though this kind of artificial support facilitated the preservation of extended families, the beginning of the end of the latter should be traced to specific circumstances of the Military Border regime. Militarization of the Military Border in the late 18th century and the early 19th century disrupted the traditional division of labor in patriarchal society; women increasingly started taking up men's jobs, which led to overburdening of the female labor force. A series of years of famine also aggravated the disruption of agricultural production, and in these circumstances mutual assistance within an extended family lessened, all of which paved the way for the final breakdown of extended families. According to these indicators, militarization of the Military Border is one of the causes behind the process of extended family disintegration. (cf. Roksandić 1988:100–102; Kaser 1997:164–167.) After the mid-19th century, the tendency towards disintegration of the extended family system grew further. The causes of this were seen in external factors (socio-economic circumstances, unsuitable legal regulations) as well as in internal ones. In addition, K. Kaser, for example,

highlighted the difference between socio-ethnic groups in relation to *zadrugas* in one period of Military Border, its constitutions and dissolution: Vlachs and Bunjevci preferred to live in *zadrugas*, as opposed to Croats in other regions of the Military Border area (1997:196).

Economist and rural sociologist Rudolf Bičanić stated the following:

“The disintegration of the extended family is, in a way, “a long-lasting process” which cannot be analyzed on the basis of a single extended family or a single law, but rather within a general socio-economic context. For this very reason, the causes of the partition of the extended family are demographic, technical, economic, political and cultural, although, in the order of importance, economic and demographic factors come first” (1936:25–28).

Furthermore, he reasoned that agrarian and general crisis had led to the intensifying of the process of partition. He provided concrete economic evidence for the crisis and its impact on the disintegration of extended families: higher taxes, retailers entering the rural market with cheap merchandise, the introduction of railways, which accelerated the transportation of goods and utilization of land, industries which provided earning opportunities outside the extended family, the opening of the capitalist market and the lowering of wheat prices. All of this brought about “a demand for change in the methods and intensity of land cultivation, which the old self-sufficient extended family, with its internal structure and organization, could not meet. Disputes and discord, an ambition for separation and reliance on one’s own individual property (*osebunjak*) that was supposed to provide additional means of livelihood, appeared within the extended family. Individuals were trying to improve their position by quitting the extended family and adopting the new economic method. Thus, one can conclude that specifically economic reasons in production and consumption were the main triggers of partition and the disintegration of the extended family at the time of crisis in the 70s and 80s of the 19th century”. Bičanić also identified the causative connection between the disintegration of extended families and the frequent search for additional earnings – both inside the country and by emigrating abroad, primarily overseas (*ibid.* 25–28).¹⁵ Croatian ethnologist Jadranka Grbić links the causes of emigration with the context of extended families’ disintegration following the cancelling of the Military Border:

“after shared households had disappeared, many small families struggled to make a living on the land that was left to them after the partition. Keeping in mind the lack of investment in development and therefore the slow pace of industrialization throughout the entire territory of Croatia and, in turn, an extremely low employment rate, high taxes and peasant debt – it was natural that many saw their salvation in migration”. (2006:14)

¹⁵ The most intense emigration from Europe to America occurred between 1880s and 1920s. (cf. Čizmić 1982.)

4.4. The *zadruga* family life of the Bunjevci

In the context of the described socio-economic circumstances, wherein the extended family type was disintegrating - or continued existing, which, with the lack of thorough insight into practices of *zadruga* family life i.e. the prominent use of descriptive methods is rather unusual (Kaser 1997:133; Todorova 1986:17), we will now attempt to qualitatively depict particular segments of extended family life within branches of Bunjevci. The economic lives of Bunjevci peoples in both the Primorje/Lika and the Danube area were quite different due to their socio-economic framework (cf. Černelić 2005:35–40). Despite the differences, certain forms of the extended family system could be found within both branches of the Bunjevci.

Therefore, the comparative approach plays a prominent role in our analysis of the family life of the two Bunjevci branches. The approach is not simple to implement, as ethnographic differences within each of the branches are evident. We will thus illustrate some individual cases to indicate and discuss the peculiarities deriving from the internal and, up to a certain degree, the informal organization of life within a particular family in each of these two Bunjevci branches. On the basis of ethnographic insight into this phenomenon, we will point to tendencies in retaining certain features of co-resistance after the (in)formal partition of the *zadruga*. As revealed by the results of research focusing on their cultural heritage, these tendencies and features can be recognized in both branches. Our aim is to present the Bunjevci *zadrugas* as a process, based on the mentioned theoretical approach inaugurated by Hammel. Our approach is based on ethnographic data concerning individual families. Milovan Gavazzi's idea was also to focus on the research of individual *zadruga* families, which is applicable in our research as well. Our aim is to reach conclusions by comparing particular features of individual *zadruga* families in their final phase of existence. Such an approach should result in cognition about the possible existence of many individual variations, which in some aspects have certain common characteristics. Based on these perceptions, our starting point is that the common law was a highly relevant factor in the regulation of *zadruga* family life, more or less adjusting to legislative rules in a certain period of time and space.

4.4.1. The Primorje/Lika Bunjevci branch

Socio-economic factors, primarily economy-driven emigration, played an important part in the disintegration of extended families in Lika and Primorje as well as in creating specific modes of managing and establishing thus conditioned property relations in particular

un-partitioned extended families who managed to survive the general economic crisis. Therefore, it is necessary to consider that “a family is a social group with an extremely important economic function in rural life” (Rihtman-Auguštin 1984:17). Ethnological research of extended families in this region shows that in such circumstances members of particular extended families tended to address the issue of organization or partition of their familial communities on their own. As a consequence, familial communities either ceased to function internally, or continued to function as an extended family according to an agreement among the members.

4.4.1.1. The role of the *master* and the *mistress*

The master and the mistress have important roles in organization of everyday family life and labor. This is more or less based on age and gender structure, which means that the oldest male member of the family is regularly the master of the family. If he is not alive, the second oldest member takes over the duty. The role of the mistress was important, especially with respect to the female members of the family, but in certain situations her role was even more significant. She conducted and coordinated the women’s work and their duties, she herself undertaking some of the basic duties in the household. Such a familial order and the established rights and duties of all the members of the extended family were mostly in line with the acts of the Basic Law of the Border after 1807 – with integral common-law norms according to which the organization of the *zadruga* life is basically structured (Pavličević 1989b:274–277). These are the general standards, which may be considered a model of the family administration, but sometimes, in practice, these rules are somewhat different. Older literature makes no mention of any external influences that might disrupt the well-established order of the extended family, while the only mentioned potential internal disturbance of relationships is in terms of determined sanctions against its members, including the *master*, if he does not perform his duties according to the rules and if he disrupts the extended family’s order. However, no concrete examples of their actual application are provided (Černelić 2009:313). Research done in the 1980s and in the last few years offers more detailed records of some individual families in the temporal and social context, indicating that the standard order was readjusted to the particular situation that caused some specific modes of conducting the family and common economy. The general principles of the *zadruga* regulations were respected, which was in fact the postulate of its existence and survival, but it was necessary to regulate interrelationships and the organization of life and homestead, adjusting these to particular family circumstances.

4.4.1.2. Specific circumstances of management, labor distribution and (in)formal partition in the final stage of the *zadruga* existence

Data from earlier literary sources quite often offer a simplified picture of a stable arrangement and order, ideal administration and relationships among members of the *zadruga* families, without providing any information about its functioning when, for example, all male members of the family are absent and work outside the family. In these cases, the regular distribution of labor between male and female members is disturbed. This was the case in the Military Border, when male labor was primarily taken on by women. The evidence of disturbance in the clear distribution between male and female work can, nevertheless, be found in some descriptions of the Military Border circumstances at the end of the 18th century. According to Hacquet's claims, at the end of the 18th century "poor" Lika women did "all" agricultural work. He especially emphasizes, obviously due to the degree of its difficulty, ploughing with the use of a "plough with no wheels"... "The hardest and the simplest" duties in the extended family homestead are done by the youngest woman (Roksandić 1988:25).

The results of the research on the *zadruga*, carried out in some regions inhabited by the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci in the 1980s and in the first decade of the 21st century will best illustrate the attributes of extended families in the final stage of their existence in the first half of the 20th century. Under normal conditions, the division of labor was based on the standard *zadruga* rules of distribution into male and female work, adapted to specific circumstances within the family, depending on the number of its male and female members. The mistress was responsible for cooking and doing most housework, while other women helped her upon agreement. If there were fewer women in the household, the mistress would take on the rest of the housework which was usually outside her domain. Methods of labor distribution differed among various extended families. The lack of a male labor force largely determined the organization of an extended family and the distribution of work in the final stage of the *zadruga* existence. Male members of the family were often absent from the household in order to earn money for the family, especially when the father, as the master of the family, was still alive; in the period of transatlantic emigrations, most intensively from the 1880s to the 1920s, in different regions of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom (named Yugoslavia from 1929) during the period of the state's existence (first half of the 20th century), as well as in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in the 60s during the wave of labor emigration to West Germany from those rare *zadrugas* that still survived by the second half of the 20th century (cf. Černelić 2006:41–43; 2009:307, 309–

312, 315). In most *zadrugas*, one of the brothers usually stayed in the household after the father died, taking over the management of the family. In many cases, the mistress took over the management, especially during the period when men were absent. Men most often worked as bricklayers (which was a common occupation at that time), but they also did other jobs, such as woodcutting work, road construction, building tunnels, and so on. In these circumstances, the mistress organized the work of both the absent male and female members of the family. She herself did most of the household work: cooking, making bread, collecting eggs (*planinka – mountain woman*), and taking care of children. If she could not handle all the jobs on her own, her daughter or/and the youngest daughter-in-law helped her. Other women worked in the field because men were also absent during the field work season. In the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci branch, the mistress most often took over the managing role after the death of the master, but that duty was often formally assigned to the oldest son, who, if not absent, performed all the work outside the household. In addition to the above, male members of the family in the region of Primorje and Lika frequently migrated to countries overseas from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century. This was the most intensive period of migration and the most common reason for the partition of extended families, but this cannot be taken as a general fact. Quite often families did not separate, but simply reorganized managing strategies and homestead activities, adapting them to the specific situation in each family. Recent research in the region of Lika in 2010 (the local community of Lovinac) indicates that the *zadruga* members who migrated to the United States, Canada or to some South American states were obliged to support the family financially. They were still considered members of the *zadruga*, keeping the right to legal inheritance in the event of its partition. In contrast to the usual idea that economic migration caused the disintegration of the *zadruga*, the informants claimed that emigration did not contribute to it - on the contrary, the emigrants in fact helped the *zadruga* to become more economically stable. For example, in one *zadruga* from Brušane, a village near Gospić in Lika, after the death of the last master in 1938, his wife conducted the family, even though the oldest son had formally taken over family management. He performed all the work outside the *zadruga* household instead of his mother. At that time, he was the only male member of the household since his younger brother was a transatlantic emigrant. The *zadruga* did not disintegrate at the moment of the master's death, the result of a conscious decision by its members, even though they had earlier considered the possibility of partition. Since the son who worked and lived in the *zadruga* died earlier than his mother (the mistress), the other son came back from abroad in order to help and take care of his mother. In this *zadruga*, as well as in some others in the region of

Lika, the disintegration occurred as a natural process caused by specific family circumstances and without formal partition being implemented (like in other settlements in Lika, such as Lovinac and Trnovac) (cf. Čermelić 2009:314). Economic migration in different periods of time was certainly an important factor in the partition of the extended family; at the same time, it produced some specific modes of family life within the *zadruga*s that survived the economic crises. After they had been (in)formally divided, certain attributes of the extended family structure were retained as well, having been adjusted to the specific circumstances of a particular family.

These changes contributed to the mistress becoming the central authority of the *zadruga*, and the extended family structure, in appropriate forms, survived up to approximately the mid-20th century, and in certain cases even longer. For example, in two generations of the one family, women took over the administration of the *zadruga* because men were absent. After their father's death, both brothers emigrated to Canada and Argentina, leaving the women alone with children. The husband of the mistress left for Argentina soon after they married. In the meantime, she gave birth to their son and on her husband's first visit home she got pregnant again. Afterwards, he never returned from emigration. The two women did not get on well and disagreed, so the old *zadruga* was divided in 1931 and one woman became the mistress of the newly established *zadruga* with her sons. When her sons married, her older son took over the management of activities outside the *zadruga*, but the woman remained the mistress, arranging all important matters with regards to family life and economy. This *zadruga* survived all the way up to the 1990s. Her sons left in the late 1960s for temporary employment in West Germany, which was common in former Yugoslavia at that time, thus contributing to the better economic prosperity of the family. Before they left, and after they came back, they had worked in the field together with the women as well as attending to other additional work outside the *zadruga*. The mistress's duty was cooking and taking the food to the field during seasonal fieldwork in addition to doing other housework, except laundry. At the time of the research (1981), the mistress's only duty was to deliver and sell milk, but she was not obliged to do anything else unless she wanted to. Her daughters-in-law took over the cooking and other activities in the household, deciding how to share duties together. The distribution of work was no longer as strict as before. (cf. *ibid.* 311, 315)

The narration of an informant from the nearby village of Trnovac near Gospić, provides an interesting perspective on the *zadruga* in its final stage of existence: one male member of the *zadruga* usually worked in the field, others would work in the woods, factories or in the United States, providing the family with a certain portion of their earnings, which

was regulated according to their income levels. Each member of the *zadruga* could only have claimed his part of the inheritance if he had contributed to the *zadruga* for thirty years. If he had ceased to provide financial support it, he lost the right to his part of the family heritage (ibid. 309).

4.4.1.3. Examples of transitional forms, from extended to nuclear family (gradual partition)

In some extended families of the Primorje Bunjevci in the region of Krivi Put, members of the divided *zadrugas* lived for 2 or 3 years in the same place, even after the formal partition (achieved via agreement without legal procedure), making common use of the former *zadruga* tools where appropriate, even working interchangeably on plots in the field that were not yet divided. Some of them remained living in the same place afterwards as they could not afford to establish new households on their own, forced to share the former common house due to economic reasons, but cooking and working separately, even though they would also rather live separately. This transitional form of living might be defined as a temporary co-residence of two or more nuclear families (Černelić 2006:52). Even in the examples of extended families in Lika mentioned above, there was no formal partition in their final stage. Instead, they survived due to their tendency of preserving certain aspects of *zadruga* life for the purpose of easier management in harsh economic conditions, which triggered overseas emigrations and led to the later disintegration of the family as part of a natural process and in accordance with specific family circumstances. There is a similar type of familial co-existence in the same location, the difference being that there are neither *zadrugas* nor any transitional forms between an extended and a nuclear family. In this case, two brothers live in their parents' house due to financial constraints, each with his own family, but according to the principle of two individual households, without shared work and economy, both seeking to set up (autonomous) homesteads of their own as soon as an opportunity arises for either of them (cf. Rubić and Birt 2009:50–52.). This type of household may correspond to Laslett's term "houseful", which "may contain several households" (Goody 1972:105). According to Laslett's definition, common location is the most important criterion when discussing "domestic group" (1972:36). In those terms, the co-residence of two or more nuclear kin families may represent a "domestic group." The aforementioned examples of family structures occurring during the transition from extended family to a nuclear one make for the same or a similar type of a familial community, but formed under different circumstances.

4.4.2. The Danube area Bunjevci branch

Although external factors which influenced the existence of particular *zadrugas* within the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci differ as compared to the Danube area Bunjevci, the latter branch of Bunjevci also tended to preserve *zadrugas* in conditions when this family system was disintegrating, both in their own environment and in a wider social context. Proving specific examples, we will attempt to indicate different modes of preserving the *zadruga* system in its final stage of existence in the Danube area as well.

4.4.2.1. The role of the Master and the Mistress

The rules concerning the duties of the master and the mistress are more or less the same as those of the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci branch. According to a general rule, the oldest son became his father's successor. Nevertheless, in some cases, his wife, the mistress, took over the managing role in the *zadruga*. Most often, however, it was the oldest son - or the most capable one - who took over duties which the master had performed and in this way became the mistress' deputy (Černelić 2006:143).

4.4.2.2. Specific forms of management and division of labour in the final stage of the *zadruga* existence

The mode of conducting the *zadruga* among the Danube area Bunjevci ethnic group is specific in some aspects. Sometimes the master and the mistress lived in the city - apart from the other members of the family. The sons were obliged to give parents a certain portion of the common income (*komencija*). The master supervised the work of the family members and he disposed of the property, but his oldest son governed the current work, and, in agreement with his brothers, decided what work was to be done. This way of *zadruga* administration is special due to the separate living arrangements described above and entails a kind of parallel seniority. As a rule, sons worked in the field and the father monitored their work and disposed of money and property (ibid. 146; 2010:112, 125-126). For instance, in one extended family near the town of Sombor, despite his father's authority and management, the oldest son took care of some of his tasks, such as trade and dealings with authorities, which meant that even after his father's death he kept performing the same duties while, in a formal sense, it was his mother who actually took the control of the *zadruga*. In some extended families (one in Tavankut, near Subotica), members did not live under one roof because of their sheer numbers; they moved to different farms (*salaš*), but retained the practice of common economy and ownership (ibid. 146).

Although the distribution of labor, especially the kind performed by women within the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci *zadruga*, was not given detailed consideration in this paper, on the basis of the insight into the final stage of its existence, one can note certain similarities. As opposed to the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci branch, men of the Danube branch most often worked within the *zadruga*, but similarly, women took over their duties if some of the men were absent for any reason. Areas inhabited by the Danube region Bunjevci are rich in fertile soil, and there was therefore no need to earn a living outside the extended family circle. Nonetheless, in some cases certain male family members did other jobs, earning money outside the *zadruga* and in this way contributing to the community. Regional modalities of female labor distribution among the Danube area Bunjevci in southern Hungary varied; the duty of the mistress is to cook and do most of the work in the household; other women help her upon agreement; the mistress cooks and makes the bread and other women assist her when necessary (one *zadruga* in Kačmar). In one *zadruga*, in the village of Čavolj, the mistress was cooking and one of her daughters-in-law was processing the milk products while the other one had no specific duties except working in the field instead of her husband, who was working outside the *zadruga* as a craftsman. A specific modality is confirmed among the regional group of the Danube area Bunjevci near Budapest in Hungary: the mistress cooked, and her daughters-in-law consecutively changed subsidiary tasks. In most *zadrugas* in the region of Bačka in Serbia as well as in some in southern Hungary, women alternated every week in performing household work, primarily in cooking, but their other duties were variously arranged from *zadruga* to *zadruga* (the so called *reduša*) (ibid. 144–145). In some extended families (for example on a farm in Đurđin and Tavankut) one woman was especially chosen to take care of poultry – named *stanarica - the (in)dweller*; in some other *zadrugas*, the name denoted a woman whose duty was to process milk products (ibid 145, ibid. 2010:126–127). Even within the Danube area Bunjevci branch, these variations in the distribution of labour among women were adjusted to the living circumstances of the *zadruga* in its final stage, when life and work organization took on specific forms adapted to the relations and circumstances of the given family.

4.4.2.3. Examples of co-existence among family members after an internal *zadruga* partition

Life in the *zadruga* in its final stage among the regional Danube area Bunjevci grouping in southern Hungary had specific aspects. All family members were living together for a certain period of time, but they worked separately; in some families they cooked

together awhile, and sometimes they worked separately, but organization was the same as when they functioned as a *zadruga*; if the father was alive, the sons worked for him to earn money for food and clothing. In some cases, the master provided them with food for a year in order to enable them to gradually prepare themselves for independent living, and even when they were completely separated, they still continued to help each other (Černelić 2006:146–147). In some *zadrugas* of the Danube area Bunjevci in Serbia (Subotica), the master tried to prevent the partition by persuading his sons to stay together. Even if the extended family had been divided internally (not legally), the land was still common property, even though members of the family used it separately (according to internal agreement) (ibid. 148–149). In case of partition, sons were obliged to provide common income (*komencija*) in order to financially support their parents, or parents stayed with the family of one of their sons, who took care of them and would, as a rule, consequently inherit a larger portion of the family property. A tendency towards internal land distribution among the members of the extended family was prominent even before the actual partition of Bunjevci *zadrugas* in southern Hungary. These kinds of extended families were gradually partitioned and one can say they died out naturally, as in the example of one *zadruga* in Gara (southern Hungary), wherein, after their father's death, two out of four brothers stayed with their mother, each of them in his own part of the house, and each family cultivated their parts of the land separately. They cooked together, and after the mother's death, they retained their living arrangements, but started cooking separately (ibid. 149, 146). Further examples among Bunjevci in southern Hungary will illustrate additional modes of co-existence in the final stage of *zadruga* life or after the internal partition. In one extended family in Aljmaš, two brothers had their own farm buildings and worked separately, but the organization of labor was very similar to the one from the times of common economy. Each brother provided an even portion of the common income to the parents and their unmarried sister. They cooked together and equally invested in the kitchen. After each brother started taking care of his own family, they became somewhat like tenant farmers (*arendaši*) on their own parents' property. One extended family in Čavolj had a similar situation. Two brothers worked together for their father for food and clothing. Even before partition, the father had decided that they were going to be dependent on him (*live by his bread*) for a year in order to prepare themselves for standalone living. During this period each of the sons, with his family, had a separate room and his own farm buildings. They worked according to the father's demands, one in the field and the other as a bricklayer outside the household. The latter's wife worked in the field instead of him, and the earnings from his craft went to their nuclear family. In 1927, when the brothers launched their own

independent households (*ošli obaška na krv*, meaning that they were not using the same bread any more), the son who worked in the field continued doing the same for his father for a half (*na polak*), and thus the yield was divided into equal portions. The other brother, apart from doing the bricklayer's job, took some land on lease, which was cultivated by his brother, for which he compensated by hilling up or offering his bricklaying services to his brother as needed. The land was still cultivated through the use of the old common *zadruga* tools. This kind of relationship between brothers was kept after the father's death. There are other similar examples of specific family relations adjusted to a particular situation, which indicate certain modes of *zadruga* management and the relations among the members of the family who were living together for a period of time after the internal partition, taking care of parents, helping each other and working together, although property relations changed after particular nuclear families within the former extended families had become independent (ibid. 146–147). There are also examples in the extended families within Bunjevci branch in Bačka, in Serbia, near Subotica (one *zadruga* from Žednik), wherein land was already divided some time before the formal breakdown of the *zadruga* following the departure of one son from the extended family. The remaining members of the extended family lived and worked together for the next ten years (ibid. 148).

These cases reflect specific modes of co-residence in two nuclear families, representing a specific type of family with its subtypes as transitional forms in the process of transforming from an extended family to a nuclear one, in circumstances of gradual *zadruga* disintegration.

4.5. Final remarks

Our research has shown that the general principles of family life and structure were regulated by the provisions of the Military Border law in 1807. However, the interrelationships and organization of life and economy in a particular household were adjusted to the living circumstances of the given. Therefore, we have illustrated specific variations of the role of the mistress after taking over for the master of the *zadruga*, which was especially characteristic of the final stage of its existence, because most likely some family members persisted in maintaining the principles of *zadruga* rule, even after it had broken apart. The roles of the master and the mistress were more or less the same in both Bunjevci branches. The mistress often took over the management of the *zadruga* in the event that the master died or became seriously ill. In some of these *zadrugas*, she also shared this

role with her eldest son, or with another one who was more capable of performing the duty. In a certain sense, that son acted as her assistant or deputy in matters of administration.

The varied forms of female work distribution among the Danube area Bunjevci indicate that some types of labor distribution were similar to those of the Primorje/Lika area Bunjevci (which can be characterized as Dinaric type of female work distribution in extended families), while the periodic alternation of certain duties, a specific form known among some regional groups of the Danube area Bunjevci, is characteristic of the Pannonian area. Nevertheless, specific subtypes in the distribution of female labor (when the mistress has fixed duties while her daughters-in law help her with some tasks, which are often not entirely specified) could also be found in certain regions of western Hercegovina, southern Dalmatia and Montenegro (cf. Andrić 1972; Černelić 2006:149–150). These features can be characterized as typical of the Bunjevci population in different regions, wherein they exist or existed in the past, despite various historical and socio-economic factors that influenced the formation of the *zadrugas* over the course of history.

Differences concerning the way extended families were partitioned as well as the efforts to preserve them, or at least to retain certain features of the *zadruga* life in the transitional period of its transformation to the nuclear family, characterize both branches of the Bunjevci subethnic group, regardless of how many variations there may be on a formal level. Initial research in 2011 among the third Bunjevci branch in Dalmatia indicated that the same tendencies survived in the region of Bukovica even longer, up to the last decade of the 20th century. An interesting aspect is the preservation of the *zadruga* lifestyle in spite of the fact that members of the younger lived separately and earned a living outside the family, mostly by leaving for Germany for temporary work. Forms of cooperative existence adapted to a specific situation have remained in some families for longer or shorter periods of time as late as the 1990s. (cf. Birt and Černelić 2014.)

The specific transitional forms observed in the transformation of the *zadruga* to nuclear families may also partly be a result of the absence of proper legal procedure concerning extended families after the disintegration of the Military Border. The law after 1889 and the *zadruga* amendment after 1902 were not changed in the first four decades of the 20th century (Pavličević 2010:141). An interesting perspective was given by Dragutin Tončić, a lawyer who had been dealing with the issue of the extended family for years as a high government official in Croatia-Slavonia by 1918 and later as an advisor to the civil governor (*ban*) in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, when he wrote a book on this subject. Tončić was an advocate of preserving the *zadruga* as an institution for as long as economic

and socio-political conditions allowed for it. Thus, he concluded the preface of his book in 1925 by stating that “the importance of the *zadruga* is still up-to-date” and that “no matter how much we speak of their survival, it is indisputable that the number of extended families, at least those consisting of a single family, has significantly increased lately, and the familial and household *zadruga* still continues to indicate our folk individuality and the life force of our peasants” (Tončić 1925:5, acc. to Pavličević 2010:141–142).¹⁶ In accordance with the decision made by the AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia) in Jajce, in 1943, Yugoslav and Croatian communists repealed all pre-war laws, including the former civil laws which were in conflict with the new political system of the newly formed country (cf. Pavličević 2010:241). In this way, the issue of the *zadruga*, along with the problem how to legally treat extended families as kinship communities, was not resolved due to the emergence of a legal vacuum. Tackling these problems came under court jurisdiction in 1947, but not without with some difficulties because in legal terms the singularities of the *zadruga* deviated from civil law norms. Lawyers finally adopted the attitude that the *zadruga* is, after all, “a property community sui generis with a pronounced familial element”. In court practice, old acts which had been revoked were also used with regard to partition since regulating secretly partitioned extended families posed a particular problem. However, no special regulations or laws on the *zadruga* were passed (ibid. 242). In the socio-political atmosphere of the socialist period, the extended family was also seen as an undesirable community because the aim of the new society was to abolish common property. It was thus proclaimed that *zadrugas* were inhibitors of socialist development, and so all legal means were made available in order to decimate the *zadruga* community (ibid. 250–251). Despite pressure from socialist authorities, particular extended families managed to survive in some other parts of Croatia as well, and not only in those inhabited by Bunjevci (cf. ibid. 252–258). The fact remains that within this “legal chaos”, in practice, unwritten common law played an important part in the final legal resolution of the *zadruga* issue since former members of extended families tackled all the complex questions by means of internal agreement. The last surviving extended families in all three Bunjevci branches can serve as a good example of this. Nevertheless, we also need to stress the importance of ethnological research on the *zadruga*, conducted in the territories of Croatia and South-Eastern Europe.

¹⁶ A more detailed analysis of the legal aspects of extended families in the 20th century is not possible here, although it is of crucial importance in understanding this type of family life in general and the influence of various factors that brought about its disintegration. Detailed information on the legal regulation of *zadrugas* by the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was offered by Croatian historian Dragutin Pavličević in his second book published in 2010, which was dedicated to the issue of the *zadruga*.

Therefore, proper partitioning - either by legal means or by agreement - is often not realized and the extended families in question mostly disappear as a result of a natural process of disintegration in the first half of the 20th century, and in some cases even later, depending on individual circumstances as well as the prevalent socio-economic factors. As far as the subethnic group of Bunjevci is concerned, it is interesting to point out that these tendencies could be traced to certain regions of Hercegovina and the Dalmatian Hinterland in the south-eastern Dinaric area, from which the Bunjevci originate. Common features of extended family life, in spite of their numerous variations, seem to be relevant traces which could result in a new understanding of the ethno-cultural formation of the Bunjevci ethnic group as well as a source of important facts about structure and life in the extended families of South-Eastern Europe. Some inherited features that characterized the extended family life of all three branches of Bunjevci survived, most likely as expression of common law and despite the strong influence of historical, socio-political, ecological and economic factors on Bunjevci family structure in the final stage of the existence of the *zadruga*.

5. *Dužijanca* – the celebration marking the end of the harvest as a cultural practice and expression of identity (co-author Jadranka Grbić Jakopović)¹⁷

5.1. Theoretical annotations

In all social systems, both past and present ones, notwithstanding the various systems and ruling ideologies, ethnic, cultural and other types of pluralism are the key factors. Among other things, this has resulted in the notion and significance of the fact that pluralism within a social and political system (e.g. state) implies the coexistence of a minority and a majority. On the global and (opponent) local levels, understanding and concepts of economic, social and cultural diversity, sameness, borders, togetherness – in a word: identity, are formed and transformed.

In an attempt to understand the reality (in) which we live, we often rely on ethnology and cultural anthropology. These conceptual sciences direct us, theoretically and methodologically (with the pertaining terminology), towards the definitions and concepts of culture and identity, i.e., towards the cultural and identification strategies and practice that can be used for categorizing and classifying communities in the introspection process and the process of interaction with others: through centuries of changes, what leads and maintains a community is confidence and self-respect, the feeling of affiliation and continuity. This implies that each community has a name, space, history, tradition and culture, a consensus as to its common origin, the feeling of sameness and the feeling of togetherness and belonging. In other words, identification processes and practices emphasize the objective dimension (cultural repertoire) and the subjective dimension (emotions and loyalty). Both dimensions are constantly being transformed and never appear in any sort of “original form”. At the same time, however, they imply the existence of certain constants, i.e. of the belief, thought and statement on the duration and continuum on which rests the basis of togetherness (cf. Grbić 2012).

In the last fifty years, referring to the notion “search for identity”, anthropological literature produced numerous and often contradictory theories directed towards the affirmation and reaffirmation of cultural, ethnic, national and other identities, such as regional

¹⁷ This chapter is our partly modified article published in the Croatian language: Sto i dvije godine trajanja Dužijanice - proslava završetka žetve kao kulturna praksa i iskazivanje identiteta. In: Muhoberac, Mira (ur.). 3. međunarodni znanstveni interdisciplinarni simpozij: Hrvatska folklorna i etnografska baština u svjetlu dubrovačke, svjetske i turističke sadašnjosti (11.-13. prosinca, 2012. ; Dubrovnik, Hrvatska *FEB 2012. Zbornik radova.* Zagreb: Folklorni ansambl Lindo 500-515 (2013).

ethnocultural identities of minority communities. Some of them foresee the de-ethnicization and overall homogenization of the society. However, the strengthening of ethnicism and regional identities in the last two decades points to a different direction of thought. This is supported by pragmatism and historical experience (cf. *ibid.* 207). Identity lives in objective cultural contents, in which tradition has a special status, since tradition is (still) where ethnical and cultural markers – media for ascription and identification – are mostly selected from (cf. Barth 1969). This tradition is not original, but is modified and transposed in each coming new era, since we can recognize the variability of identities in this new modification of, so to speak, “originality”: being the same, but always in a different way (cf. Banac 1992:88).

Identity co-exists on the global and local levels: in, at, and beyond borders. From one’s native region to one’s homeland, people become aware of their culture when they become aware of its borders, i.e. when something different and diverse appears, or something that departs from what is usual or normal: the norm becomes the border, a symbolic sense of recognition and consolidation of identity. What is also important for the process of symbolic identification are the notions of what we have “inside” and what is different from that (cf. Cohen 1985) ... When insiders and outsiders meet at the borders, a “play” of similarities and differences takes place (cf. Jenkins 1996).

To conclude: genesis, limits, symbols, common destiny and, in the end, as the Croatian scientist and politician Pavao Ritter Vitezović stated in the 17th century, “our national customs”, are evidence that the stability of the identification process, as well as its final result – identity – in spite of everything, can remain undisputed for a long time (cf. Banac 1992).

5.2. The outlines of the *Dužijanca*

A proper evidence of these processes is the celebration marking the end of the harvest called the *Dužijanca*, a specific cultural festivity of the Danube area Bunjevci in Vojvodina.

The *Dužijanca* as a public festivity should be outlined from a historical and contemporary perspective. From a holistic perspective, we have tried to provide an answer in what way this festivity, both in the past and present, represents an expression of the identity of the ethnic group of Bunjevci in the multicultural environment of the province of Vojvodina, as well as to outline the variety of social, cultural, religious, political and environmental contexts within which the event is celebrated.

As part of their cultural heritage, the *Dužijanca* was organized jointly by the Bunjevci family members and reapers. It is imbued with religious dimension, giving thanks to God for the collected crop. Blaško Rajić, a priest in St. Rocco’s Church in Subotica, fostered its

celebration as a public event in 1911. The leading male and female figures of the harvest (*bandaš* and *bandašica*) were selected for the first time in the town of Subotica, the administrative and cultural center of the Danube area Bunjevci branch. Since then it has continuously existed with occasional ups and downs. The *Dužijanca* was not organized only during the Second World War. Its religious and civil segment existed separately up to 1993 (cf. Vojnić Hajduk 2006a).

The family *Dužijanca* has been practiced every summer during the final stage of harvest, realized through mutual assistance between families, the so called *moba*, the latter being a standard method of economic cooperation until the Second World War on the Bunjevci farm (known as *salaš*), which was the central institution of rural life in Bačka (Fig. 23). The *salaš* was composed of a farmhouse and the farm buildings bordering directly on field crops.



Fig. 23. Salaš in Tavankut, nearby Subotica. Photograph by Matija Dronjić 2011.

The male reapers (*risari*) performed the hard work of harvesting by hand, while the female reapers (*risaruše*), both girls and women, sheaved (Fig. 24). The most skilled among them wove a crown from the wheat straw and ear, which was assigned to the leader of the reapers (*bandaš*): they also made some decorations from straw for other reapers. After all the work around harvest was completed, the reapers led by the *bandaš* walked in procession to the farm of the master whose field had been reaped. The mistress blessed the wreath with holy water and the master offered the reapers some brandy and wine. The *bandaš* informed them on the harvest, the quality and the quantity of wheat sheaves, handing over the wreath to the

master, which was usually stored until the next harvest. The final event of the harvest celebration (the *Dužijanca*) was a lavish supper which included traditionally prepared cheese strudel, dance and music until late night. The *Dužijanca* is a festivity meant to express a sense of gratitude to God for successfully performed harvest. Thus briefly outlined traditional way of marking the end of harvest was practiced in this way until the mid-20th century, i.e. the period when the traditional harvesting by hand was increasingly replaced by agricultural mechanization.



Fig. 24. Traditional harvest. Photograph by Bolto Dulić, 1940s.

Industrialization and different political regimes caused many transformations in agriculture, first of all by incorporating the social capital as the basic socio-economic capital. At the same time, in the period after the Second World War, with the introduction of the Communist regime, any festivity with national characteristics has been blocked. The agrarian reform which led to dispossession of private property harmed agricultural farming families greatly. These factors mostly affected the celebration of the *Dužijanca* in the family households (cf. Vojnić Hajduk 2011:13-14).

As already mentioned, the celebration of the *Dužijanca* in an urban environment started as early as 1911, when it was initiated by the Church circles, who recognized the

celebration of giving thanks to God for a successful harvest as an ethnocultural festivity of the Bunjevci subethnic group. In this way a traditional celebration has been incorporated in the Catholic Church liturgy. Having initiated it, the priest B. Rajić, was in fact a forerunner of a kind because the Catholic Church officially declared the incorporation of the folk customs in liturgy at the Second Vatican Council no sooner than in 1963. The rural celebration was thus transposed into urban environment. From 1935 the *Dužijanca* has also been celebrated in Sombor, the other town in Bačka inhabited by Bunjevci, where it is called the *Dužionica*. More and more villages take part in the *Dužijanca* and organize their own local celebrations. In the final ceremony performed in Church the main figures are the reapers' leader (*bandaš*) and the leading female reaper (*bandašica*) (cf. Vojnić Hajduk 2006:68, 70; Zelić 2006:101).

Straw decoration as unique artistic expression of the Bunjevci subethnic group in the region of Bačka has become thereafter the symbol of the Bunjevci identity up to the present days. Instead of the wreath or crown, various items, representing primarily religious motifs, have been created for the purpose by local women artists in straw technique (Fig. 25a, b, c, d, e) (cf. Vojnić Hajduk 2006: 68-70).



*Figure 25a. The 50th anniversary cross made from straw in 1961.
Photograph in: Piuković 2010:61.*

Figure 25b. The Cathedral made from straw (marking the jubilee of the Subotica Cathedral) in 1973. Photograph in: Piuković 2010:83.



Figure 25c. *The salaš made from straw in 1980. Photograph in: Piuković 2010:97.*



Figure 25d. *The Holy Rosary made from straw in 1996. Photograph in: Piuković 2010:129.*



Figure 25e. *The hundredth anniversary straw crown in 2010. Photograph in: Piuković 2010:157.*

Certain authors point out that the *Dužijanca* was not upheld at all during the Second World War, while others claim that the roles of the two leading figures, those of the *bandaš* and the *bandašica*, were taken by children. However, all of them agree on the three pivotal years of this tradition – 1911, 1968 and 1993 (cf. Čupurdija 2010:165). There is not enough research done about the period following the Second World War. Apart from considerable harm that the agrarian reform did to the practice of the *Dužijanca* within family circles due to confiscation of farmers' property, other contributing factors that went hand in hand with it were the introduction of social ownership and the new political system. (cf. Vojnić Hajduk 2011:13-14). During the Communist regime, civil and religious aspects of the celebration were separated. Starting from 1968 many public events became part of the festivity during the summer months: the competition of the reapers, the choosing of the *bandaš* and the *bandašica*, the reapers' assembly, the big round dance of reapers, the reapers' night, the ceremonial procession, the decorating of shop windows and horse races. Thusly enriched with different activities, the festivity became a tourist attraction. The folkloristic aspects of the festivity gained more emphasis. The civil procession was held by the end of July and the church procession on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on August 15. Its religious and civil segments existed separately up to 1993. A number of the participants took part both in the religious and civil *Dužijanca*, the former one (before the Communist regime) being celebrated by believers only. The central part of the religious celebration was the Holy Communion, while the civil-urban *Dužijanca* gathered those citizens who, for personal reasons, or due to the regime's attitude towards the Church, did not attend the final religious ceremony marking the end of the harvest. After that period there were political tendencies towards involvement in the organization of the *Dužijanca*, with the intention of neutralizing its national character and the specific cultural heritage of the Croatian subethnic group of Bunjevci. (cf. Vojnić Hajduk 2006:71)

Since 1993, both aspects of the celebration have been united and new cultural content has been added: besides its originally traditional ethnographic features the celebration of the *Dužijanca* now unites various other activities: cultural, spiritual, folklore and sports. The activists of the cultural association *Bunjevačko kolo* (meaning: Bunjevci round dance) and the Church representatives successfully contributed to the coexistence of both civil and religious aspects of the *Dužijanca*. In the past few years the newly formed *Association of the Bunjevci Croats "Dužijanca"* has taken over the organization of the festivity. Some other Croatian institutions are also included in the organization of various events happening during the celebration of the *Dužijanca* (which is a rather complex project today regulated by a special

organizing board coordinating all the events (cf. *ibid.*, 72). The celebration of the *Dužijanca* has been publicized on posters since 1968. (Fig. 26) and since 2001 the *Dužijanca* has had its own website (www.duzijanca.co.yu), which seems to be inactive since 2011 (Fig. 27). Information about current events is available on Facebook nowadays.¹⁸

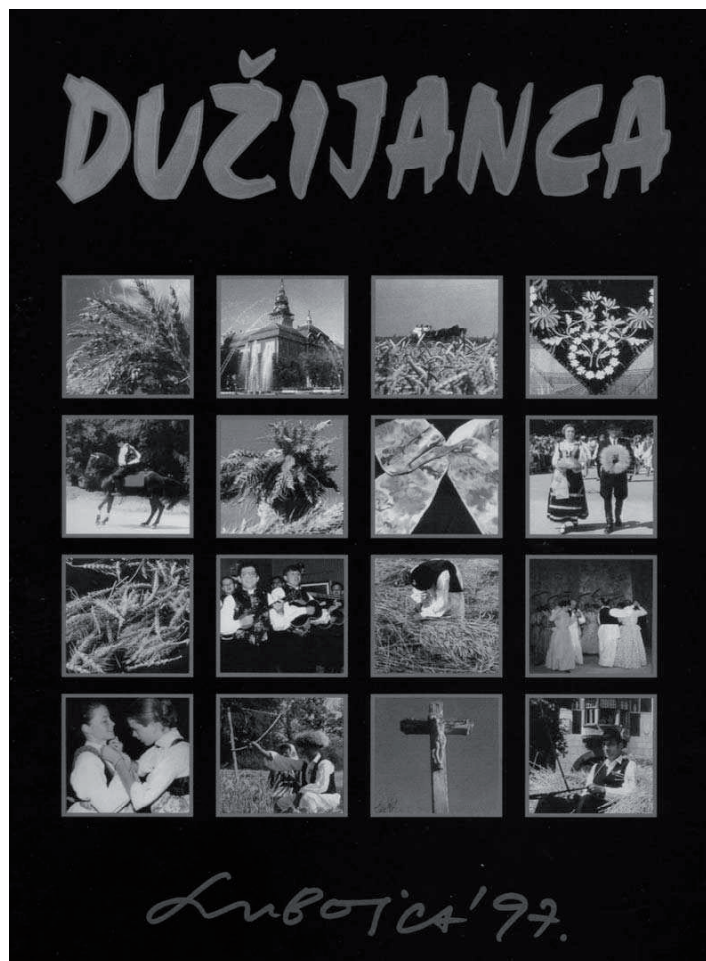


Figure 26. Poster of *Dužijanca* in 1997.
Photograph in: *Vojnić Hajduk* 2006:213.

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/Du%C5%BEijanca-1583435021912432/>



DUŽIJANCA

SUBOTICA - SZABADKA



ORGANIZACIJA | PROGRAM | INFO | AKTUALNO | ARHIVA | DONATORI | KONTAKT

Dobrodošli na Dužijancu...

Dobrodošli u Suboticu, na Dužijancu, svetkovinu završetka žetve, koja se u Subotici slavi već više od 90 godina. U trećem tisućljeću, Dužijanca blista više nego ranije. Ona je usađena u mnoga srca kao neprolazna duhovna vrednota.

Dobro očuvan stari običaj zahvale Bogu na plodovima zemlje, poglavito žitu, Hrvati Bunjevci su pretočili u jednu svečanu, dostojanstvenu i vrlo lijepu priredbu, koja mami, plijeni i zrači ljepotom, bogatstvom, radošću, ljubavlju i dubokom religioznošću. U Dužijancu je utkana naša privrženost Bogu, koji je, vjerujemo u to, gospodar života.

U slavlju Dužijance, a ono traje, od 25 travnja do 25 kolovoza, organiziramo preko 20 priredbi različitog sadržaja. Imamo, dakle, priredbe obilježja običaja i tradicije, zatim, kulture i stvaralaštva, potom duhovno-religioznoga i na kraju športskog karaktera. Ti sadržaji stavljaju na "stol kulture" grada Subotice, duhovna bogatstva Hrvata Bunjevaca, kako bi grad u svom zajedništvu različitosti, okrenut budućnosti, sačuvao obilježja grada suživota, više kultura, više nacionalnosti i više vjeroispovesti.

Dužijanca nije usputna i prolazna manifestacija, već odredište mnogih ljudi različitog staleža i dužnosti. Dužijanca svojim šarmom privlači mnoge ljude, koji joj se vraćaju, a kanili su samo proći. Unatoč mnogim poteškoćama, Dužijanca je uspjela sačuvati dušu i ostati primjerena čovjeku.

Predsjednik O.O. Dužijance
Lazo Vojnić Hajduk

Figure 27. Website of Dužijanca from 2001 and 2002.
Photograph in: Vojnić Hajduk 2006:78.

The celebration lasts for almost four months, with some additions such as the blessing of the wheat in the fields on St. Mark's day, on April 25, which is the first event of the *Dužijanca*. The next event of importance is the competition of the reapers, which is, in fact, a reconstruction of harvest in the past (Fig. 28a, b); there are various other events: the exhibition of items made in straw technique, art colonies (naive art in general and in straw technique), literary evenings, concerts, the "big round dance" of the reapers when their male and female leaders are chosen together with three runner-up couples; numerous stands are being set up, the best prize-winning decorated shop window is pronounced., etc. (Fig. 29).



*Figure 28a. A reconstruction of harvest.
Photograph by Nevena Škrbić Alempijević 2012.*



*Figure 28b. A reconstruction of the mechanized harvest.
Photograph by Nevena Škrbić Alempijević 2012.*



Figure 29. First prize winning shop window of the 102nd Dužijanka. Presenting lunch for the reapers. Photograph by Mihovil Gotal 2012.

One day before the ceremonial procession the blessing of the wheat crown is held in the Cathedral of St. Teresa of Avila, after which there is the reapers' assembly enacting the harvest customs, followed by the performance of various tambura bands and folklore ensembles from Subotica, Bačka, Hungary, Croatia and Serbia. (Fig. 30)



Figure 30. An enactment of negotiating the harvest between the master and reapers. Photograph by Mihovil Gotal 2012.

The central event of the *Dužijanca* is the ceremonial procession culminating with the act of blessing the bread and other symbols of the harvest in St. Rocco's Church attended by all the leading couples (*bandaš* and *bandašica*) from the villages nearby Subotica. Each couple brings their wheat crown. Then the procession moves towards the Cathedral of St Teresa of Avila, where the blessed bread is handed over to the priest. The procession is headed by *bandaš* and *bandašica*, dressed in traditional costume (Fig. 31a, b).



Figure 31a. *Bandaš* and *bandašica* in the procession in 1926.
Photograph in: Piuković 2010:12.



Figure 31b. *Bandaš* and *bandašica* at the 102nd *Dužijanca* in 2012.
Photograph by Mihovil Gotal 2012.

Other participants of the procession are: the standard-bearer of *Dužijanca*, numerous horse riders and carriages decorated in straw, all kinds of participants from the youngest to the oldest Bunjevci dressed in traditional national costume. (Fig. 32a, b)



Figure 32a. The youngest participants of the ceremonial procession. Photograph by Mihovil Gotal 2012.



Figure 32b. Junior and senior generations of the Bunjevci in the ceremonial procession. Photograph by Mihovil Gotal 2012.

After the Holy Mass the procession enters the main town square where a welcome is extended to the reapers on stage designed to represent the *salaš* as a backdrop for the ensuing performance. The important part of the performance is giving a symbolic present to the mayor of Subotica: bread made from the new flour. The celebration of the *Dužijanca* ends in a pilgrimage to the suburban sanctuary of Bunarić and a visit to the grave of the priest Blaško Rajić, the founder father of the urban celebration of the *Dužijanca* (cf. Vojnić Hajduk:76-79; cf. Zelić 2006:103).

The order of the final events is more or less constant with a few slight changes every year.¹⁹ In the past few years some new events have been introduced to the *Dužijanca*. To commemorate its 100th jubilee in 2011, a statue of a reaper (*risar*) was installed in the park nearby the famous imposing secession Town Hall (Fig. 33). In the same year a new event was added to the program of the *Dužijanca* – a custom of jumping over bonfire, which had been practiced by the mid-20th century on St. John's Day (Sv. Ivan Cvitnjak) (cf. Černelić 2014:272-273).



Figure 33. Placing a wheat crown on the head of the statue of a reaper.
Photograph by Mihovil Gotal 2012.

Since 2008 the children's *Dužijanca* has been organized as a separate event, in which children imitate adults of the original *Dužijanca*. It comprises various activities such as:

¹⁹ For more details on the jubilee *Dužijanca* in 2010 visit:
<http://www.zkvh.org.rs/index.php/batina/knjievnost/397-proslavljenaduijanca-2010-stoljee-ponosa-i-zahvalnosti?start=2>

children's ethno workshops, the presenting of the leading child couple – *the little bandaš* and *bandašica*, a Holy Mass in the Cathedral of St. Teresa of Avila, etc. This has been done in order to convey a message to young generations that, apart from the folklore dimension, the *Dužijanca* has also had a religious and spiritual dimension. The child couple (*the little bandaš* and *bandašica*) also present the mayor with new bread in the Subotica Town Hall.²⁰

New activities are constantly being introduced. Thus, since 2015 a whip cracking competition has been organized²¹, and another event called *Risarska tarana* (reapers' *tarana* pasta) was first organized on June 27, 2017, which is an occasion where a special kind of homemade pasta is being prepared in a traditional manner (the kneaded dough is grated into tiny round balls of pasta and left to dry).²²

5.3. Concluding remarks

Since the *Dužijanca* is a celebration with more than a century-long tradition, and, while it has some permanent characteristic features, it is constantly being updated by introducing new events almost every year, it eludes any kind of final conclusion. It is a complex culture phenomenon, a living tradition that has stood the test of time and adapted to economic and political context of the contemporary society. Therefore, instead of a conclusion I point to the latest research results of this phenomenon published in 2012 as part of the project mentioned earlier in the introduction. I am referring in particular to two articles published recently based on the mentioned research. The authors of the article *Subotica Dužijanca: Creation of Tradition, Performance of Memory* deal with various cultural processes in the contemporary context, primarily with revitalization and creation of tradition. Through the prism of collective memory, the authors look into contemporary attitudes towards the past that are expressed and embodied in this public event. In doing so, the authors focus on the following questions: What are the traditional or historical motives actualized today in the *Dužijanca* and for what purpose? What is the relationship between its protagonists, institutions and individuals, involved in producing and constructing the festivity? What relationship between their different perceptions of tradition does the event bring about and how is the connection between the rural and the urban created in this context? The main focus of the research is placed on the identification processes, where the creation of

²⁰ <http://www.zkvh.org.rs/index.php/vijesti/vijesti-iz-zajednice/4198-djeca-u-duzijanci>

²¹ <http://www.zkvh.org.rs/index.php/vijesti/vijesti-iz-zajednice/4257-duzijanca-natjecanje-u-pucanju-bicevima>

²² <http://www.zkvh.org.rs/index.php/vijesti/vijesti-iz-zajednice/4174-nova-radionica-ubh-duzijanca-u-durдинu-risarska-tarana>

adequate memory plays an important part. The analysis of these processes is based on field research and study, starting from following various festivity segments (competitions of reapers and events pertaining to the final festival) to analyzing media presentation, popular, professional and scientific works on the subject of the *Dužijanca* (cf. Škrbić Alempijević and Rubić 2014). They conclude their analysis as follows:

“Having lately reached its centenary the *Dužijanca* is a project which, instead of adding new meanings to traditional forms, by its every single instance responds to the ever-changing social circumstances. By gathering and involving different generations and local communities, it is a point of cohesion and also a point of creation of a distinctive identity because it points to the difference between ‘us’ and ‘the others’. For the Bunjevci Croats in Subotica the *Dužijanca* is seen as a means instrumental in the processes of their identification; it serves today’s needs and purposes and involves a certain projection of the future of the community as well. In this way... the *Dužijanca* is realized as a tradition in every sense of the word.” (ibid. 512).

Such a conclusion is close to emotional reflections by Grgo Kujundžić, a longtime president of the *Dužijanca* organizing board, who himself was *bandaš* in 1968:

...It is a tremendous joy even today. We have to keep this alive. *Bunjevačko kolo*, once cultural association and today the Croatian Cultural Center, also arose from organizing the civil *Dužijanca*. Being a witness to its continuity and having participated in the joining of the two aspects of the *Dužijanca*, such a festivity still makes me happy. The *Dužijanca* serves as a magnet with a huge force of attraction of the local Bunjevci Croats. It still remains a highly significant way of expressing our culture and faith. We should take pride and joy in the fact that our fellow citizens of different nationality and faith show appreciation, respect and support for this tradition of ours. Most certainly some others celebrate harvest, too, but our way of celebrating is so special and close to our hearts and we safeguard it. We have put harvest festivity onto the town table of culture. The *Dužijanca* is a testament to continuity of the Bunjevci Croats culture in Bačka.” (Sarić 2012)

The second article *Dužijanca as a Symbol of Contemporary Identity of the Bunjevci Croats* looks at the *Dužijanca* as an important symbol of their group identity in the contemporary context, being one of the most prominent festivities belonging to the cultural heritage of the Bunjevci Croats. The initial assumption is that such a meaning of the *Dužijanca* is manifested through its position as the key symbol in a culture that comprises various symbolic meanings. The authors present and analyze the meanings attributed to the *Dužijanca* by the members of the community, and the ways in which those meanings establish this phenomenon as an identity marker. Furthermore, they analyze relationship between the

group identity of the Bunjevci Croats and the *Dužijanica* from three aspects of the latter – regarding it as a tradition, a religious festivity and a public event. They point out that each of these aspects reflects different dimensions of identity. (cf. Vugdelija and Gotal 2013)

During the turbulent times and politicizing the ethnic belonging of Bunjevci, the *Dužijanica* has continued to exist as a rather stable expression of the Bunjevci Croats ethnocultural identity. Finally, it should be noted that this tradition with a special place in the Bunjevci cultural heritage, which has stood the test of time, being continuously upheld and having grown over years by introducing different activities to it, most definitely deserves to be signed into the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage register. However, since the tradition belongs to a Croatian subethnic group residing in a different country, such a suggestion should come from their resident country, where they are a national minority and where the very event is held. Apart from this, the above mentioned issue of the Bunjevci dual ethnic identity also stands in the way of such a potential initiative.

6. The role of ritual traditional clothing among Bunjevci in Vojvodina in the revitalization of annual customs and rituals ²³

The same theoretical annotations specified in the previous chapter can be applied to this chapter as well. The traditional costume carries an important symbolic meaning and as such it represents an ethnocultural identity marker of the group. Some of these customs among the Bunjevci have undergone a great revival in the past twenty years, being observed in certain calendar periods or on specific days during the ritual year, such as the central cultural and social event – the prelo (spinning bee) – in the winter period of Shrovetide, the kraljice (the Pentecost pageant) and the St. John's Day. In addition to the festive calendar year, the traditional costume has an important continual role on the occasion of the *Dužijanca*, which has been presented in the previous chapter.

6.1. Short description of Bunjevci traditional costume

For the purpose of overviewing the use of the traditional clothing on these various occasions with a special focus on its significance as an identity marker and a symbolic object, it is necessary to provide some basic information about the traditional folk costume that is most often used in the revived customs.²⁴ The basic parts of the traditional female costume are always the same, regardless of the type of the costume: a shirt, 7–9 petticoats, a skirt (both cut out of 5–6 parts), a waistcoat, and an apron. In the 19th century and in earlier times the materials were woven from home-made hemp and flax, later alternated with cotton, but as early as the end of the 19th century they were replaced with manufactured materials both for everyday and ceremonial costumes. A characteristic part of the Bunjevci female costume was the *igrač* – a belt made of the appropriate material, depending on the occasion, 15–20 centimetres wide and 3 metres long, tied into a bow around the waist. Women wore a kerchief over the hair, called *konda* or *kapica*, and a scarf over their shoulders. Since the late 19th century the ceremonial silk costume made of manufactured silk, which relatively wealthy peasants purchased from the famous silk factory in Lyon in France, has formed a recognisable

²³ This chapter is my partly modified article: Role of Ritual Traditional Clothing among Bunjevci Croats in Serbia in the Revitalisation of Annual Customs and Rituals. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore / Edited by Mare Köiva & Andres Kuperjanov*. Tartu: FB and Media Group of LM, vol. 66; 4 (2016).

²⁴ The purpose of this chapter is not to give a thorough presentation of the traditional costume. It would include more complex analyses of different types of traditional costumes according to gender, age, season and occasion, including the transformations starting from the late 19th century, which is not possible to provide in such a short account.

marker of the Bunjevci identity. Since that time the girls' characteristic costume has been a white cotton costume, each part of which is decorated with white embroidery (*šlinga*). The everyday costume was also made of different manufactured cotton materials with various ornaments: the *sefir* for girls, with characteristic vertical stripes, the *paja* for older women, consisting of a wool skirt and a cotton shirt (*parketski leveš*), most often having a tartan ornament, and so on. The function of the everyday costume has also transitioned into a ceremonial one nowadays. In wintertime the most characteristic pieces of female clothes are different types of coats: the ceremonial *čurdija* made from a scarf and welted with fox fur, decorated with silver buttons and ribbons made of various materials (leather, wool, silk, silver or golden threads), with a specific narrow waist. Other winter coats are made of similar materials, differently cut and less decorated. The basic parts of the traditional male costume are: a shirt, wide pants (each pant leg being cut out in 2 parts), and a waistcoat. The ceremonial costume differed from the everyday one in material and decoration. In winter men wore trousers over pants, different types of decorated ceremonial dolman jackets (*dolama* or *reklja*), sheep fleece waistcoats (*pršnjak*), and long fleece robes (*opaklija*). Under the influence of urban fashion, both male and female costumes changed in different periods.²⁵

6.2. Prelo

The complex phenomenon of the *prelo* (spinning bee), which consists of various social gatherings during the period of Shrovetide, is one of the important customs belonging to the Bunjevci traditional heritage. The *Veliko prelo* (the Great Spinning Bee), the most important event of the period in the form of a public festivity, is held in Subotica, the administrative and cultural centre of the Bunjevci Croats. After a long break it has undergone a great revival in the past twenty years, today being the central cultural event in the winter period, socially particularly important to the Bunjevci in northern Bačka. Along with *Veliko prelo*, many similar smaller gatherings are organised during that period in Subotica and Sombor (another urban settlement in Bačka), and in the surrounding Bunjevci rural settlements. In earlier times such gatherings were traditionally held in rural settlements, on the Bunjevci farms, which represented the central institution of rural life in the Bačka region. As a family gathering combining spinning and other textile crafts and entertainment, the *prelo* survived up to the 1970s. In its latest stage it was coupled with pig slaughter, another tradition characteristic of

²⁵ Much more detail on the mentioned costumes, as well as on some other parts of the traditional costume of the Bunjevci can be found in Sekulić 1991; Maglica 1998; Suknović 2010.

the winter period, although those were originally two different traditions (cf. Dronjić 2014: 118–120). *Veliko prelo* was first held as a public festivity, concurrently with the family *prelos*, in Pešta hotel in Subotica, in 1879, in the period of the national revival of the Croats in Bačka. The festivity continued to exist until the mid-20th century, with a short break during the First World War. It was revived in the 1990s. Since then it has been held every year in the great hall of the Croatian Cultural Center *Bunjevačko kolo* (meaning: the Bunjevci round dance). In 2015 several other cultural associations organised it together for the first time; earlier on they had each organised their own *prelo* during the period of Shrovetide.

The traditional dress used to be obligatory in the 19th century when the public festivity was initiated. Nowadays it is not obligatory anymore but some participants appear in traditional costumes, most often the organisers and their families. The guests are welcomed by girls dressed in folk costumes, and each of them gets a handkerchief with the embroidered motif of the spinning bee, the same motif being on the invitation card. The programme leaders are dressed in folk costumes, along with all the participants who perform the original family spinning bee on stage as well as those who play and sing on the stage (Fig. 34).



Figure 34. Reconstruction of the *prelo* on stage. Photograph by Matija Dronjić 2012.

An important part of the programme, besides singing and dancing, is also a fashion show of the traditional costumes, wherein the best dressed and bestlooking girl is proclaimed (Fig. 35) (ibid. 120-132).



Figure 35. The first three awarded traditional costumes in 2013.
Photograph in possession of the newsweekly Hrvatska riječ.

In 2011 another event came into existence - the *prelo sićanja* (the Memory Spinning Bee). Its aim is to revive and represent the original *prelo*, which means that the traditional costume is a necessary prerequisite for participation. The reason behind its initiation is nostalgia. One of the organisers, Ivan Piukovic, has explained that it serves to remind the older members of the community of the good old days, of what the *prelo* looked like in the past, as well as to teach the young about it and to continue the tradition. The participants gather in front of the Town Hall; then they attend the Holy Mass in the nearby Franciscan church (cf. Sudarevic 2012) (Fig. 36). Afterwards, they socialise in a restaurant, accompanied by players on the *tambura* (a characteristic Croatian long-necked plucked string instrument), eat donuts, drink wine, and play cards. The spinning and other textile crafts are not demonstrated any longer, but both younger and older men play cards, as they used to do in the

past, with girls and women joining them nowadays, which was not the case when the *prelo* was a living tradition (Fig. 37) (ibid.).



Figure 36. The participants of the prelo sićanja in the Franciscan church in 2013. Photograph in possession of the newsweekly Hrvatska riječ.



Figure 37. Men and women playing cards. Prelo sićanja in 2013. Photograph in possession of the newsweekly Hrvatska riječ.

6.3. Pentecost pageant

Another custom that has also undergone revitalization in the last decade of the 20th century is the Pentecost pageant, which was practiced more or less continuously in the first half of the 20th century. Research based on interviews was combined with the actual observation of the custom itself on Pentecost (called *Dove* in the local vernacular), in Aleksandrovo and Ker (two parishes in Subotica) on June 12, 2011, in the village of Tavankut and its surroundings in 2013, in Vancaga in Serbia (suburbs of the city of Baja), and in the village Kačmar, in Hungary, on May 28, 2012. I am dealing only with the custom as observed in Serbia. Although the basic elements of the original custom and ritual practices are recaptured, the revived custom also contains some new elements adapted to the present-day context. The *kraljice* (meaning queens, which is the name for young girls performing the pageant) are dressed in the traditional costumes of girls who in earlier times, up to the mid-20th century, performed the pageant barefoot (Fig. 38).



Figure 38. *Kraljice* in 1921 or 1922. in Subotica. Photograph in possession of Grgo Piuković.

The traditional silk costume alternates with the white embroidered one, but the waistcoat is obligatory in both types of the costume. Older girls that accompany the *kraljice* are dressed in everyday costume made of industrial cotton, the *sefir*, with characteristic vertical stripes. They

are also accompanied by boys, the shepherds, who collect presents - mainly money nowadays (Fig. 39).



Figure 39. Kraljice in the yard of the family who welcomed young girls during their pageant in the parish of Ker in Subotica in 2013. Photograph in possession of Bernadica Ivanković.

The headdress of the queen is important as well and it differs in the two parishes in Subotica where the custom has been revitalised thanks to the local nuns. In the parish of Ker it is similar to the original one, but in the parish of Aleksandrovo nun Eleonora Merković decided to change it, since, quoting her words: “it is too heavy for the poor young girls’ heads” (Černelić and Štricki Seg 2014:217) (Fig. 40).

The *kraljice* pageant forms a part of various other events during the year: folklore festivals, the festival of the Bunjevci songs, literary evenings, etc. In the past three years, this custom has also been revitalised in the nearby village of Tavankut, organised by the Croatian cultural society in cooperation with the local church authorities. The *kraljice* wear traditional silk costumes (Fig. 41) (cf. *ibid.* 2014).



*Figure 40. Kraljice in the parish of Aleksandrovo in Subotica in 2010.
Photograph in possession of Eleonora Merковиć.*



*Figure 41. Kraljice singing in front of the church in Tavankut.
Photograph by Ivica Dulić 2013.*

The custom of the *kraljice* pageant is perceived by the Danube area Bunjevci as a distinctive feature of their own, which sets them apart from the others in their surroundings. The custom is thus translated into a symbol of identity of this Croatian national minority in Serbia. Within a multicultural context its members express their distinctive ethnocultural identity through a public display of certain segments of their traditional heritage. The traditional costume plays an important role in these processes.

6.4. The Dužijanca

As already mentioned, the *Dužijanca* is the celebration marking the end of the harvest among the Bunjevci Croats in the region of Bačka, which has existed as a public event for over a century. The traditional costume acts as an important symbol of the *Dužijanca*, being one of the key elements of the traditional heritage and an outstanding identity marker. The competition of reapers stands as one of the most significant events. It is, as mentioned in previous chapter, a reconstruction of the authentic harvest. The reapers are dressed in the traditional everyday costumes, similar to those they used to wear during the harvest in the past (Fig. 42).



*Figure 42. Reapers on their way to the field.
Photograph by Nevena Škrbić Alempijević 2012.*

The ceremonial traditional dress also forms an important part of *Duzijanca*. The participants of the procession are dressed in different types of folk costumes, both everyday (*sefir*) and ceremonial (silk, with white embroidery), along with the leading male and female figure of the harvest, the so-called *bandaš* and *bandašica*, who wear ceremonial folk costumes (Fig. 43).



Figure 43. The bandaš and bandašica together with other participants of the procession in front of the church. Photograph by Mihovil Gotal 2012.

People do not quite agree on what particular type of traditional costume is appropriate for the occasion. Today girls like to wear white dresses with characteristic embroidery (*slinga*), which some of the representatives of cultural associations consider to be improper, because it used to be one of the underlayers of the traditional costume in the past. According to some people, it looks as if someone appeared in the street in their underwear (Škrbić Alempijević and Rubić 2014:285).

The mentioned *kraljice* of both parishes are also involved in the *Duzijanca* harvest festivity. Those from Ker parish participate in the ceremonial procession - they escort the leading male and female figure of the harvest at the head of the procession, after they have received the priest's blessing in the church. The *kraljice* from Aleksandrovo parish take part

in the pilgrimage to the suburban sanctuary Bunarić, which is the final event of the *Dužijanca* harvest festivity (Černelić and Štricki Seg 2014:231, 233).

In recent years the custom of lighting bonfires and jumping over them has been revived within the *Dužijanca* harvest festivity in some rural settlements; originally it was practiced on Midsummer, i.e. St. John's Day. In this way, this custom has been newly revived on the Bunjevci rural estates (*salaš*) as a vivid reminder of one of the major customs in their ancestors' calendar (Fig. 44).



Figure 44. A boy jumping over bonfire in the village of Mala Bosna in 2013. Photograph in possession of the newsweekly Hrvatska riječ.

This custom is closely related to the harvest: many magical beliefs are connected with the protection of the crop from thunder, fire, or vermin. Boys and girls jump over the bonfire, dressed in traditional costumes (Černelić 2014:). In the village of Tavankut in 2014 jumping over bonfire was also practiced as part of the *Dužijanca* harvest festival. In 2015 it was organised separately by the local Croatian cultural association. I had the opportunity to witness the performance of the custom on June 20 of the same year. Today it is not observed exactly on St. John's Day, for practical reasons, but rather on a weekend day closest to this date. Along with the girls and boys dressed in traditional costumes, other participants observing the custom, especially children, join in and jump over the bonfire as well (Fig. 45)



Figure 45. Girls jumping over bonfire. Photograph by Katarina Čeliković 2015.

6.8. Concluding Remarks

The national folk costume plays a very important role in all the mentioned events that occur during the ritual year. Even before Bogatyrev (1937), whose contribution was re-actualised in 1971 in light of semiotic theories, the founder of Croatian ethnology, Antun Radić, in his work titled *The Foundation for Collecting and Interpreting Material about Folk*

Life, pointed to the differences in the function of the traditional costume as well as to the changes in both the style and function of clothing (1897:23).

As long as the traditional costume was part of everyday rural life, it had several functions, first of all, practical and aesthetic; the latter was not very comfortable for those who wore the traditional costume, especially girls and women (Bogatyrev 1971:34-35). An interesting example applied to the Bunjevci case is the nun's intervention on the headdress of the queens, so as to make it more comfortable for the girls to wear. Its function has changed because its purpose is different today - the traditional folk costume is used for ceremonial purposes and as an important means for demonstrating ethnocultural identity.

According to Bogatyrev's (ibid. 43-44) categories of the transition of the traditional costume through ritual stages and functional changes, the ceremonial holiday costume (the traditional silk costume and girls' white cotton costume decorated with white embroidery) is of crucial importance in the ritual annual customs of the Bunjevci. The function of the everyday costume has also transitioned into ceremonial. It is worn for the purpose of reconstructing the harvest, and on the occasion of jumping over the fire on St. John's Day; so it has taken on a ceremonial function nowadays, to recall and revitalise traditional costumes as originally as possible in the present day context (most often the *sefir*, made from industrial cotton with characteristic vertical stripes). Over the past several decades, the traditional costume has also stood for a national symbol and, as such, has played an important role in all the analysed customs as a symbolic object and an ethnocultural marker of the identity of the subethnic and national minority group of the Bunjevci Croats in Serbia. Their ambivalent position, as depicted in chapter two, seems to reflect their intense need to further demonstrate their ethnocultural heritage.

7. Comparable Phenomena in Wedding Customs of the Bunjevci and the Romance Language Speaking Inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula ²⁶

7.1. Introduction: honorary wedding attendant *staćel*

The starting point in my research of the elements of the Bunjevci wedding customs, which, according to certain indicators, have been shaped in contact with the Balkan Romance speaking population, was the specific honorary wedding attendant *staćel* (cf. Černelić 1991).

The first ethnologist who dealt with the phenomenon of *staćel* was the well known Croatian ethnologist Milovan Gavazzi (cf. 1972). He tried to establish its origin, accepting the hypothesis of the Greek origin of the word and connecting it with the Greek term *stahtiaris*, which, according to the Shrovetide customs observed in the northern parts of Greece, denotes a member of the wedding procession attired in the Greek plaited shirt with a number of bells round the waist and the bag of ashes serving to defend the bride and the groom (Megas 1958:61). He pointed to three potential ways of the element entering the region of Dalmatian Hinterland:”

- I. By way of the Adriatic from the northern Greek ethnic and language area; the way being the least possible because: a) none of the elements and the term itself appear along the eastern Adriatic area, which is, of course, to be expected if this hypothesis is correct, and b) the cultural elements, having entered the eastern Adriatic area from the Mediterranean, generally did not enter the Dinaric hinterland of the Adriatic and therefore could not be transferred into the Dalmatian Hinterland.
- II. By continental route across the inland carried by the Vlachs (Romance speaking population), whose presence in the Dalmatian Hinterland is indisputable and who could have adopted the elements while shepherding since it involved constant movement over many areas; although, there is another possibility of the influence coming from the south of the Balkans, where the Greek influence, either cultural or linguistic, was manifold.
- III. By continental route through the Dinarides in the Dalmatian hinterland carried by newcomers (particularly from the 15th century onwards) from the southeast, i. e. from Montenegro and a large area around it, since in ancient times those areas had been exposed to cultural and linguistic influences from even more distant neighbors reaching even the original Greek territories” (Gavazzi, 1972:7).

²⁶ This chapter is a partly modified article titled *Comparable Occurrences in Wedding Customs of the Bunjevci and the Romance Language Speaking Inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula*. *Studia Ethnologica Croatica*, 7/8:181-192 (1996).

Furthermore, in his text M. Gavazzi is advising that it would be necessary to positively prove the connection between the Greek *stahtiaris* and *staćel* and also to check whether the word *staćel* had been confirmed in the rare remnants of the past or more recent times by which the way (and perhaps the time) of its entering the Dalmatian Hinterland would probably be explained more thoroughly (ibid.). There were no concrete indicators, as the occurrence of the *staćel* in the wedding customs of the Bunjevci, of Burgenland Croats (i.e. Croats of Gradišće), in some regions of Dalmatia (among Morlachs, in Knin Frontier, Imotski Frontier and Poljice), with some traces in the Primorje (the Croatian Littoral), in Lika, as well as in Istria, has not been fully investigated. More detailed research on *staćel* has confirmed its presence in an even wider area (in Ravni Kotari, Bukovica, southwest Bosnia, western Herzegovina and very probably in the area of the mouth of the Neretva River), as well as among Vlachs in northeastern Serbia (there having a slightly different name – *strčala*). However, not even by more detailed research were the origins of *staćel* explained. What can be said with certainty is that the characteristic distribution of the occurrence of the specific wedding attendant and the ethnological indicators of its role rely on its being brought by the Balkan Vlachs (cf. Černelić 1991:96-114, 153-160). Apart from the Vlachs who inhabit the territory of the northeastern Serbia, other tribes inhabiting other areas of the Balkans do not seem to be familiar with this wedding role. Still, there is a trace of a similar wedding attendant of a similar name the *st'rčina* found among Asia Minor and Thracia Bulgarians. Only this time it is a female attendant who supports the bride by taking her by the hand to the wedding in church and on the way back follows and thus protects the bride having the groom and the groomsman by both her sides. She is the only person that can ward off all the negative influences. The *St'rčina* is the wife of the groom's (youngest) brother, or if he has none, another relative (Vakarelski 1935:365, according to Černelić 2016:217). The term *st'rčina* is close to the Vlach variant of the word but this instance shows a completely new and different role, although the protective element (though here merely in the apotropaic sense) often forms part of the role of the *staćel* among Vlachs in northeastern Serbia, among Dalmatian Morlachs, in Šuica, in Duvanjsko polje (the karst field of Duvno) and among the Danube area Bunjevci. Though not unprecedented, however, it is an interesting fact that the *st'rčina* is a woman. Among the Danube area Bunjevci (nearby Sombor and Budapest) the *staćel* sometimes had a female companion called *staćeli(ni)ca*. Also, the *staćel* could have been a woman as well, as confirmed in the village of Lemeš and on the Đinić farms (*salaši*) nearby Sombor (Černelić 1991:101). In light of the newly found characteristic Bunjevac-Vlach

wedding custom elements, this information further contributes and goes in favor of the hypothesis of the Vlach i.e. pre-Slavic origin of this phenomenon. The word for it could be interpreted as a joint Slavic-Vlach formation. Therefore, the phenomenon of *staćel* as a whole seems to be a result of the Vlach-Slavic interplay, which could be regarded as a well-founded assumption based on ethnological indicators. Another interesting finding is worth mentioning: in *nahija* (administrative unit) Kuči in southeastern Montenegro there is a village of *Strčalići* the name of which the author J. Erdeljanović traces back to the Albanian words *stral/ steral*, and Š. Kulišić considers it to be of the Balkan or Slavic-Balkan origin (Erdeljanović 1907:331 and Kulišić 1980:32, according to Černelić 2016:217). Apart from the distribution of the *staćel* in the territory, which points to its Balkan origin (either Greek, brought by Vlachs, or even of the very Vlach origins), other ethnological indicators seem to confirm that the *staćel*'s role was variable, having no specific or definite characteristics; according to ceremony requirements, varying from area to area in which *staćel* could be found or traced to, the particular wedding member was fitted into the ceremony or was taking on the roles typical of other honorary wedding attendants, such as: the *stari svat* (chief attendant), *djever* (groomsman), *čauš* (the wedding attendant in charge of amusement), and *kum* (honorary chief attendant); the word *staćel* sometimes denoted a group of ordinary members of a wedding party having no particular honors (*the pustosvati*), sometimes even particular wedding guests who were considered a laughing stock. Such varied characteristics of the role of the *staćel* show that the occurrence of such a special wedding attendant as part of wedding customs of some Croatian groups should not be considered to be originally Croatian, nor even of Slavic origin, since, apart from the potential (but not conclusive) linguistic indicator – the Slavic root, ethnological indicators do not allow for such a possibility. If the word *staćel* is of Slavic origin, then it would be a new expression common to some Croatian and some Romance speaking groups.

The Staćel is a distinctive phenomenon in the cultural heritage of the Danube area Bunjevci, with some past traces that could be found among the other two Bunjevci branches. Though the question of its origins and the way it was brought to the particular territory still remains unanswered, the *staćel*, a mysterious wedding ceremony attendant has become a research challenge and a stimulus that raised many questions on the cultural heritage of the Bunjevci. Ethnological indicators have brought many of the questions on the brink of them receiving some real answers.

The mentioned research of the defined themes of the wedding customs was based primarily on the phenomena of other honorary wedding attendants and their role in the

wedding ceremony. Following these traces I carried out research on a series of new themes springing up and pointing to the new knowledge on the possible origins of the cultural heritage among all the branches of the Bunjevci (cf. Černelić 2016). Cultural heritage of one ethnic group is a sum of a number of elements of various origins which give them distinctive characteristics within one greater national corpus. The fact that the Bunjevci have been divided into several branches from the common nucleus during their ethnocultural development makes such research even more complex.

In this chapter the attention will be directed to some cultural elements of the Bunjevci wedding customs which might have been formed in contact with the Balkan Romance speaking population, by comparing particular cultural elements of wedding customs, confirmed only in some or in all the Bunjevci branches, with the same or related elements appearing among Vlachs in the Pindus area in northern Greece (in Samarina and the neighboring Vlach settlements) and in the area of northeastern Serbia.²⁷ To my knowledge, only in the mentioned Vlach areas have the wedding customs been studied in more detail. Some of the occurrences have also been confirmed among other Balkan peoples, the Albanians and Greeks²⁸. It is not possible to claim that all the confirmed related phenomena are of the Romance speaking area origin without a thorough analysis. Some of them could have been adopted by the Vlachs in the south of the Balkans, and, as they were wandering livestock raising nomads, they could have carried the customs to the peoples they came into contact with, as M. Gavazzi suggested in his reflections on the *staćel* and some other cultural elements. When there is contact between different cultures there is always a mutual interplay. Only the study of the presence of such occurrences in their specific form on a large territory could offer more precise determinants of their origins. The existence of numerous common cultural elements of wedding customs among Vlachs in the northeastern Serbia and in the areas of the Dinarides and the Adriatic territory all the way to Istria, including Vlach cultural elements in general, had already been confirmed (cf. Kulišić 1963; Pantelić 1971:69; Vince

²⁷ I have analyzed these elements and phenomena (as well as some others) in all Bunjevci branches and in the broader Southeastern-European context in more detail in my latest book *Bunjevci: Origins, Destinies, Identities* (2016). They will be briefly presented in this chapter with regard to the territories with possible Bunjevci traces in the past and present.

²⁸ The bibliographic information on the wedding customs in the Vlach area in the northeastern Serbia can be found in: Černelić 2016. G. Weigand gives information on other Vlach areas (1894:32-59). D. Antonijević also provides information on the Vlach wedding ceremony in general, but since it is only a compilation of information taken from other authors, we are not considering it to be a source. The elements of the Bunjevci wedding customs also known in the Albanian and Greek wedding customs will be pointed to as well, according to information offered by I.G. Hahn on the Orthodox Albanians and by Rennel Rodd on some regions of Greece. A more thorough look into the literature of the Albanian and Greek wedding is required for a more detailed analysis and comparison to be obtained.

Pallua 1992; Černelić 1991:129-160.). The common elements seem to confirm that Vlachs have often been preservers of Slavic cultural heritage in these territories. When we speak of the Bunjevci as an entity we should think of the wide areas which this group could have inhabited, though they have not been precisely defined yet; the whole of the Adriatic and greater Dinaric area (Herzegovina, parts of Bosnia and Montenegro) should be taken into account. These are, at the same time, the areas in which the presence of the Vlachs in the past is indisputable.

7.2. The *kum* (chief attendant)

There is another honorary wedding attendant that might be interesting in a similar way as the *staćel*. The word *kum* (the marriage witness, the best man, chief attendant) is of Romance language origin (Skok 1972:231-232). This honorary wedding attendant is not part of Slavic traditional heritage, though the *kum* is familiar to Russians and Slovaks, but only as an honorary member of the wedding party as well as the child's godfather. The *kum* appeared with the introduction of Christian elements into the wedding customs, his role being that of a marriage witness during the wedding ceremony in church. The *kum* has developed into one of the most important honorary wedding attendants in some areas. Such a development of the role of *kum* happened also among the Danube area and Primorje/Lika Bunjevci. The *Kum* obtains the role of the wedding master. This wedding role has also been confirmed among the Dalmatian Bunjevci, where the more important role of the *kum* is less evident in general. There are some other interesting details regarding the role of the *kum*, such as: the choice of the *kum*, his duty and role of the bride's protector, certain specific elements of the role of the *kum*: the obligation to invite him first to the wedding, collecting him and the gift from him, seeing him off, the first visit paid to him after the wedding and visiting him and gift-giving for some of the most important holidays during the year. The elements of the best man's role in wedding customs are also known in the area of Livanjsko polje (the Livno Field) in western Bosnia, in parts of Herzegovina and in Dalmatia as well, particularly in the southernmost parts including Boka Kotorska (The Bay of Kotor). In southern Dalmatia and in Boka Kotorska some of these phenomena are more present than in some other parts of the territories where more traces of the Bunjevci would have been expected. Some of the details mentioned pertaining the role of the *kum* have also been confirmed in parts of Montenegrin areas. A significant presence of the mentioned characteristic elements of the role of the *kum* is found among the Vlach population of the northeastern Serbia where this wedding attendant is called *naš* (cf. Čemelić 1991:137-139). Among the Vlachs of the northern Pindus the elements of the

role of the *kum* rank him as the chief honorary wedding attendant called *nun(u)* (cf. Wace and Thompson 1972:144, 120, 124-125; Weigand 1894:36-37, 40). It is important to note that among Vlachs there are only a few honorary wedding attendants of the same name, apart from *nun(u)*, which is more parallel to the role of our *djever* (groomsman). According to the available sources, it appears that there is only one honorary chief wedding attendant: the *wlam* with the Albanians, the *koumbaros* or *paranymphos* with Greeks (Hahn 1853:145; Rennel Rodd 1968:91-92). This fact differentiates them from the Bunjevci wedding customs participants, as well as from those among Croats in general and South Slavs, too, since different wedding roles have been distributed among several honorary wedding attendants, the most important one among the Bunjevci being the honor of the *kum*.

In my analyses of the role of the best man, I pointed to the processes of his development from a wedding witness to the key wedding party member within all the Bunjevci branches. As shown by the indicators of the distribution of the best man role, primarily as a wedding master (and the bride's protector, too), the manner of choosing him and certain specific elements of his role – the best man as such might have originated in the area around the border of Dalmatia and the neighboring western Herzegovina and western Bosnia. However, the data suggest that the actual area might be even farther southeast than mentioned, encompassing a wider south Adriatic-Dinaric border region: this phenomena has been confirmed alongside the entire border – from Sinjska Krajina and Livanjsko Polje (the Livno Field), across the Neretva River Delta, Pelješac, the entire South Dalmatia, all the way down to Boka Kotorska (The Bay of Kotor) and the Montenegrin coast with the hinterland. The analyses of the elements of the best man's role suggest that this specific role has derived from the primary role of a wedding witness, further developing by meeting and intertwining with pre-Slavic, Slavic and Christian cultural layers in the territory of Southeastern Europe. Within the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci and the Danube area Bunjevci branch the meaning of the term *kum* has been broadened thus shaping a new honorary wedding attendant's role that came about by the intertwining of similar elements of two other roles – the one of Slavic origin termed *stari svat* (chief attendant) and another of Romanian (Vlach) origin – *nun*. Finally, in the new wedding role of *kum*, formed as a result, the elements of the Vlach role of the *nun* gradually prevailed (cf. Černelić 2016:75-84; 95-112).

In the context of the role of the *kum*, some practices in relation to the wedding cake are interesting as they show certain analogies between the Vlach and the Bunjevci wedding customs. It should be noted that the wedding cake of the Bunjevci customs contains many elements of Slavic tradition, their ancestors having practiced them before their moving and

settling in the south. However, the characteristic distribution of some practices in connection with the cake point to the mutual contact between Slavic and Balkan traditions. In this case, it appears impossible to precisely distinguish the Bunjevci cultural elements from the Vlach ones, the mentioned cultural elements being: the cake as a present, breaking and distribution of the cake, throwing money on the cake, the cake as part of the blessing ceremony and of the procedure with rings between the bride and the groom. All the practices have been encountered as a part of the Vlach wedding customs in northeastern Serbia, while among Vlachs in the north of Greece some of the following elements occur: the cake as a present, the cake as a part of the wedding ceremony, the ritual of breaking the wedding cake above the bride's head while all present young people are grabbing for it and the cake being the communication means for the purpose of inviting the honorary wedding attendants (cf. Čemelić 2006:233-251; *ibid.* 2016:120-246; Wace and Thompson 1972:112, 117, 199; Weigand 1894: 38).

7.3. A gift of money given to the bride in exchange for a kiss

One specific custom of the Danube area Bunjevci, with traces among the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci as well, belongs to the same group of customs: the bride is kissing the guests during the wedding festivities and for every kiss she is rewarded with money. If considering the possible place of origin of the Bunjevci, it can be concluded that the custom can be traced sporadically along the Adriatic Coast and its hinterland including Montenegro, in the Livanjsko polje (The Livno Field) in western Bosnia, in Tomislavgrad in western Herzegovina and in Gacko in eastern Herzegovina, and even more towards the east, where this element of wedding customs is largely present, but mostly excludes the reward of money. (Černelić 2016:147-154). This practice is characteristic of both Vlach groups, being particularly prominent among Vlachs inhabiting northern Greece, as it is repeated for several times on different occasions (Wace and Thompson 1972:118,120-121; Weigand 1894:40). In the Albanian wedding customs the bride also kisses the wedding guests at parting and they reward her kiss with money (Hahn 1853: 146).

7.4. Separating the newlyweds or the bride from the rest of the wedding party/separating the male from female wedding party members

The traces of the custom that the bride is separated, for a longer or shorter period, from the wedding guests, but accompanied from time to time by some of the honorary wedding attendants, either male or female, or both, as well as the practice of separating the male from

female wedding party members in the past have been confirmed among the Danube area and the Primorje/Lika Bunjevci. These elements of wedding customs were spread in the same area as the above mentioned phenomena, with more confirmations for the territories of the continental Dalmatia and all the way to Boka Kotorska and the coastal region of Montenegro. This custom is known among both groups of Vlachs. Otherwise, these phenomena are characteristic of Muslim population in Southeastern Europe (cf. Černelić 2016:170-173; Wace and Thompson 1972:155; Weigand 1894:37). According to Greek and Albanian wedding customs the bride is in the company of womenfolk and separated from male guests at the wedding ceremony (Rennel Rodd 1968: 93; Hahn 1853:145. Mihačević 1911:91).

7.5. Crossing water in front of the bride's and/or the groom's home

Apart from the mentioned customs characteristic of the Vlach wedding which have been detected primarily among the Danube area Bunjevci, partly in the Primorje/Lika area and in the areas of the Bunjevci's possible origin, there are several other customs which, have not been confirmed in all the areas with possible traces of the Bunjevci population. They are not familiar to some or all the regional groups of the Danube area Bunjevci, nor are they known among all Vlachs.

In that way, a distinctive custom among the Danube area Bunjevci, with traces among Bunjevci in Lika (in the village of Lovinac) of guests throwing coins into a container with water (usually manger) before entering the house was known among Vlachs inhabiting northeastern Serbia (cf. Černelić 2016:159-160). In some places the custom has included certain additional practices. In Zlot and in the larger area of Bor, the bride sprinkles the wedding guests using a branch of sweet basil dipped in water, as they enter the house and throw coins into a container with water; after all the wedding guests pass, the bride (in Zlot), the couple or the groom (larger area of Bor) tips over the container using the foot and the bride alone collects the money (ibid. 165). Some of the elements of the custom are found among Vlachs in northern Greece. When the wedding procession comes to take the bride away, the groomsman throws money into a jug and then tips it over using his foot. On the third day of the celebration, the bride fetches water, pours it in and out three times, and the third time the groomsman throws the money into the jug and when the bride pours the water out, the youngsters present try to find the coins in the mud (Wace and Thompson 1972: 115, 123). Similar practices can be found in eastern Herzegovina. Among Croats in the village of Ravno in Popovo polje and among Serbs in Gacko polje, the bride removes the lid off the container for carrying water placed in front of the door of the groom's house and pours the

water out. In some other regions, among Serbs, the bride also removes lid off the container for carrying water and throws money in it, while, according to gathered data for Popovo polje (exclusively on Serbs' customs), the bride takes out an apple with coins stuck in it from the container and leaves it. A very interesting variant of the custom can be found in Dubrovnik, dating from 15th century: the bride tips over, using her foot, a container full of milk or milk mixed with water, an explanation being that it brings an abundance of earthly riches into the house (cf. Černelić 2016:157-166). According to Albanian wedding customs there are the following similar practices: the bride's mother welcomes the bridegroom at the door, he is kissing her hand while she sprinkles him with a bouquet dipped into a vessel with water which she is holding in her hand. The bridegroom throws money into the vessel with water and then his mother-in-law puts on his right shoulder (Hahn 1853:145). Though the cited customs may differ in certain details, there are some common elements connecting them: throwing coins into a container with water and/or tipping it over; also, the practice takes place in the space separating the two wedding sides. The important difference is the absence of crossing as an element of the custom in most of the mentioned examples.

7.6. The bride entering the groom's home by treading on white linen/rug

Another characteristic custom, observed only nearby Sombor (with some evidence in the vicinity of Subotica in the past) among the regional group of the Danube area Bunjevci and among Vlachs, refers to the bride entering the groom's home stepping over the white cloth. There are rather sporadic traces of the custom in Lika, in some regions in central and south Dalmatian Hinterland and eastern Herzegovina, in Boka Kotorska and in some other Montenegrin coastal and hinterland areas (cf. Černelić 2016:166-169)²⁹.

7.7. Specific elements pertaining to the apple within wedding customs

An apple extended as an invitation to the wedding seems to be characteristic only of the Bunjevci from the vicinity of Sombor. The bride's parents invite relatives to the wedding by offering them an apple when encountering them in the street or at the market, the apple symbolising the invitation to the wedding. The special manner of invitation using an apple is not familiar to the Bunjevci in general, other than those living nearby Sombor in Bačka,

²⁹ When mentioning the detail Weigand refers to the review *Macedonia*, Bucharest 1889, while remarking that he himself had not found confirmation of the occurrence during the field research, but he did not specify the particular group of Vlachs nor the source. Antonijević cites a specific variant of the practice: "Among Vlachs (Karaguna) a rug is put in front of the house entrance with three ritual bread loafs put underneath it. The bride must first step on the bread and crush the loaves before entering the house." In a remark on the matter he refers to Wace-Thompson as the source for this detail. It seems obvious that it is a matter of false citation since in the work of the source the detail is not mentioned, thus rendering the confirmation of the source impossible for now.

however, it is confirmed in one village in the Dubrovnik coastal area: the only difference being that both bride's and groom's wedding guests are invited in this manner. There is no trace of the custom in other areas either, but the apple as a present given to each invited guest is noted in the northern Vlach group, some other regions in Serbia, eastern Herzegovina, and even more so in northeastern Montenegro, with some more occurrences of the apple as a means of decorating the bottle of brandy which the wedding inviter offers to the invited guests (cf. *ibid.* 173-175).

Another interesting practice in relation to the apple is that of halving an apple. The newlyweds should eat a half of the apple each, which symbolizes the established marriage bond. This practice is confirmed among the Danube area Bunjevci with some traces among the Primorje-Lika Bunjevci, also in some regions of Istria, northern Dalmatian Hinterland and among Vlachs in northeastern Serbia (cf. *ibid.* 176-178).

8.8. Delaying the consummation of the marriage

Finally, let's mention one more specific occurrence among the Danube area Bunjevci, according to the 19th century data confirmed only in the vicinity of Budapest. It is a matter of delaying the consummation of the marriage which may last up to two years and even up to four years. Later research has not confirmed this phenomenon. Only in Montenegro there has been noted a longer delay of the consummation of the marriage in recent times, the occurrence being quite widespread in the area. The delay of the consummation of the marriage for one or two nights was recognized in some hinterland regions in northern Dalmatia according to some earlier sources, and, as more recent data suggest the custom is confirmed sporadically in the area of the mouth of the Neretva River, in Boka Kotorska, eastern Herzegovina as well as among Vlachs in northeastern Serbia (Čemelić 1991:146-147). In the description of wedding customs observed by Vlachs in northern Greece no practices related to the first wedding night are mentioned. The delay in the consummation of the marriage is also known in the Albanian wedding: during the first night of the festivities the bride and the groom sleep separately and they are allowed to sleep together only on the third night (Hahn 1853:147)

7.9. Other specific related phenomena in the Bunjevci and Vlach wedding customs

There are two more distinctive beliefs regarding the wedding procession that have similar distribution in space. One of them is the belief that an encounter of two brides will bring misfortune, sometimes even death to one of them (confirmed among Vlachs in

northeastern Serbia) and the other forbids the bride to look back in the wedding procession so as not to look like her relatives (sometimes the opposite is desirable) or to avoid coming back to her parents' home – the two being the most common interpretations behind this belief (cf. Černelić 2016:178-183). There are also some indicators for other related phenomena in the Bunjevci and Vlach wedding customs worth mentioning: multiple bringing of gifts in food and drink, the important role of the bride's brother in negotiation with the representatives of the bridegroom's party, the tasks of particular honorary attendants - helping the bride get off the carriage or off the horse and taking her into her new home, leading the bride into the dancing group in front of the bridegroom's house, the couple taking leave of the wedding guests by accompanying them, bride's parents and relatives coming to the wedding feast etc. Ceremoniously rich and abundant gifts of food and drink are brought for the occasion in the Vlach wedding customs, while among both Bunjevci branches the *pohodani* (the bride's visitors) come twice - to the festivity itself and afterwards, bringing presents, primarily cakes and the like. Some of these customs have been known as the Greek and Albanian wedding customs as well etc. (cf. *ibid.* 183-185)

The practices according to which in the period between the proposal and the actual wedding the bride's relatives bring presents to the bride at different times and the obligation of the groom's family to present the bride with a wedding dress also belong to common elements of the wedding customs of the Bunjevci and Vlachs. Next chapter offers more detailed analyses of their distribution in Southeastern Europe.

Apart from being widely known some of the mentioned customs have also been characteristic of another Croatian group: the Šokci in Bačka, Baranja and Slavonia, and partly of Bačka Serbs as well as of Croats and other peoples in the migration interspace between the Bunjevci branches. The Šokci as well as Serbs, similarly to the Bunjevci, had populated the Pannonian territory in the centuries marked by the Turkish invasions. The roots of these customs should undoubtedly be looked for in southern areas, since they did not result from later acculturation processes in the new. There is a possibility that the Bačka Serbs have adopted some of the customs upon their contact with the Bunjevci and the Šokci in Bačka, but they could have got to know them at earlier times as well, when those Serbs had settled in Bačka having arrived from the neighboring southeastern territories where they most definitely had been in contact with Vlachs. They might even have been "Serbianized" Vlachs.

All the considered phenomena can be traced to the Balkan interior, to territories which must have seen bleeding of cultural elements of the settling Slavs with the autochthonous Romance speaking population. Though it may seem that the mysterious wedding figure of

staćel has further twisted the already entangled Balkan web, it is also true that it has offered the right stimulus to make an attempt to explain the complex ethnocultural processes in the past in the territories of Southeastern Europe.

8. Common elements of the bridal gift-giving in the period preceding the wedding among the Bunjevci, Vlachs and other peoples in Southeastern Europe³⁰

8.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter certain characteristic wedding customs have been presented in the territories with possible traces of the Bunjevci in the past and present. This chapter focuses on the bridal gift-giving in the period between the marriage proposal to the actual marriage among the Bunjevci, drawing a comparison with different variants of the same custom regularly practiced among various peoples in the territory of Southeastern Europe. There is a variety of possibilities shown in this practice, but I will focus on a specific type of gift-giving. It forms part of regular visits to the future bride: it is an obligation for the bridegroom's family, mainly women, to bring her presents primarily consisting of cake and/or food and drink, often including some other things. This custom appears in the large territory of Southeastern Europe in a number of varieties, which differ in terms of the frequency of the visits to the bride, the visitors, and the content of the gifts. The mother-in-law most frequently has the duty to visit her future daughter-in-law. In other cases this is performed by the bridegroom's female relatives, who take turns as participants of these visits, either accompanied by the mother-in-law, or alternating with her. The future bridegroom usually takes no part in the custom. This kind of gift-giving can also be carried out as part of other regular encounters, such as the engagement ceremony, but it is most frequently practiced as a separate occasion. At the same time, the aim of the bridegroom's mother and his relatives' visits to the fiancée is to get better acquainted with her. The other custom is connected with the bridegroom's or his parents'/father's duty to provide the bride with the wedding attire or part of it. These two customs are sometimes practiced on the same occasion.

8.2. The Danube area Bunjevci

This custom is characteristic of the Danube area Bunjevci, especially for the regional group in northern Bačka around the town of Sombor in several variations: the future mother-in-law attends the engagement ceremony (*prsten, rakija*), bringing along a braided cake and a decorated bottle of brandy; in certain places she and her husband take the mentioned gifts to the bride every Sunday during the wedding announcement in the church; in the third instance,

³⁰ This chapter is partly modified and updated article: *Common Elements of the Bridal Gift-Giving in the Wedding Customs of the Bunjevci, the Vlach and other Balkan Peoples. Macedonian Folklore*, 33/64:123-142, published in 2007.

she takes the braided cake on the occasion of her first visit, whereas upon the next two visits the same gift is supposed to be brought by close female relatives of the bridegroom's family. The fiancée can get such a gift once or several times. The same custom is confirmed only in several places around the town of Subotica. Somewhat different description of the custom can be found in the earlier published sources: the bridegroom's mother sends the cake to her future daughter-in-law, which is delivered by the bridegroom's sisters or his female relatives while visiting her in order to take her to church to the wedding announcement (cf. Černelić 2016:121-122).

In the vicinity of the town of Sombor on the same occasion the bridegroom's mother visits the future bride and brings her the wedding attire. The custom is based on the obligation of the bridegroom's parents to provide the future bride with the wedding attire itself or, possibly, give her money to purchase it herself instead. By contrast, in the vicinity of the town of Subotica these practices had been performed as two separate customs until the mid-20th century, and only after that time they started to take place on the same occasion as well. These two customs are preserved even today in a slightly modified way, not as separate practices any longer, but included in the engagement ceremony (cf. Černelić and Jaramazović 2010:221, 231-235; Černelić 2016:122-123; 137-138). Traces of both customs can also be found among the Danube area Bunjevci in southern Hungary but without elaborate details (cf. Černelić 2016:119-123; 136-138).

8.3. The Primorje/Lika Bunjevci

The same customs also form part of the traditional heritage of the Bunjevci subgroup in Primorje/Lika, including also the territory of Gorski Kotar in western Croatia. In these regions they differ in certain details. The bridegroom's parents visit the future bride, bringing her presents in food and drink, usually on Sunday during the engagement period, which in the region of Primorje (the Croatian Littoral) could last for more than a year. In the region of Lika all the mentioned variants are possible, but most frequently the bride's mother-in-law brings gifts on her own, sometimes accompanied by her husband and/or female relatives. Sometimes the bridegroom himself brings the cake and other gifts to his fiancée, which is otherwise unusual. In the region of Gorski Kotar the bridegroom's female relatives take turns in visiting the future bride every Sunday, in order to make acquaintance with her and bring gifts (cf. *ibid.* 126-127.). Traces of the custom which prescribed the bridegroom's parents' obligation to bring the bride the wedding attire on the engagement day can be observed only among the Bunjevci in the Primorje region, as well as in some regions of the Northern Adriatic: Istria,

the islands of Cres, Krk and Pag. An interesting variant of the combination of the two different types of gifts occurs among the Bunjevci in the southern part of the Velebitsko Podgorje (the Velebit foothills) region: the bridegroom's parents bring a big decorated cake which is covered with the bride's wedding attire (cf. *ibid.* 139-140)

8.4. The Dalmatian Bunjevci, southern Dalmatia, southeastern regions of Montenegro

Along the Adriatic Coast and in its hinterland (Dalmatia) traces of the bridegroom's family obligation to visit the fiancée and bring her gifts are rare. Certain traces of this custom can be followed only in the region of Bukovica among the Bunjevci population (the hinterland of northern Dalmatia). Sometimes the gift consists of footwear, clothing and/or jewelry. (cf. *ibid.* 127-128). In the rest of Dalmatia there is generally no confirmation of such a practice. Only in its southern parts (the mouth of the Neretva River and the Pelješac Peninsula) and in some southeastern mostly coastal regions of Montenegro, the obligation of the bridegroom's parents or the bridegroom himself to give the future bride gifts of clothes, sometimes including footwear, jewelry, cosmetics and the like, appears to be important tradition within wedding customs. Only in some parts of the mouth of the Neretva River region and Boka Kotorska, this gift is meant to be part of the bride's wedding attire. A combination of such gifts with a cake and food has been found in some southeastern regions of Montenegro. The cake alone is only rarely brought as a gift to the bride (cf. *ibid.* 128-129; 140).

8.5. The Pannonian Plain and Bosnia and Herzegovina

There are traces of these customs in the migration interspace of the three Bunjevci subgroups, i.e. on the territories of the Pannonian Plain and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The custom's numerous variants, either relating to the type and frequency of visits to the fiancée in the period between the engagement and the wedding or the content of the received gifts, also appear among other Croats, as well as among other ethnic groups in Vojvodina and in other regions of the Pannonian Plain: in Baranja, Syrmia and Slavonia. In parts of the Pannonian region this custom was also observed in combination with the obligation of the bridegroom's parents to provide the bride with the wedding attire, either as two separate practices or combined on a single occasion. Only the custom of buying the wedding attire for the bride can be traced in some parts of Syrmia and the part of the region of Baranja in Hungary (cf. *ibid.* 123-124; 138-139).

On the territory of Bosnia a combination of the customs can be observed in its northern, western and central regions, most often among Croats. The most frequent variant seems to be the duty of the mother-in-law to visit the future bride only once and bring her gifts on the occasion – on her own or she can choose someone to replace her. Sometimes it is a duty of the mother-in-law to visit her future daughter-in-law more than once or she can take turns with some other female family members. In some regions this custom is also combined with the custom of giving the wedding attire as a gift to the future bride, which has also been practiced in some regions where the previous custom is not confirmed (cf. *ibid.* 125-126; 139)

8.6. Kosovo and Serbia

The combination of the two basic customs is rare, while in Kosovo clothes, footwear, cosmetics and jewelry prevail. A gift consisting of these items in combination with a cake and food is most frequently delivered to the future bride in some regions of Serbia, especially in its eastern and northeastern parts. Among Serbian and the Vlach population the obligation to buy the wedding attire for the future bride seems to be a prevailing tradition (cf. *ibid.* 129, 140-141).

8.7. Bulgaria and Macedonia

The bridegroom's relatives, especially women, bring the future bride a specially prepared cake; in the western parts it is the mother-in-law's duty to prepare it; in some regions of Bulgaria relatives visit the future bride three times, giving her the cake as a gift. Different variants of the custom are confirmed in Macedonia; along with the cake, food and drink, relatives are often obliged to bring additional gifts such as clothes, cosmetics and jewelry in different combinations. In Macedonia men most often play the role of the visitors, in contrast with other Southeastern European regions. There are traces of the practice of bringing the wedding attire to the future bride as a gift only in some regions of Bulgaria and Macedonia where the above mentioned custom takes place (cf. 128-130, 141).

8.8. Albania and Greece

The obligation of the bridegroom's side to send the wedding attire to the future bride can also be traced to southern Albania and northeastern Greece. Among Vlachs in northern Greece the bridegroom's relatives bring the future bride different kinds of gifts upon each visit during the engagement period, which lasts for a year. The last visit, in the eve of the wedding,

is characterized with special gifts: the bride's veil, some decorative pieces serving as her hair decoration on the wedding day, cosmetics and sweets (cf. *ibid.* 129-130, 141).

8.9. Conclusion

A short survey of specific variants of the bridal gift-giving in the period preceding marriage in Southeastern Europe points to their characteristic distribution, which has already been confirmed with regard to many other wedding phenomena (cf. Černelić 2016). The customs are characteristic of the Bunjevci subgroups in the Danube area and in Primorje, Lika and Gorski Kotar, which all exhibit certain specific regional features, with certain discontinuity along the Adriatic Coast and its hinterland (the Dalmatian Bunjevci). Nevertheless, traces can be seen from the territories of Herzegovina, southern Dalmatia to the Montenegrin-Albanian border, further on to the region of Kosovo, parts of Serbia, including regions with Vlach population, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania to Vlach settlements in northern Greece. Due to medieval migrations during the Turkish invasion, the traces lead through the territories of Bosnia towards the north, covering greater extents of the Pannonian Plain, especially the eastern parts, including the Danube area Bunjevci as the final northern point of occurrence of the bridal gift-giving in the period between the marriage proposal and the actual marriage as a common element, observed within wedding customs of the majority of Balkan people.

As we draw closer to the territories from which it obviously originated, there appear to be increasingly more elements characteristic of the Vlach population. Most common time chosen for visits to the fiancée among the Vlachs in northern Greece is during the most important religious holidays, which can also be traced to other more or less distant regions in Southeastern Europe: some regions of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Boka Kotorska and southern and southeastern regions of Montenegro, sporadically in Konavle (the hinterland of Dubrovnik) and Slavonia in Croatia.

Taking into consideration the presented data, the following hypothesis can be proposed.³¹ It seems that the custom of regular visits to the future bride during the engagement period has something to do with the long-lasting engagement period (up to a year); especially in the southeastern Balkan regions due to the Vlach movements towards the west and the north, this custom was transferred to some other regions, where the engagement period is otherwise much shorter. On one hand, frequent visits to the future bride

³¹ The customs discussed here are more thoroughly presented in my latest book (cf. 2016:120-142).

consequently happen in shorter intervals, which in some Pannonian and Dinaric regions, among Roman Catholic population, relates to the obligation to announce the wedding in the church on three Sundays in turn. That has happened among the Bunjevci in the Danube region as well. In other Croatian regions, as well as in other territories of Southeastern Europe, the engagement period is usually shorter. On the other hand, in some regions of the same area, traces of a long-lasting engagement period could be found. There is some isolated, but significant, evidence of this tendency on the islands surrounding the town of Zadar in northern Dalmatia, as well as in the regions of Lika and Primorje, among the Bunjevci population (cf. *ibid.* 131-132).

The next hypothesis is the following: the origins of the two related customs discussed should be sought among the native Balkan peoples, most likely within the Vlach tradition. As we get closer to the assumed territory of its origin, the content of the gifts changes so as to include various decorative items and cosmetics. The interesting difference is the absence of the cake in the custom of Vlachs in northern Greece, as opposed to Vlachs inhabiting northeastern Serbia. The future mother-in law takes no part in visiting the fiancée, she prepares gifts to her, which some members of the bridegroom's family, who act as mediators between the two parties, bring to her and her household members. An interesting common element among various Balkan peoples, including the Bunjevci in the Danube region, is the mediation by female relatives. This variant of gift-giving forms part of the tradition, along with the mother-in-law's obligation to visit and bring gifts to her future daughter-in-law personally. Sometimes they take turns in fulfilling the duty of gift-giving to the fiancée, which is frequently the case in Bosnia and in the Pannonian Plain, but this custom's variant is rarely practiced in the territories of its origin. Traces of this variant in southwestern, central and northern Bosnia, in the region of Gorski Kotar in Croatia and in western Macedonia argue against the hypothesis that this variant originated in the Pannonian region, where it was most commonly practiced.

A specific term used to denote the women who participate in the custom appears to be a common element in several distant regions in the area. It is the term *kolačare*, which is characteristic of some localities of the Bunjevci in the Danube region, in the vicinity of the town of Sombor. The variant *kolačarice* is confirmed in the region of Gorski Kotar, where significant evidence of the Bunjevci ethnic group could be traced back to the past. Traces of this term and its variants can be sporadically confirmed in some regions on the territory between the recognizable Bunjevci subgroups in the regions of eastern Sylvania, northern Bosnia (the variant known as *kolačaruše* in the vicinity of the town of Derventa) as well as

southeastern Bosnia. Interesting variants occur in some regions in Macedonia: *kolačarke*, *kolakari* and in northern and southwestern Serbia *kolačari*; the last two terms denoting men who in these regions bring gifts to the future bride, instead of women, who mostly take on the duty to mediate between the two wedding parties (cf. *ibid.* 134)

The other custom presented in this chapter has the same or similar distribution in space. There are not many examples of these two customs combined, which is the case among the Danube area Bunjevci group in the vicinity of the town of Sombor (and the town of Subotica alike, but only from the mid-20th century), among Vlachs in northern Greece and in some isolated regions in the large interspace between these two ethnic groups (Kosovo, southeastern Serbia, the region of Podgorje (the Velebit foothills) – with traces of the Bunjevci ethnic group in the past, and in central Bosnia). Nevertheless, these two customs are related and sometimes it is not easy to make a distinction between them. For example, there is a very small difference between the obligation of the bridegroom's family to give the future bride clothes and footwear, jewelry and decorative items as a gift and the obligation to provide her with the wedding attire. It may simply point to a certain regional difference of the same basic custom but it may also mean that the author was not precise enough in his/her description. However, it is interesting to observe the interrelationship between these two customs concerning its space distribution and to follow their development from the Vlach territories, wherefrom they originated, to the Danube area, where one subgroup of the Bunjevci ethnic group settled in the 17th century. Sometimes they occur either as two separate or combined customs in the same setting. Most frequently both appear in the same area, but not necessarily in the same localities, which is the case in the regions of Bačka, Syrmia, Baranja and Slavonia in the Pannonian Plain, Bosnia, the Adriatic coast, and parts of Montenegro. In some regions the duty of the bridegroom's parents to buy the wedding attire for the future bride appears to be more commonly practiced than the other bridal gift-giving custom (Serbia) and vice versa (the regions of Lika and Gorski Kotar in Croatia, parts of Macedonia and Bulgaria). These specific customs must share a common origin. Their distribution in space and their constitutional elements point to predominantly indigenous tradition with certain elements of Slavic origin. The elements of the related customs came in contact due to certain historic circumstances, and, being compatible one with another, they were well adjusted without any deeper disturbance. While the related customs among Vlachs in northern Greece seem to be less pervaded by elements of Slavic origin, the latter are more evident among the Vlach groups settled in northeastern Serbia. Slavic elements also prevail in the western and northern regions of Southeastern Europe.

Nevertheless, combinations of the related customs' constituent elements may be various and numerous, and the same or similar elements can sometimes be traced to different parts of Southeastern Europe. Different combinations of the elements produce specific regional variations of the custom. In the course of gradual acculturation, sometimes also assimilation, certain interesting and specific variants of the same (or related) custom have been produced. The separation of the Croatian ethnic group of Bunjevci into three recognizable branches along with migrations of another Croatian ethnic group known under the ethnic name of Šokci from Bosnia have certainly contributed to the distribution of the specific elements of bridal gift-giving in the period between the marriage proposal and the actual marriage in the western and the northern territories of Southeastern Europe.

9. Concluding remarks on the possible origin of the Croatian subethnic group of Bunjevci

In my latest book through analyses of specific elements and phenomena of the Bunjevci wedding customs, as well as their distribution on the territory of Southeastern Europe, my aim was to interpret the knowledge behind the mosaic pieced together element by element, thus taking on a recognizable physiognomy. In this manner the particular area of their interfusion with the Vlach elements can be determined on one hand and the way they were spreading on the other hand. Various specific elements of the Bunjevci wedding customs, examined in the previous two chapters (an in more details presented in my mentioned book), make the body and the content of this mosaic. They also point to the manner of their development and origins, as well as the directions of their spreading. On the basis of the territorial distribution of a combination of specific elements of the Bunjevci wedding the potential original homeland of the Bunjevci could be specified as well as the ways their cultural assets were passed on further north and west. The mentioned analyses led me to the conclusion that based on ethnological, linguistic and certain historical indicators the origin of the Bunjevci Croats should be looked for on the historical territory of the so called *Red Croatia*. Regardless of whether this entity, which is now part of Montenegro, is historically founded (it is not up to ethnologists to deal with these issues), there seem to be grounds for it in ethnic sense, considering the traces left by Croats on this territory. Since as early as Slavs came to the south, as already mentioned, they might have started to assimilate the local Romance population (perhaps even Albanian in part), and this process might have continued later on due to Vlachs' nomadic migrations towards the Adriatic. The expansion of the Serbian state into this region propelled ethnic and linguistic changes in population structure and Croats were pushed further towards the sea, where they still reside today (the Bay of Kotor). Part of the population left the territory heading further northeast for the Neretva River, only to join similar local Croatian population fostering the Ekavian accent (typically associated with Serbian population), while the remaining population that stayed gradually adopted the Ijekavian accent (which originated as a combination of the Ikavian and Ekavian accent). Thus, the Croats living in the Bay of Kotor today use the Ijekavian accent. In addition, one can assume that precisely from the ranks of this part of Croatian population that was pushed forward from the farthest Croatian ethnic frontier, thus saving their characteristic Ikavian accent, rose a distinctive Croatian sub(ethnic) group – the Bunjevci. Assimilation of

the local Romance population might have come about and ended even earlier in their original habitat or this process might have continued on the new territories that were inhabited by the Bunjevci Croats in the course of their transition (regardless of whether the very ethnonym *Bunjevac* existed at the time or not – which is not possible to determine without any historical documents available). With the new Vlach elements coming from the southeast the total population of the region came into contact with Vlach heritage once again. Therefore, it is not possible to separate clearly the Bunjevci from the rest of Croatian (sub)ethnic groups. Since the Bunjevci-Vlach common elements are present at the very place considered to be the potential point of origin of Croats, one can assume that their assimilation of the indigenous population found in the region, as well as their mutual cultural influence, took place for the most part in that very region. It is not possible to determine precisely how long this group of Croats resided at their supposed point of origin or when exactly they transited towards and across the Neretva River. They might have lived at this farthest Croatian frontier since the time the first Slavic settlers came to the region, until as late as the 13th century. Due to Serbian expansion at the time, they might have left their original home gradually migrating westward towards western Herzegovina, western Bosnia and the neighboring Dalmatian Hinterland, wherein historical evidence of their presence can be found. Also, some of them might have stayed for some time or even settled along the way between the Bay of Kotor and the Neretva. Certain ethnological indicators point to their presence in the mentioned area. It might be worthwhile investigating whether there is any trace of any Bunjevci surnames, to add to the existing evidence of their presence in that area as well – all the way down to their supposed point of origin, according to the latest ethnological indicators. The process of their further development and shaping into a distinctive ethnic group might have continued through their contact with similar Croatian population of the area they migrated to. The traces of cultural elements found in the area suggest that the farthest Bunjevci frontier might be not far away from the Bunë River (Albanian name for the Bojana River) and that the groups of Croats that in time became known as the Bunjevci might have resided between the two Buna Rivers once. One would be in the south, on the border with Albania, and the other is the well known rivulet commonly associated with the Bunjevci, flowing into the Neretva River from the east. Many researchers tried to derive the ethnonym Bunjevci from the name of the Buna River. At the same time some researchers, primarily linguists, find this interpretation unfounded.³² Folk

³² A lot of efforts have been made in order to interpret the possible origin of the ethnonym Bunjevci, but it is left unexplained due to a lack of well-founded arguments.

tradition is also in favor of this interpretation and perhaps folk etymology should not be completely dismissed when searching for the Bunjevci origin, for it is a testimony of a historical memory, especially since the ethnological indicators also confirm the Bunjevci traces in the wider area between the two Buna rivers. Back in the 1980s I heard an account in Baja (Hungary) that Bunjevci came from Albania, which at the time I deemed quite unlikely. When it comes to folk (oral) tradition, it is sometimes difficult to separate the real from the imagined. However, in the light of the latest ethnological findings, the claim does not seem so unlikely any longer. Ethnological indicators point to traces of Bunjevci very near the ethnic Albanians' territory.

Based on everything said above, it can be presumed that ethnological indicators have given new clues for determining the processes of ethnocultural shaping of the Bunjevci. Starting from the given presumption, it seems that further ethnological, historical, linguistic, anthroponymic, demographic, topographic and anthropological research might provide additional evidence of the proposed ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic processes in the new supposedly original home of the Bunjevci. Nevertheless, on the general territories settled by the Bunjevci today subjective aspects of their identity are more pronounced in those areas where their cultural heritage is well-preserved. Although the latter is partly kept only in collective memory, this too serves as an important indicator of the processes of ethnocultural shaping of the Bunjevci, having forged their identities and affected their destinies both past and present.

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Biography

Milana Černelić was born on 11 August, 1954 in Osijek, a citizen of the Republic of Croatia. In 1980 she graduated from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb majoring in the English language and literature (A1) and Ethnology (A2). She received her Phd in 1997. She is a professor at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb.

By 2001 she participated in five domestic scientific projects. She was the leader of a scientific project titled *Identity of the Ethnogenesis of the Littoral Bunjevci* (2002–2006) and *Identity and Ethnocultural Shaping of the Bunjevci* (2008–2013). Černelić also took part in two international scientific projects from 2005 to 2014 and in around 60 domestic and international scientific conferences in Croatia and abroad.

Her main research interests are customs and rituals, family, ethnicity and the construction of identity of Croatian minorities and subethnic groups (primarily the subethnic group of the Bunjevci in Croatia, Hungary and Serbia), ethnological methodology and the role of the ethnologist in the development of rural tourism.

She is an author of three scientific books, over 80 scientific papers and 20 professional papers. Milana Černelić is also a coeditor of an exhibition catalogue (and a coauthor of the same exhibition), coeditor of three scientific monographs, two conference proceedings and the chief editor of a scientific monograph.

She teaches undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate courses, which she created on her own, at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. She mentored over 30 students advising on their graduate papers as well as three doctoral dissertations. As a result of field research under her mentorship nearly a hundred students' papers have been written and published in scientific journals, monographs and conference proceedings. Several generations of a couple of dozens of students who came under her wing have won awards given by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, some of them the Award given by the Croatian Ethnological Society for students' papers and the Rector's Award for scientific papers. For her book *The Bunjevci Studies* (2006), in 2008, Milana Černelić received annual award "Milovan Gavazzi" for scientific and teaching work given by the Croatian Ethnological Society and, in 2010, an award in the same category for coeditorship of the second and third volume of scientific monograph *To live in Krivi Put*. Along with her associates on the project, in 2012, she was bestowed the Charter of the Town of Senj for outstanding

achievements and accomplishments in the ethnological research of the hinterland of Senj. For coeditorship of the conference proceedings *The Bunjevci in the Context of Time and Space* she received two awards given by the Institute for Culture of Croats of Vojvodina: “Emerik Pavić” award for the best book in 2014 and a triennial award “Tomo Vereš” for the best book in the field of science and publicist writing between 2013 and 2015. She has recently been given "Milovan Gavazzi" award for lifetime work in 2017 by the Croatian Ethnological Society.

Milana Černelić is a member of *the Croatian Ethnological Society, Matrix Croatica, Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF), the Association of University Professors* and the *Society of Vojvodina and Danube region Croats*.

Summary

The chapter entitled **The impact of migration on the cultural heritage and identity of the Croatian (sub)ethnic group Bunjevci** deals with the (sub)ethnic group of Bunjevci, inhabiting today different territories of Southeastern Europe, as a result of the mobility on the Balkans throughout the 17th century. This introductory chapter aims to portray the Bunjevci providing a short historic survey. The ethnonym Bunjevci stands for a group of ethnic Croats, originating from Dalmatia, southeastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, forming three branches of the ethnic group of Bunjevci known as Dalmatia, Primorje/Lika and the Danube area Bunjevci. The holistic approach to the research of their cultural heritage, and the ethnocultural processes through which Bunjevci have been formed as a distinct ethnic group, could contribute to the better understanding of the way in which the identity of an ethnic group has been, and is being, formed, as well as the way in which the manifold identities of each particular branch have been constructed as a result of the migration processes. This chapter examines Bunjevci branches' identities, the influence of ethnic, cultural, social, historical, political, and ecological factors on the construction of the identity of each Bunjevci branch, outlining the differences in the process of construction of their identity, from subjective as well as objective point of view, based on the examples of some specific elements of the cultural heritage of Bunjevci.

The following chapter deals more specifically with the **Attempts to deny the Bačka Bunjevci the rights to belong to the Croatian nation** during the existence of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes between the two World Wars. Under the cover of a common name for the three nations living in one state, three basic forms of manipulation with the ethnic name of Bunjevci came to light: 1. Neutralization of the Bunjevci by emphasizing their distinctiveness: they are neither Serbs nor Croats; one explanation being that they are the fourth tribe of the unique Yugoslav people, and the other one that they are the fourth nation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. 2. the Bunjevci can be both Serbs and Croats, which is a matter of an individual choice; it is irrelevant anyway, since both Serbs and Croats are in fact Yugoslavs. 3. Denial of the Croatian ethnicity of the Bunjevci, through manipulating their religious affiliation, expressed in the claim that the Bunjevci, as well as the Šokci are Serbs of Roman Catholic denomination. Manipulations of the kind can be found in different forms in various published sources, especially in the period between 1920 and 1930, and again in 1939 and in 1940. The author illustrates these attempts by quoting the available and relevant sources. On the basis of the documents, the author reaches a conclusion that

writings of the kind in the local newspapers reflected the attempts that had been initiated in certain Serbian scientific circles, whose intention was to prove that the Bunjevci and the Šokci were Serbs converted to Roman Catholicism at one point in the past, or at least to persuade them to neglect their Croatian ethnicity. Leading Serbian scientists offered many unconvincing and senseless statements as „evidence“ of the alleged Serbian origin of the Bunjevci, such as the language, the conversion to Roman Catholicism and the ethnic constitution of the territory wherefrom the Bunjevci had most probably originated. The author also refers to the reactions to the attempts that appeared in other local newspapers, which were clear regarding the Croatian ethnic origin of the Bunjevci. The Croats in Vojvodina (the Bunjevci and the Šokci) are constantly the object of manipulation of the Serbian state. In the 1991 census and onwards their traditional ethnic names were entered as separate nationalities. The means of manipulation have become different today, but its essence has remained the same: the manipulators rely on devotion and loyalty of the Croatian ethnic groups of Bunjevci and Šokci to their ethnic names. The author gives a short account of recent understandings of this phenomenon.

The following chapter considers **The local community of the Danube area Bunjevci branch in Croatia**. It focusses on the Bunjevci from Bačka who settled in Croatia at different times in the 20th century. They come together as a local community on certain occasions when gathering for certain common purpose, as initiated and organized by the *Society of Croats from Vojvodina and the Danube region*, which was created in the late 1980s. One of the central events of their common activities, initiated and organized by their *Society*, was the exhibition *From the Heritage of the Bunjevci Croats in Bačka*, held in 1998. The author selected a few traditional items presented at the exhibition to illustrate a positive attitude of some Bunjevci individuals towards their cultural heritage. They keep them today in their new homes in a quite different environment since thus they have become symbols of their identity. The exhibition served as an occasion for revealing their cultural heritage, which could be well and holistically presented due to high awareness of their cultural identity.

The aim of the next chapter **Characteristic features of the *zadruga* (extended family)** (co-author Tihana Rubić) is to introduce certain characteristic features of life in extended families of the Bunjevci in the different regions that they have inhabited since the 17th century, with a focus on interrelations of the family members in everyday organization of life and work; the role of the master and the mistress – her duties in relation to other female family members; and (in)formal partition as well as some specific transitional forms of family life from the *zadruga* to nuclear families. The authors observe the *zadruga* phenomenon as a

dynamic process, depending on the internal as well as the external socio-economic factors, and provide a comparative insight into the *zadruga* phenomenon in two branches of the same subethnic group, which largely reflects the historical and social circumstances in which such a family lifestyle existed and was transformed. The authors pay attention to the influence of common law, which had a great importance in preserving specific features of family life, despite the strong influence of historical, socio-political, ecological and economic factors on the Bunjevci family life structure in the final stage of the existence of the *zadruga*.

The chapter ***Dužijanca – the celebration marking the end of the harvest as a cultural practice and expression of identity*** deals with a specific cultural festivity and a traditional practice of the Bunjevci in Serbia (in the province of Vojvodina), the celebration marking the end of the harvest, called *Dužijanca*. As part of the Bunjevci cultural heritage, it was being organized jointly by family members and reapers on a family farm. Apart from its cultural aspect, it is also imbued with an important religious dimension – that of giving thanks to God for the collected crop, which was the final part of the festivity. Blaško Rajić, a priest in St. Rocco's Church in Subotica, brought it into life again and fostered its celebration as a public event in 1911, even though it used to be a ceremony performed strictly within a family. Since then it has continuously existed with occasional ups and downs. Since 1968 it has become a public festivity of the ethnic group of Bunjevci and the town of Subotica, taking place in shape of various activities and events during the summer. Up to 1993 all religious and civil segments were performed separately. Since then, both aspects of the celebration have been united and enriched with new cultural content. This chapter briefly presents *Dužijanca* as a public festivity from a historical and a contemporary perspective. A variety of social, cultural, religious and political contexts within which the event is celebrated is outlined from a holistic perspective. It also aims to interpret in what way this festivity, both in past and present, represents an expression of the identity of the ethnic group of Bunjevci in the multicultural environment of the county of Vojvodina.

The chapter ***The role of ritual traditional clothing among Bunjevci in Vojvodina in the revitalization of annual customs and rituals*** deals with the traditional costume worn in the course of calendar festivals and the feast marking the end of the harvest among Bunjevci in the region of Bačka (province of Vojvodina) in Serbia. The traditional costume carries an important symbolic meaning in the process of revitalizing customs and, as such, it represents an ethnocultural identity marker of the group. The customs analyzed have undergone a great revival in the past twenty years, being observed in certain calendar periods or on specific days during the ritual year, such as the central cultural and social event - the *prelo* (spinning bee) in

the winter period of Shrovetide, and the Pentecost pageant called *kraljice*, as well as on the occasion of the *Dužijanca*.

The chapter **Comparable phenomena in wedding customs of the Bunjevci and the Romance language speaking inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula** the elements of the Bunjevci wedding customs, which, according to certain indicators, have been shaped in contact with the Balkan Romance speaking population. The survey starts with an introduction dealing with *stačel*, a specific wedding attendant, followed by another wedding attendant, the *kum*. The following phenomena are considered further on: a gift of money given to the bride in exchange for a kiss; separating the newlyweds or the bride from the rest of the wedding party/separating the male from the female wedding party members; crossing water in front of the bride's and/or the groom's house; the bride entering the groom's home while stepping on the white linen/rug; specific elements pertaining to the apple within wedding customs, delaying the consummation of the marriage and a short account of some other specific phenomena in the Bunjevci and Vlach wedding customs is given. More detailed examination of each particular element may shed some more light on the origins of at least a part of cultural heritage of all the Bunjevci branches, as well as on the processes of their ethnocultural shaping and their ethnogenesis in the period before the separation into the three recognizable branches.

In the chapter **Common elements of the bridal gift-giving in the period preceding wedding among the Bunjevci, the Vlachs and other peoples in Southeastern Europe** the author focuses on the bridal gift-giving in the period from marriage proposal to the actual marriage among the Bunjevci, comparing it with the variants of the same custom regularly practiced among various peoples in the territory of Southeastern Europe. There is a variety of possibilities within this practice, but the author deals with a specific kind of gift-giving, which is a part of regular visits to the future bride: it is an obligation for the bridegroom's family, mainly women, to bring her presents primarily consisting of a cake and/or food and drink, often including some other things. The mother-in-law most commonly has the duty to visit her future daughter-in-law. As an alternative, this is performed by the bridegroom's female relatives, who take turns as participants of these visits, either accompanied by the mother-in-law, or alternating with her. The future bridegroom usually takes no part in the custom. This kind of gift-giving can also be carried out as part of other regular encounters, such as the engagement ceremony, but it is most frequently practiced as a separate occasion. At the same time, the aim of the bridegroom's mother and his relatives' visits to the fiancée is to get better acquainted with her. This custom appears in the large territory of Southeastern Europe in a

number of varieties, which differ in the frequency of the visits to the bride, the visitors, and the content of the gifts. The other custom is connected with the bridegroom's or his parents/father's duty to give the bride the wedding attire or some of its parts. These two customs are sometimes practiced on the same occasion. In their specific variants both of them are also characteristic of the Vlach wedding customs, well known among other Balkan peoples as well: Greeks, Albanians, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Montenegrins, one more dominant than the other in various regions. Traces of these elements could be found among all Bunjevci branches and territories of their migrations in the 17th century: southern parts of the Adriatic area, some regions in Bosnia, the region of Lika, Gorski kotar, eastern Pannonian region in Croatia and in Vojvodina (Serbia). Through comparative analyses the author tries to reach the conclusion about the origin of these customs and their distribution in the western and northern parts of Southeastern Europe, as well as about the potential homeland of the Bunjevci Croats.

In the final chapter **Concluding remarks on the possible origin of the Croatian subethnic group of Bunjevci** the author claims that based on the analyses of the specific elements of the wedding customs of Bunjevci and their distribution in space on the territories of Southeastern Europe presented in previous two chapters, an interpretation of the Bunjevci's possible homeland origin and their formation as an subethnic group can be made. In concluding words about the Bunjevci, their migrations, traditional heritage and identities in this book the author tries to outline the processes that consequently influenced and determined their destiny in the past as well as the present. The author presumes that ethnological indicators have given new clues for determining the processes of ethnocultural shaping of the Bunjevci and points that further ethnological, historical, linguistic, anthroponymic, demographic, topographic and anthropological research might provide additional evidence of the proposed ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic processes in the new supposedly original home of the Bunjevci. On the general territories settled by the Bunjevci today subjective aspects of their identity are more pronounced in those areas where their cultural heritage is well-preserved. Although the latter is partly kept only in collective memory, this too serves as an important indicator of the processes of ethnocultural shaping of the Bunjevci, having forged their identities and affected their destinies both past and present.

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