

Moba tradition / Mowing on Rajac Mountain



The interview with Mrs. Danica Pavlović, conducted by Jelena Bjegović in a café in Belgrade. December 2021.

Danica Pavlović is 65 years old. By education, she is an economy technician. Danica is now retired. She worked at National Bank of Serbia, as a controller of intranational transactions in the Department of Foreign Finances. She lives in Belgrade, but her origins are in Ljig, small town cca. 100 km southwest from Belgrade.

Jelena Bjegović (JB): We met today to talk about moba custom and the festivity “Mowing on Rajac Mountain”. What do moba custom and the festivity “Mowing on Rajac Mountain” personally mean to you?

Danica Pavlović (DP): Back then when I was a little girl growing up in the village Kadine Luke, where my mother’s family is from, calling for moba was a call for all generations, young and old, to be together and get a job done. The whole village worked as one. Everyone was driven so the work is done. In our community mowing was the most frequent cause for calling moba especially during the summer. Festivity “Mowing on Rajac mountain” directly draws from the tradition. Like in the old days, for half of the century from the first festivity, every year call around St. Peter’s Day [July 12th] people are called for mowing. Whole community is keen to make festivity successful, so the “Mowing” is a moba in its own right. For me personally, it means affirmation of solidarity and the community, helping each other out to overcome difficulties and contribute to the prosperity of the village.

JB: What have you learned and what experiences do you have as participant of “Mowing on Rajac Mountain”?

DP: From experiences of participating moba and in organization of “Mowing on Rajac Mountain” festivity I learned to be solidary with people in need and the community. I developed deep sense of the belonging to the community. I also learned about social roles. You know the saying: “who mows and who carries

water". It is known who is didija [host of the mowing], who are water carriers, who prepares lunch and who brings it to the mowers, etc. Yet, we are still together with a common goal.

I learned a lot about handicrafts: knitting, embroidery, weaving. I also learned a bit about blacksmith's trade. I learned a lot about traditional gastronomy – making pies, donuts, kaymak, rakija, etc. My cooking skills have improved. You know that I make delicious pies and donuts! For my cooking and baking skills I can credit "Mowing on Rajac Mountain".

Each year festivity ends with performances of traditional singing and music groups. I perfected myself in dancing our traditional kolo and I also learned some songs.

You are engaged in ecology, so I want to tell you that thanks to participating festivity "Mowing on Rajac Mountain" I also learned something about ecology as well. If meadows aren't mowed, they'd become weeded, filled with darnel, which would jeopardize some other species of flora and fauna. That reflects on biodiversity. "Mowing on Rajac Mountain" hence contributes maintaining biodiversity. Because of the "Mowing" there are no weeded meadows!

DP: Moba is important because it promotes solidarity and social cohesion. Everyone in the community puts effort so the community prospers. I'm talking about all generations, young and old, everyone according to his or her abilities makes personal contribution. Don't make me talk about girls and lads, who can meet and get to know each other! [laughs]

JB: According to your opinion why are moba and "Mowing on Rajac Mountain" important for Ljig municipality, which organizes the festivity and the community?

DP: When we talk about Ljig municipality, I remind you it was and still is small municipality just outside Belgrade, on the very important traffic communication leading towards Western Serbia, Montenegro, and Adriatic Sea. Festivity "Mowing on Rajac Mountain" encouraged people in Ljig community to think more about their customs and culture, to realize that major component of their identity is affinity for solidarity and aspirations to overcome difficulties together. Also, Ljig become known as municipality that attracts mowers and tourists from all over Balkans. And beyond. You know that "Mowing on Rajac mountain" gathers mowers from all over the region. Everyone brings something that shows, tells something about the essence of moba and mowing. It is so wonderful to see colourful embroideries on white shirts that mowers wear, each being traditional costumes in their communities. As hosts, we offer what we have, our customs, we share our beliefs and values, our traditions. Let me tell you, it is not so different from others. We are a bit, but it does not stop us to find quite easily something in common.

JB: According to your opinion and experiences, how is "Mowing on Rajac Mountain" related to other expressions of living culture in Serbia?

DP: Beside moba, "Mowing" also cherishes two important social practices: prelo and poselo. Prelo is a practice in which women and girls get together to work on their handicrafts. On the day prior to "Mowing", in the afternoon, women in the community get together to work and to present completed handicrafts. After prelo, everyone gets together on poselo. Poselo is traditional practice of getting

together to socialize. Women, men, girls, and lads are together competing who will sing better, who will tell a better joke, who will win the social games. It all holds the spirit of old times when prelo and poselo were almost the only way for informal interactions of all villagers.