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In-Cult



Cultural treasures – Serbia
Education Section
Institute for Cultural
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SER_1/Moba – Mowing on the mountain Rajac

Practiced in villages all over Serbia, cherishing solidarity and voluntarily work, Moba is an ancient tradition of mutual helping in works that require more people so they can be done more efficiently. Most often people called for moba when they needed help in building houses, mowing, sowing, harvest, etc.

Key elements of the tradition are preserved in annual festivity Mowing on the mountain Rajac in Ljig municipality (Šumadija region of Central Serbia). Though moba could be called anytime from early spring until late autumn, Festivity is organized around St. Peter's Day (July 12th).

Mowing on the mountain Rajac encompasses all features of moba – from gathering of participants including water carriers and lunch carriers (as moba caller is to provide water and food, latter on drinks for the workers) to dinner marking the end of the working day. In the morning person representing moba caller (didija) welcomes the participants with a toast and rakija (spirit drink). He overlooks the work and at the end hosts the dinner for the participants.

When the work is done, participants join traditional dance kolo.

SER_2/Belmuž – traditional cheese meal

Shepherds keeping sheeps in and around villages on the Old Mountain and Svrljig mountains in the Eastern Serbia for centuries traditionally prepare Belmuž. It is a meal made of dairy products and flour, ingredients that are most common.

The name Belmuž derives from the words for white cheese and man. In Serbian white cheese is called beli sir, hence BEL, whereas the word for man in Serbian dialect spoken in Eastern Serbia is MUŽ. Belmuž is very nutritious, and it was prepared for the whole family. It is said that it tastes the best when it is prepared in larger quantity in larger pots. Constant stirring of the mixture demands the strength, which is why men were preparing the meal. Some say that mainly young males were preparing and consuming the meal, so they prove that they are fit to get married, to become honest husbands, as the word MUŽ means husband in Serbian, and white is the color of honesty. Also, meal was very often prepared by shepherds taking flocks of sheeps on pastures higher in the mountain.

Most often, Belmuž is prepared of fresh, so-called young, cheese that was prepared two days before preparation of Belmuž. It is said that every man (MUŽ) develops his own secret recipe for most delicious Belmuž.

SER_3/The Musical Heritage of Vranje

Vranje, city in the Southern Serbia, is known for its rich cultural heritage. Vranje is most famous for its musical heritage, notably its urban songs and brass band music.

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Vranje's musical heritage combines several cultural and civilizational elements that have shaped the city's history. It evolved from the traditions of numerous ethnic groups, most notably Serbs, Romas, and Turks. It draws from both Christian and Islamic religious practices.

Brass bands' music, for which Vranje is also famous, was primarily created by Roma bands playing at fairs and festivities. This music has distinctive oriental influences. Playing brass instruments in bands requires musicianship and a strong ability to improvise. Popularity of music performed by brass bands from Vranje was raised for its ability to elicit intense emotions.

Vranje's musical heritage is frequently featured on television and radio programs, and is increasingly becoming a part of the global world music scene, having numerous special editions.

Brass Music is enlisted in the National Register of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia. In 2019 Vranje became the first city in Serbia to be included in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network for music.

SER_4/Licider craft

The making of Licider cookies (Lebzelter) is of very old origin that can be traced through centuries. Honey cookies were mentioned in general since the 12th century. From the 17th century in Central Europe, it is more frequently mentioned that the Christmas trees have been decorated with honey cookies of various shapes.

Along with wax production, making Licider cookies was considered as very lucrative craft, economically payable and was often called the "golden craft". This craft was practiced by wax workers who successfully perfected themselves in making honey and making honey cookies. Making Licider cookies is attributed to the influence of German colonists who developed this craft first in southern Hungary, and then took to other cities in Serbia.

Licider cookies can be of different looks and shapes. The most widespread and most famous to this day is the Licider heart, of various sizes, decorated with a mirror.

The most commonly carved motives were figures of well-dressed men and women, horsemen, or horses, babies in pillows and hearts (the heart of Christ). Licider cookies modeled in a mold, and later sprinkled with multi-colored shaped dough, were sold at fairs, village celebrations and markets. Well decorated and colorful, they symbolized affection, love and respect.

SER_5/St. George's Day – Đurđevdan

St. George's Day is celebrated on May 6th. It is known as Đurđevdan, Đurđovdan, Ml'zigruda, Premlaz, and Erdelezi. It is celebrated by both Christians and Muslims as major spring festivity when nature blossoms and people are pleading St. George to help.

St. George is particularly celebrated in Roma communities all over Serbia. He is seen as patron that connects community with its ancestors. Alike changes in nature, St. George's Days marks the spring of

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good luck and happiness. In Roma communities St. George is celebrated for two days. On the first day, girls and women go to the fields and pastures to pick flowers, herbs and ivy leaves to make corollas. These corollas are put at the gates of the household, at the doors of the house, around the house. Special corolla is made for a lamb. Flowers are also placed under the pillows. For good luck, flowers from under the pillows after the night are kept as good luck charms. Some of the flowers in the morning is taken to be the bedding of selected lamb. Then the lamb is ritually sacrificed. Family members change their cloths, chant and sing to praise the Lord and St. George.

Festivities for St. George's Day are practices enlisted in National Register of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia.

SER_6/Fair in Šabac

Important marker of Šabac's (city in West Serbia) cultural identity is traditional fair. Because of its fair Šabac is well-known over the Balkans, especially in former Yugoslavia.

Historical and archive sources suggest that the roots of Šabac fair can be traced to the 14th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, fair was established around the Day of the Birth of Holy Virgin Mary (September 21st).

Šabac fair is important as a place of social interactions. An event when people meet, eat, drink, dance, have a good time on carusels, where and when they see and are seen. In the 20th century Šabac fair was vividly memorized in famous old-urban song that begins with lyrics: „Hoćemo li u Šabac na vašar?“ („Shall we go on Šabac fair?“) continuing with the lyrics „Da idemo, da se provedemo!“ („Yes, we'll go to have a good time!“).

Šabac fair officially lasts for three days, from September 21st to September 23rd. However, festivity spirit lasts longer. Young and old, but especially children, look forward to September.

SER_7/Beekeeping

Bees are sensitive creatures that play enormously important role in our environment and maintaining biodiversity.

The nutritional and medicinal value of honey, pollen and propolis has been known since ancient times, as well as the various uses of wax. In addition to the production of royal jelly, whose healing properties are increasingly recognized today, bees play an extremely important role in pollinating plants, which preserves biodiversity. Thanks to bees, at least a third of fruit trees in Serbia are pollinated.

In Serbian villages in the central part of Kosovo and Metohija, traditional practice of Singing along a bee swarm is preserved. It includes performing ritual songs at the time when bees are swarming (according to weather conditions from St. George's Day (May 6th) until August) bees are enticed in order to be caught into a beehive named trmka. During singing the bees are sprinkled with water, while the queen bee is paid special attention and addressed with honor, to ensure that she will enter the provided hive.

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Singing along a bee swarm is a practice enlisted in National Register of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia.

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