

# CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLECTING FOLKSONG MATERIAL AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLES AND CULTURES: THE OSNP<sup>1</sup> PROGRAM IN THE PRINCELY COUNTY OF GORIZIA AND GRADISCA

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*In the program of the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs, the Princely County of Gorizia and Gradisca was poorly represented in the songs transcribed. The small number of transcriptions was partly the result of inactivity on the part of committee member Ivan Kokošar, but even more so due to changes in how folk songs were valued in that region as the consequence of the activity of the choirs of the reading rooms and societies.*

Keywords: *Princely county of Gorizia and Gradisca, Ivan Kokošar, reading rooms, choirs.*

*Med akcijo Odbora za slovensko narodno pesem je bila poknežena grofija Goriško-Gradišćanska slabo zastopana z zapisi pesmi. Pomanjkanje zapisov je bilo deloma posledica nedejavnosti odbornika Kokošarja, še bolj pa spremenjenega vrednotenja ljudske pesmi na tem področju. Na to so vplivala številna pevska društva v okviru čitalnic in društev.*

Ključne besede: *Poknežena grofija Goriško-Gradišćanska, Ivan Kokošar, čitalnice, zbori.*

## THE PRINCELY COUNTY OF GORIZIA AND GRADISCA: AN INTERSECTION OF PEOPLES AND CULTURES

The Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs was appointed by the Ministry of Public Worship and Education in Vienna on 23 October 1905 to carry out centrally planned work for collect and editing folk songs for a publication encompassing all of the Slovenian-inhabited crownlands of Austria (except Prekmurje, which was in the Hungarian half of the monarchy). These crownlands included the Princely County of Gorizia and Gradisca, which was divided into four regional districts: Gorizia/Gorica, Tolmin, Gradisca (Sln. *Gradišće*), and Sežana. Ethnically, and to a lesser extent economically, the county was also divided into two parts. With the exception of the ethnically mixed town of Gorizia/Gorica, the Gorizia region was primarily settled by Slovenians, and was ethnically as well as economically distinct from Italian (or Friulian) Gradisca, which was a distinctly agricultural area [cf. Marušič 1985: 367].

The county went through a period of various forms and degrees of ethnic and cultural confrontation. In the second half of the 19th century, when a lively and multifaceted national movement was developing among the Slovenians of the Gorizia region, this also received political connotations. This confrontation primarily took place between Slovenians and Italians – who represented a third of the population of the county, but maintained social and political dominance (along with the *regnicoli*, or immigrants from the Kingdom of Italy)

<sup>1</sup> Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs.

– and to a lesser extent with the Germans (a category that also included members of other nations of Austria-Hungary) and the Friulians, if they were not equated with the Italians.

This atmosphere of a national and cultural “struggle for dominance” was also witnessed by Karel Štrekelj, the first president of the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs, while he studied at the normal school and upper secondary school in the town of Gorizia/Gorica.

#### ENTHUSIASM AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE COLLECTION OF SLOVENIAN FOLK SONGS IN GORIZIA AND GRADISCA

When forming the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs, Štrekelj proposed an acquaintance from the Gorizia/Gorica secondary school as the committee member and commissioner for the Gorizia/Gorica and Trieste/Trst regions, the composer and collector of folk songs Ivan (Janez) Kokošar (1860 Hudajužna – 1923 Grahovo). As a pupil at the preparatory seminary, Kokošar attended the upper secondary school in Gorizia/Gorica from 1871 to 1879, and then studied theology there and was ordained as a priest in 1883. He served as a curate in Cerklno, and then from 1889 to 1901 was the parish priest in Šebrelje. In 1901 he was named priest at the town church of St. Ignatius at the Travnik in Gorizia/Gorica, where he worked until he retired in 1914. He then served in Grahovo until his death. He was one of the founders of the Cecilian Society for the Gorizia region, and he published his songs and arrangements in the periodicals *Cerkveni glasbenik*, *Slovenski narod*, and *Soča*.

From the publication *Nekateri spomini na delovanje gospoda Kokošarja* (Some Recollections of Kokošar’s Work in Šebrelje)<sup>2</sup> it is known that Štrekelj and Kokošar stayed in regular contact. “He generously opened his house [the parish office in Šebrelje, M.P.] to many friends on vacation. They came to him and stayed for several days – for example, his professor from Gorizia/Gorica, Mr. Šantelj, his former schoolmate Professor Štrekelj from Graz/Gradec ...”<sup>3</sup> He also sent the results of his collection efforts to Štrekelj,<sup>4</sup> as he was collecting, transcribing, and harmonizing folk songs in the areas where he served.

In a letter to Štrekelj dated 25 September 1905, in which he accepts the position of committee member and commissioner for Gorizia/Gorica and Trieste/Trst, Kokošar explains his perspective on the purpose and work of the OSNP:

*The plan is enormous! Those that made it probably have not dreamed of*

<sup>2</sup> The author of the memoirs was Anton Rejc, a landowner and the former mayor of Šebrelje, who gave a copy to the parish priest so that he could write a biography, look for his unpublished works, and compile a complete bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> *Nekateri spomini na delovanje gospoda Kokošarja* [GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the Kokošar, folder 15, unpublished correspondence].

<sup>4</sup> Štrekelj thanked him in the first volume of his *Slovenske narodne pesmi* (Slovenian Folk Songs) for the collection that he sent [cf. Štrekelj 1898: XIV], and in the third volume for a collection later sent from the retired military chaplain Ivanetič [cf. Štrekelj 1907: VI].

*how much work it will be if it is actually carried out as planned. Time is truly short. In 50 years it will be too late. Compulsory schooling and forced education are wiping out our national tradition like Nero.*<sup>5</sup>

However, despite his initial enthusiasm, he participated in only the first session and made a few additions to the manuscript version of the “Questionnaire for Collecting and Transcribing Folk Songs, Folk Music, and Folk Dances,” but did not engage qualified collectors that were skilled in transcribing melodies, which was a task of the committee members. In the minutes of the sessions of the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs there are repeated complaints regarding his passivity and comments about the lack of material from the Gorizia region. In 1909 the committee members observed that “only in Gorizia/Gorica is there no proper collector since Filipič disappeared without a trace.”<sup>6</sup>

All appeals were in vain, and so during a one-year directorship at the Gorizia upper secondary school from 1910 to 1911 the committee’s secretary, Dr. Josip Tominšek, tried to obtain folk song collectors. He reported to the Committee that “the beginning has been made, but sufficient power is lacking, and the collection of genuine Slovenian songs is not very promising.”<sup>7</sup>

After Tominšek left Gorizia/Gorica, the committee members tried once more to encourage Kokošar to at least send what he had already collected. They became impatient:

*‘Kokošar has much material, but is not in contact with the committee. Nothing positive about Kokošar can be said – he is an odd fellow. A pupil from Gorizia/Gorica wrote in a term paper: ‘Kokošar has collected all of the folk songs of the Gorizia region, from popular to printed.’ He must turn over the collection to the committee.’*<sup>8</sup>

Matija Murko, who assumed the presidency of the committee after Štrekelj’s death, wrote to him several times in vain:

*... at least write what you have and when we will receive it. The committee needs to have a sense of how much material was collected in the Gorizia region and where so that it can be supplemented if necessary, because soon it will be time to start thinking about editing. Without your material we cannot move forward, and so please do not impede this work, which is already difficult as it is.*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the OSNP, folder 1, unpublished correspondence.

<sup>6</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the OSNP, folder 3, Minutes of the session of the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs from 6 August 1909.

<sup>7</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the OSNP, folder 4, Minutes of the session of the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs from 15 October 1911.

<sup>8</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the OSNP, folder 5, Minutes of the session of the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs from 11 April 1913.

<sup>9</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the Kokošar, folder 15, unpublished correspondence, letter from Graz, 20 January 1914.

Because Kokošar did not answer the letters, the committee even asked the archbishop of Gorizia/Gorica, Frančišek Borgia Sedej, to intercede.<sup>10</sup>

During the First World War the committee did not even have Kokošar's address, and therefore it looked for new associates among the refugees from the Gorizia region. After the war Kokošar was unable to work with the newly reconstituted committee because he had become an Italian citizen with the occupation of the Littoral/Primorska.

After the disbanding of the committee, Murko wrote with resignation:

*It was a particular tragedy for Štrekelj (and the Slovenian nation!) that his two closest compatriots that he appointed to the committee left him completely in the lurch. Because of Trieste/Trst he himself took great care and as early as 1906 proposed the teacher Štefan Ferluga for the committee, but the ministry did not grant this. We comforted ourselves with the fact that the parish priest, Mr. Kokošar, had a large collection of folk songs from Gorizia/Gorica, collected both orally and from printed sources, which he of course promised to Štrekelj and the committee. Unfortunately this remained unknown to those around him and so his songs, of which he collected over 700, were not turned over to the committee after his death (16 May 1923). [Murko 1929: 42]*

Kokošar left his collection to his friend Roman Pahor, an organist in Renče. When Matej Hubad found out that Kokošar had left the collection to Pahor, as the former vice president of the committee he asked Pahor for a copy of the collection in 1927. From Pahor's letter to Stanko Vurnik of 1 April 1931, it is seen that Pahor complied and sent half of the copies to Hubad, and the remainder directly to Vurnik [Kumer 1959: 206]. Kokošar's extensive collection, which is today kept at the Institute of Ethnomusicology of the SRC SASA, contains 755 transcriptions, mostly from Obloke, Hudajužna, Cerknjo, and Podmelec [cf. Kumer 1959: 208].

Nonetheless, a few transcriptions of folk songs came from the Gorizia region thanks to other collectors.

*Fran Mavrič, a teacher in Kostanjevica near Kanal, and later in Bovec, diligently transcribed 40 songs; likewise the Gorizia secondary school senior Vekoslav Filipič 154 songs; the organist Anton Trebše (with the help of the teacher Rihard Trebše in Kal, later in Bovec) sent 14 melodies from Srpenica, but then his work stopped; a few pupils from Gorizia/Gorica (e.g., Ivan Gabršček from Kobarid) tried collecting, but did not continue. [Tominšek 1937: 316–17]*

Franc Mavrič (1890 Kozana – 1969 Turin) graduated from the teacher's college in Koper in 1900 and then worked as a teacher in Bovec and in Kostanjevica near Kanal, until he was transferred to Porto Recanati and then to Chieri near Turin. He first sent the committee 35, and then 42, transcriptions of folk songs. One third of his transcriptions were from his native Kozana in Goriška brda, and the remainder from Bovec, Bavščica near Bovec, and

<sup>10</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the OSNP, folder 6, letter from Gorizia, 19 January 1914.

Soča. Among the collectors in the Gorizia/Gorica region, Franc Mavrič most closely followed Murko's recommendation to add notes about folk songs in context, about the singers, and about the customs and habits that accompanied them [cf. Murko 1929: 31]. Thus Mavrič twice commented on the origin and maintenance of songs. Regarding the song "Jule, give my letter back, because we will not see each other again," he says:

*This folk song (melody and lyrics) is not old. The origin of this song is quite interesting. In the area where it originated (i.e., in Kozana near Gorizia), it is the custom for the farmers to peel and dry all of the plums that they produce at home. They are even imported them from other areas – for example, from Croatia. Because this work is very time consuming and requires many people (especially women), each year they engage a large number of women workers from Venetian Slovenia. Because these are mostly only young women, it is natural that some suitors come around (of course, only for a short time). Thus one of the workers – a girl named Jule – and a local boy became lovers. When the work came to an end, they had to part. The youth composed the song on this occasion. By saying 'give me my letter back', he wished to say that their relationship had been broken off and that they should forget each other.<sup>11</sup>*

The interweaving of different cultural influences in contact is also evident from the description of dance culture in Goriška brda.<sup>12</sup>

Hrabroslav Volarič (1863 Kobarid – 1895 Duino/Devin) – a teacher in Kobarid, Kozana, and Duino/Devin and a composer that based his melodies on folk songs – added 21 transcriptions of folk songs from Kobarid to the OSNP collection. He turned eight selected songs into a folk medley. Unfortunately, however, Volarič did not follow the committee's instructions and did not record information about the place and time of the transcription or the singer.

The most active collector in the Gorizia region was Vekoslav Filipič, a pupil at the Gorizia/Gorica upper secondary school, who sent the committee transcriptions of 152 songs. The majority of the transcriptions are from Ravnica, some from the town of Gorizia/Gorica, Most na Soči, and Cerkno, and the remainder from the Vipava Valley.

## THERE IS A LOT OF SINGING – IN CHOIRS

The committee, which began preparing the test fascicle *Proben slowenischer Volkslieder* (Slovenian Folk Song Samples),<sup>13</sup> did not include any songs from the Gorizia region in it,

<sup>11</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Collection of the OSNP 9442, Kozana.

<sup>12</sup> "The wooden dance floor, known as a brjar, is set up in the open. There are many of these in Friuli. They usually bring dance floors to Brda only from Friuli (from Mossa/Moš, Lucinico/Ločnik, San Lorenzo Isontino/Šlovrenc, etc.)" GNI ZRC SAZU, Collection of the OSNP, 9455, sung by Korjana Prinčič, Kozana.

<sup>13</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the OSNP, folder 7, no. 53.

although the other regions were represented equally. The non-inclusion of Gorizia/Gorica in the test fascicle was likely a result of the small number of songs transcribed from this area; in 1912 the committee had 6,403 songs from Carniola, 3,862 from Styria, 384 from Carinthia (despite the fact that teachers were reluctant to participate out of intimidation), and only 200 from Gorizia/Gorica [cf. Murko 1929: 34–35]. In addition to the small number of transcriptions, the material's lack of interest and representativeness was also significant in its non-inclusion. The transcribers had not “discovered” any exceptional songs or “old” and rare songs. Tomiňsek even reported from the town of Gorizia/Gorica that there were few genuinely native songs in the Gorizia region, because the people sang less than in Carniola and Styria and were very fond of foreign songs.<sup>14</sup>

Returned copies of the “Questionnaire” offer interesting information that reflects the perspectives of the locals or those that were in close contact with them. Thus Janez Laharnar, an organist and composer from Šentviška gora, wrote that in his area there was much singing, and he mentioned a Choral and Reading Society among the permanent associations of folk singers. This demonstrates the significance and understanding of the numerous reading societies and their choral associations in the Gorizia/Gorica region. Modeling the first two choral societies in the Gorizia/Gorica region, which were founded in 1862 in Tolmin and the town of Gorizia, reading societies were founded in smaller towns and even villages that also included the rural population, which was only characteristic of the Littoral [cf. Torkar 1991: 10]. In 1889, three-fifths of all Slovenian reading societies were in the present-day Littoral area [Cigoj Krstulovič 1996: 65], and later the number of reading societies increased further, although because of the political divisions and orientation of the reading societies it is difficult to provide exact information about how many there were. Baudouin de Courtenay stated that “schools and reading rooms are accelerating the education of the Slovenian population the most” and that “the school situation in the Gorizia region is much better than in Carniola,” and also that reading societies had really “taken root” only in Gorizia, because in Carniola they were found only in major urban areas [cf. Baudouin de Courtenay 1873: 45–46].

Singing had a central place in the reading societies – the purpose of which was “instruction, communication, and entertainment for its members, especially for the development of society on a national basis” [Pravila 1895: 1] – because “singing is the flame of national life.”<sup>15</sup>

*Among the direct causes of the beginning of reading room singing among the Slovenians is the prominent notion of simple, engaging songs with nationally conscious lyrics. People learned these songs and their lyrics to an extent that the purpose was achieved. It awakened a love for the Slovenian land and an awareness of belonging to the Slovenian nation. The second cause, no less important and significant, was the revival of Slovenian folk tradition in the ‘national spirit’. [Cigoj Krstulovič 1996: 67]*

<sup>14</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the OSNP, folder 4, Minutes of the session of the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs from 15 October 1911.

<sup>15</sup> Soča, 18 April 1884 (correspondent from Šebrelje).

Especially in the Gorizia/Gorica and Trieste regions, the promotion of singing was based on efforts oriented towards national policies and protecting national interests; namely, “so that Slovenian songs will be learned ... and that trivial Italian songs will soon disappear from the area and our Slovenian songs will be sung in their stead.”<sup>16</sup> Choirs were therefore founded in the countryside as well:

*“The purpose of village choirs is also to become a bulwark against denationalization, which has also taken place through the mass acceptance of popular Italian songs. We must be aware of our Slovenian blood not only in word, but also in song. The singing of folk songs is of special help in rooting out Italian songs.”*<sup>17</sup>

The organization of choirs in an area of national and cultural intersection was a method of demonstrating cultural and national equality or superiority. Thus, for example, several Italians in the Gorizia region declined an invitation to participate in the first public performance of the Slavec Choral Society (on 30 December 1875), which included 134 singers from the wider Gorizia area. An audience of about 600 gathered in the Gorizia theater for the event, but the hall was not completely filled because the Italians of Gorizia/Gorica wished to undermine the event’s success and bought 23 tickets that remained unused [cf. Marušič 1985: 117]. In 1900 the Choral and Music Society was founded in the town of Gorizia/Gorica, and the music critics in all of the music reviews considered its choir to be the second best in Slovenia, after the choir of the Philharmonic Society in Ljubljana [Štucin 2001: 34]. For active members of the society, it was important that “choral concerts soon reached a level that the Italians and Germans in the town of Gorizia/Gorica were not nearly able to achieve” [Koledar 1926: 38]. The program was entirely Slavic; in the first ten years not a single Italian or German song was sung, and Slovenian songs were generally only sung in the original [Jelarčič 1980: 98]. This was because

*in addition to the preservation of the tradition of ‘beautiful singing’ and quality use of leisure time, these choirs continually revived and expanded awareness of the Slovenian word. They contributed to the spirit of society and raised self awareness, which was especially important for the small, threatened community in which these types of activities were developing.* [Komavec 2001: 56]

The Slovenians of the Gorizia region were such a community, because with the unification of Italy in 1866, the loss of neighboring Venetian Slovenia, and growing Italian nationalism they felt increasingly threatened. The shaping of the choral repertoire clearly shows that the coral performances and the songs themselves bore the ideals of the national program and served to shape the national self-image and strengthen self-awareness.

<sup>16</sup> *Slovenka* 19, I, 11. September 1897, 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Primorec*, 4, XIII, 27 January 1905.

Thus, the emphasis on the significance of singing in reading societies and choral activity also contained a drawback, as a correspondent from Cerčno commented:

They are founding reading societies, and folk festivals are being created. Choirmasters are attempting with all their might to eliminate coarse singing and to implant and spread the germ of newly composed folk songs. The people have begun to take an interest in what is new and artificial, and the older style seems incomplete or too simple to them.... A great national tradition is now hanging before a dangerous precipice.<sup>18</sup>

The teacher Josip Pahor from Sežana also enumerated the reasons for the decline of folk singing that he observed in his region: "...folk singing is truly in decline, because of newly composed songs, because of the influence of Italian screeching, and especially because of changes in lifestyle (i.e., society)."<sup>19</sup>

The organization of societies not only changed social life in smaller areas, but through choral activity it also changed the standards of "beautiful singing." "Beautiful singing" was understood to be choral singing, which was considered to be a mark of a more developed culture, and with their proliferation the choirs themselves gave an impression of power and invincibility.

The collection of folk songs during the OSNP program in the Gorizia region did not result in large amounts of material. However, alongside its organizational difficulties and the dependence of the success of the program on the personal qualities of an individual committee member, it reveals the image and structure of the area and its inhabitants at an intersection of peoples, languages, and cultures. Organized choral societies – which provided a feeling of belonging, power, quality, and progress – gradually replaced or supplanted folk singing, which no longer fit the ideal of the "beautiful singing" that those active in society wished to achieve. It is therefore not surprising that there were so few folk song transcriptions in an area where choral singing was so extensive.

## POSEBNOSTI ZBIRANJA LJUDSKOPESEMSKEGA GRADIVA NA PODROČJU STIKANJA NARODOV IN KULTUR – AKCIJA OSNP V POKNEŽENI GROFIJI GORIŠKO-GRADIŠČANSKI

*Poknežena grofija Goriško-Gradiščanska, deželna na skrajnem zahodu slovenskega etničnega prostora, je bila med akcijo Odbora za slovensko narodno pesem slabo zastopana z zapisi pesmi. Za pridobitev večjih zapisovalcev in zbiranje gradiva na tem področju je bil odgovoren Štrekljev gimnazijski prijatelj, duhovnik Ivan Kokošar, ki je imel zbranega precej gradiva iz ustnih in tiskanih virov. Čeprav Kokošar zbiralec ni pridobil, so nekateri posamezniki zbirali gradivo in zapise poslali Odboru; Kokošarjevo gradivo pa je prišlo v zbirko OSNP šele po razpustu Odbora. Poleg težav organizacijske narave pa nam zbiranje ljudskopesemskega gradiva med akcijo OSNP*

<sup>18</sup> Soča, 1 March 1884.

<sup>19</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU, Archives of the OSNP, "Questionnaire" (completed).

na Goriškem zrcali tudi vprašanje o vlogi in recepciji ljudske pesmi v pokrajini na stiku narodov. Odborov tajnik dr. Josip Tomišek je namreč poročal, da ljudstvo na Goriškem manj poje kot na Kranjskem in Štajerskem in se zelo oklepa domačih pesmi. V vrnjenih Popraševalnih polah o narodnih pesmih, narodni godbi in narodnih plesih pa so domačini nasprotno poročali, da se pri njih mnogo poje, stalni pevski sestavi pa so v organiziranem okviru čitalnic in društev. V številnih čitalnicah, ki so bile na obravnavanem področju tudi v manjših krajih in v katere se je vključevalo tudi kmečko prebivalstvo, so delovali pevski sestavi, iz katerih so se razvili pevski zbori. V repertoarju teh zborov, ki so imeli vlogo množičnega nacionalno-istovetnega medija, so bile umetne pesmi z narodnopræbudno vsebino, ki so se želele približati ljudski glasbi in iz nje črpati. Recepcija pesmi in pojma »lepega petja« se je tako ob aktivnem in pasivnem delovanju v pevskih zborih preoblikovala; pevovodje so namreč želeli zatreti 'grdo popevanje' in z izbranim pevskim programom dokazati kulturno superiornost nad sodeželani druge narodnosti. Obenem pa so zbori s svojo množičnostjo prispevali k utrjevanju nacionalne identitete.

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