
WOMEN IN THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE BIZELJSKO AND KOZJANSKO REGIONS

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ABSTRACT

The position of a woman in the Bizeljsko and Kozjansko regions in the first half of the 20th century depended on her position in the family and household, and this position was directly related to the virilocal residence, property and legal relations, and to the system of authority in the traditional village society. The clear divisions by sex and age in the family as well as in society were very significant in this sense. Women were under the massive pressure of social control. A girl's or woman's future also depended on the social and property differences. Nevertheless, it appears that in these two areas women managed – by making the most of wisdom, female diplomacy, instinct and shrewdness – to run their households without endangering the traditional model of the village community in relation to the status of the sexes in which the male principle dominated.

Key words: Slovenia, ethnology, Bizeljsko, Kozjansko, woman, female sex, male sex

IZVLEČEK

Položaj ženske na Bizeljskem in Kozjanskem v prvi polovici 20. stoletja je bil odvisen od njenega položaja v družini in gospodinjstvu, ki je bil neposredno povezan s tem, da je stanovala v hiši moževe družine, s premoženjskimi in pravnimi razmerji in s sistemom moči v tradicionalni vaški skupnosti. Jasne delitve po spolu in starosti v družini kakor v družbi so bile v tem smislu zelo pomembne. Ženske so bile pod močnim pritiskom socialne kontrole. Usoda dekleta ali ženske je bila odvisna tudi od družbenih in premoženjskih razlik. Kljub temu kaže, da je na teh dveh območjih ženskam z veliko mero pameti, z žensko diplomacijo, z zvitostjo in instinktivnostjo uspelo dejansko voditi gospodinjstva, ne da bi ogrožale tradicionalni vzorec vaške skupnosti v zvezi s položajem spolov, v katerem je prevladalo moško načelo.

Ključne besede: Slovenija, etnologija, Bizeljsko, Kozjansko, ženska, ženski spol, moški spol

Curiosity about “the others” has always existed. The essence of this text is a “Macedonian” view of the status of women in the Bizeljsko and Kozjansko regions in the first half of the 20th century. The article is the result of empirical research carried out in the summer of 2000. The findings of the field research are based on ten interviews

with women and men in two age groups: 50 to 65, and 65 to 75¹. The small number of informants may effect the quality of the conclusions, and this text is therefore more a sketch than a real study of the status of women in these Slavic areas from the early 20th century to the period after the Second World War.

The status of women in the family and household

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The research about the size of families in Bizeljsko and Kozjansko showed that until approximately the mid 20th century extended or multi-generation families prevailed, consisting of the parents, their married son and his wife, and their children (i.e. the old, middle and young generations). At the same time nuclear families existed. In the period that followed nuclear families, consisting only of parents and their children, started to dominate, but even today there are still examples of extended, three-generation families.

The households in these regions formed around the husband's family, i.e. virilocal residence prevailed. One of the sons, usually the eldest one continued to live in the house of his parents after he married, while the daughters left when they married. One of the sons inherited the entire property, but he had to pay compensation to the others, either in money or immovable property. In principle the land of one family could not be divided. After the compensation was paid the other sons lived in separate houses, outside the property, or left the region in search of a job. It also occurred that a daughter, who did not marry, stayed on in the family house as she had the right to live in her father's (later her brother's, that is the inheritor's) house. Her status was not clearly defined. Sometimes it was that of a servant, while in other examples she had major privileges concerning family decisions and the upbringing of the children.

Uxorilocal residence, i.e. when the husband moved to his wife's family house, was very rare and was not met with approval.

By the mid 20th century it had become quite common for newlyweds to establish their own separate, neolocal household.

The virilocal residence principle enabled early marriage, while the neolocal principle postponed it. The type of residence at the beginning of the 20th century caused people to marry at different ages. Girls usually married when 16 and the popular opinion was that the bridegroom should be at least two years older than the bride.

Women and family life

There are still many traces of the former collective type of property that was typical of the period when extended families prevailed². They are particularly connected

¹ The data of the interviewed persons are preserved on audio tapes in the archives of Kozjanski Park. Because they did not allow their names to be published, only their initials are used.

² Slavko Kremenšek, *Matične in družinske knjige kot vir za etnološko preučevanje družine*, *Etnološki pregled* 11, Beograd 1973, 99–103.

with people's endeavours to preserve the family property, i.e. the land, the family home and the outbuildings as a whole and in accordance with traditional common law. For this reason the eldest son inherited the property and the other male inheritors were paid a certain share (*dediščina*). The female members of a family rarely inherited land.

The entire property was entered in the land register as that of the husband or as the joint property of the husband and the wife and presented as a whole, regardless of the fact whether the wife had received a part of the land or other property from her parents. The (male) owners thus had complete control over the property and could leave it to whomever they wanted in their wills. This position made them very powerful within the family. Individual property and the institute of the will were introduced to the Slovene regions together with western standards of legislation. However, the introduction of these standards had no major effect on the use of common law. According to common law in Bizeljsko and Kozjansko the eldest son or the son who inherited the land was responsible for looking after the ageing parents. This attitude was deeply rooted in the mentality of the people from these regions. In some cases, when there was no male inheritor, a male related child was adopted.

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The introduction of legislation which granted the right of inheritance to all those legally entitled, including women, gradually changed the traditional practices. But even in these new circumstances, some sort of compromise with the traditions was found. The father of a family made an agreement with his sons how much *dota* (compensation) each would receive when the property was transferred to the eldest son. The *dota* also included land, for example parts of a vineyard, other lots or money, but cash was usually short. If there were several sons, they all received lots of land or agreed to be paid with a certain amount of money. The principal intention was for the property to remain a whole, but if a second son (besides the main inheritor) continued to live in the same place after marrying, he received his own share. Those involved in the distribution were called inheritors (*dediči*). Disputes, of course, also occurred and if no agreement was reached, the head of the village – held to be a wise man – was asked to mediate³. After he was given the property, the eldest son made an oral statement in the presence of a witness by which he agreed to the obligation of covering all the needs of the parents. Nowadays a written agreement is made which includes every detail connected with the life of the retired parents.

In the course of time positive legislation increasingly affected the use of common law. Women could obtain property in different ways: through their dowry (*bala* or *dota*), inheriting from their male or female relatives, purchase, earnings outside the house, and through the distribution of money between the women of nuclear families in a household. A woman's personal property could also consist of movable objects – folk costumes, tools (distaffs, looms, sewing machines, cash etc.).

In accordance with the common norms regarding property and regardless of the particular procedure governing the inheritance of real estate, the daughters of a family in principle did not receive any of the land. Until the first third of the 20th century a

³ M. Š., aged 74, Nova Vas – Bizeljsko, 20-07-2000.

girl was given only personal belongings when she married – clothes and shoes, sheets, knitwear etc. (*bala*). Occasionally they were given cattle, money and land (*dota*). In the latter cases cash was the preferred compensation because the land could then be inherited by the sons. A daughter inherited such property only if she was the only daughter or if the family was rich. Between the two world wars money became a very important item of the dowry, though it did not bear comparison with the shares given to the sons. Besides the introduction of positive legislation which gave women a status equal to that of men, common law prevailed regarding the share of the husband. This went so far that women could not expect to be given any part of the family's real estate. In an example from Bizeljsko three sisters, the only heirs of the property, left their father's house when they got married and the property was given to a male close relative⁴. Women did not always accept these practices voluntarily as is witnessed by the many lawsuits through which women attempted to assert their property rights.

Women, management and authority in the family

Because of the patrilineal transfer of the name, surname and immovable property, as well as because of the virilocal residence, the husband had total authority in remote village households.

Every adult member of the family could ask for his or her share. The division into several households which became more common towards the end of the 19th century should be understood as a normal development in a period when there were increasingly less extended families, and in which the dominant principles of the new type of family were that of individuality and individual property.

In the extended families with common property the father or grandfather was the head of the family. Although the basic criterion for being the “head” of a family was age, the decisive factor was the ability to lead. There were also examples when the aged master of the house occupied the function only formally, while his eldest son actually managed the property. It was not easy for the ageing master to give up his first place in the family, as is confirmed by the saying: “*Ti meni luč – jaz tebi ključ*” – “Give me the candle and I shall give you the keys”.

Owing to his function and age the head of the family was respected by the rest of the family and this respect was reflected in certain privileges which he enjoyed.

The division of labour between the women in the family depended on their age, marital status and how long they were married. Women had a double burden: their own family and the extended one (together with the rest of the members). The women in the house had many duties and the main responsibility was theirs. This fact is usually referred to by the saying: “*Žena podpira tri vogale, mož pa enega*” – “The wife supports three corners of the house and the husband one”. When pregnant or during menstruation women had to go on working.

⁴ M. Š., at the age of 74, Nova Vas – Bizeljsko, 20-07-2000.

In accordance with the principle of age the leading woman in the family was the mother (grandmother - *stara mati*), i.e. the wife of the old master. Competence, quick decisions and wisdom were important requirements for performing the function.

In these regions dominated by wine and wine-growing it is often mentioned that the men prefer to gather over a glass of wine than to get some work done ("*Bizeljčan je pijanc, če je dobro leto, če pa ni, pa živi kot prase pripeto*" – "A man from Bizeljsko is always drunk when the grape harvest is good; and if it's not, he lives like a pig in a box"⁵). In such conditions the wife sometimes took control of the household, not because she wanted to be the master of the house but out of sheer need. Although the research showed that many women indeed led their households, this was not considered normal but rather out of line". Popular expressions confirm this attitude: "*možiča*" – virago, or "*pri tej hiši pa ona hlače nosi*" – "In this house it's the wife who wears trousers (who is the boss)".

Women and family relations

Differences in sex and age were the basic elements of the social hierarchy. In the case of the Slovene villages in the Bizeljsko and Kozjansko regions they mean that men (male dominance) and elder people (the order of age) were higher in the hierarchy. Another important factor in determining the hierarchy was whether a person was married or not.

Nowadays it is thought that a true family relationship begins with the marriage of the bridegroom and bride, but this was different in the past. The relations between husband and wife in extended families was part of the wider relationships between all the members. In some cases women were not able to obtain the loyalty of their husbands. This is confirmed by examples in which a husband took the side of his mother in a dispute, or in which the extended family interfered with the life of the young couple.

There are some indicators that for a certain period the young daughter-in-law was treated as a stranger in the house of her husband. Her position was ambiguous as was the status of every person who achieved a new position. This situation lasted for a period of time which could be short or last quite a while (for example: until she gave birth to her first child). In this period of transition the daughter-in-law was differentiated from the other members of the family by what she was called, the attitude towards her, and the work she was given - mostly helping out with the chores.

The ideological domination of the male was based on patrilinearity and virilocality. A woman had to show that she respected her husband and men in general with as variety of signs which confirmed her as a submissive person. Women were expected to show their submission not only to their husbands but also in public, for all to see. Women were to not show nerves and never to voice their own wishes⁶.

⁵ M. M., born 1925, Brezovica – Bizeljsko, 24-07-2000.

⁶ I. D., born 1927 in Orešje – Bizeljsko, 27-07-2000.

In public a wife was subordinated to her husband and a husband's behaviour usually emphasised that he was his wife's master. Patriarchal relationships were thus effected at least on an imaginary level. But if we analyse the relations in households, in the private sphere, we come across a wealth of details which warrant a re-examination of the thesis that the sexual hierarchy prevailed in the everyday life of the early 20th century. The data show that two principles prevailed: 1. The patriarchal principle which strengthened the dominant role of the husband in the local folk culture; and 2. the age principle which emphasised the role of the elder people but without differentiating between men and women. This shows that the hierarchy of age was interwoven with the sexual hierarchy.

150 The symbolical indicators of women's subordination do not reflect their real role in the family and the household. Women actually carried out all their jobs in the house independently: cooking, baking bread, cleaning, fetching water and firewood, taking care of the children, sewing, weaving, spinning, laundering, digging in the garden etc. They were also responsible for the chicken and the cattle near the house and the kitchen garden; they worked in the fields and in the vineyards, which included planting supporting sticks – the hardest job. Women publicly or secretly traded with various produce and products. The care of the children and their upbringing were central to the process of inculturation. Women passed to their children the basic cultural values and models of behaviour of the local society. The culturisation of village children was further carried out by professional institutions - schools. In the course of time and as a result of the social changes culturisation was discontinued and a number of cultural characteristics from the Bizeljsko and Kozjansko regions were lost, for example the old dialect of Bizeljsko – *stara govorica* (“If you were to meet some who died fifty years ago, you wouldn't understand him at all and neither would we” said an informant ⁷).

The mother took care of the children of both sexes as well as of the older girls, while the father dedicated more care to the grown-up boys. Fathers rarely took babies in their arms because the care of little children was not part of the traditional male role.

If we compare the data about the upbringing of the female children we come across the constantly repeated statement that her first period caused fear and horror in every girl. In some cases a girl did not know what had happened to her for three months. And her anguish continued until her mother or a close female friend explained what had happened. Some women, who spoke to us about the time when they got their first period, blamed their mothers for not telling them anything about menstruation. It was something nobody ever mentioned. Girls hid the fact that they had their period; they washed and dried the towels secretly. During her periods a girl had the status of an unclean woman, it appears. Some of the mothers protected the girls by releasing them from doing hard work like doing the laundry in the stream or other hard labour. The mothers did this silently and simply protected the girls in their own way⁸.

Regardless whether the children used the familiar “ti” or polite “vi” forms to address their parents, they showed great respect toward them.

⁷ I. D., born 1927 in Orešje – Bizeljsko, 27-07-2000.

⁸ Jasna Sok (sociologist and ethnologist) born in Rogaška Slatina, Kozjanski park, July 2000.

Children were put to work very early in their childhood. Even three and four-year-old children were expected to do something useful, e.g. holding a baby or distaff. From their fifth or sixth year children began to take part in real work. Girls started to learn about a woman's jobs and the model of a woman's behaviour, while boys were introduced to the work of men. At the same time boys and girls started to wear different clothes, while previously they were dressed both in the same way. This child "labour" was more a matter of upbringing than a real contribution to the household. Until they started attending school boys and girls carried out similar jobs: collecting eggs from the nests, fetching firewood, etc. Sweeping was for the girls only. When the father went to the market he took with him only the boys. This was his way of introducing them to his work. Some chores like fetching water were carried out by both boys and girls. Mothers would relieve only the weaker children or those that were ill. Children learned more in the way of games. The field research, however, showed that these games differed from what they are nowadays. Children worked hard and had very little free time. Games were merely a break between two jobs. The moment a girl recovered, she was given another job right away. Both girls and boys were beaten as a punishment for not doing their jobs properly⁹.

It was further customary in the region for the children to look after the aged parents. If they disobeyed, they were scolded. In a culture, in which the differences in age played an important role in the social hierarchy, children were taught to respect old age from their early childhood.

Based on the processed material we may conclude that until the first quarter of the 20th century every member of a family had a specific place in the household. A person's life was determined by his or her sex, but it also depended on age and marital status. Although the sexual (pre)determination was an immovable constant, age was the main factor in defining the relations between the members of a household.

Sex and age divisions in the village

The villages of the Bizeljsko and Kozjansko regions constituted the principle framework of communication and the basic space for establishing social relations in the first half of the 20th century. As in the family the village environment reiterated sex and age as the main factors for establishing relations between people.

Unwritten rules separated the male and female spaces: on Sundays the men and women of the village met and talked separately; they then proceeded separately to the church and stood in separate groups in front of the church, etc. The sexual division contributed to the formation of small or big groups of the same sex which were especially important for the young. Young people thus established close relations with members of their own sex.

The bands of boys were organized on the level of one village or a part of a village. It appears that these bands had no firm organisation, but they participated in some

⁹ Jasna Sok (sociologist and ethnologist) born in Rogaška Slatina, Kozjanski park, July 2000.

customs (e.g. at Shrovetide). The boys used to make male dolls and at night placed them in front of the houses (or on trees) where girls (of the right age) lived who had not married by Shrovetide. This custom was called “*do pusta*”¹⁰.

The boys also gathered for singing. According to the interviews the men from Bizeljsko used to sing particularly well with a specific enhanced vocalisation: olala, lo-o-o... Especially during the harvest the boys used to gather on high places and then went from house to house in order to sing to the girls with their hats askew¹¹. This shows that they were privileged in communicating with the girls from the village, something they considered their natural right. This behaviour witnesses to the existence of endogamy in the village and region and to the intentions of the boys to continue the tradition. When a local girl married someone from the other side of the Sotla River she was looked upon with disdain and called a “Croatian”, while the boy from the other side of the river was derided with comments of the type “*Proklet je Hrvat tat*” – “Damn the Croatian thief”, “*Vsak Hrvat je tat*” – “Every Croatian is a thief”¹². When poor boys and girls from the Croatian side of the Sotla came to Bizeljsko for season jobs, the danger augmented:

“They came to work here from households from the other side of the Sotla, in particular to plant supporting sticks and to do other jobs in the vineyards. Some were very good at planting sticks and others at how to cut them. There were two women who were very good at both jobs. They usually came on Sundays. The men worked separated from the women. The women wanted to be independent when carrying out the job. Apart from this, payment was to the individual, so that the men did not know how much the women got for their work. After they were paid both the men and women were offered wine”¹³.

But there were other occasions when boys and girls could make closer contact under the supervision of elder people. The young could see each other in the fields or during some major activities like husking the crops. The job was done sitting and when it was finished a meal was served, pastry and meat, and afterwards there was singing and dancing because there was always someone who knew to play an instrument. The friendship continued at the other farms during the following days. The young people knew in advance in which house they were going to work. This went on for fifteen to twenty days until the seasonal work was finished. Other opportunities for socialising was when poultry was plucked, but this was done in the evenings and more a women’s job. The third way of socialising was during the *mlačva* – manual threshing - when the young and older men gathered and it was also followed by a feast. The fourth way was

¹⁰ I. D., born 1927 in Orešje – Bizeljsko, 27-07-2000.

¹¹ A. F., aged 75, Orešje – Bizeljsko, 20-07-2000.

¹² A. F., aged 75, Orešje – Bizeljsko, 20-07-2000; Jasna Čapo, Hrvatsko slovenski brakovi uz rijeku Sutlu, Zgodovinske vzporednice slovenske in hrvaške etnologija, Dolenjske Toplice 1987, Ljubljana 1988, p. 114–135.

¹³ A. F., aged 75, Orešje – Bizeljsko, 20-07-2000; Božica Somek-Machala, Sezonski rad oko Bizeljskog u svijetlu slovenskog-hrvatskih prepletanja, Zgodovinske vzporednice slovenske in hrvaške etnologije, Dolenjske Toplice, 1987, Ljubljana 1988, p. 136–151.

during a pilgrimage (*romanje*) to Sveta Gora and the church of the Virgin Mary (on September 15)¹⁴. Pilgrimages were preceded by long periods of preparing the provisions for the road, etc. Secular and sacral aspects were quite similar. In the church courtyard merchants sold all kinds of goods and it was an opportunity for the pilgrims to buy something. People sold heart-shaped pastry for boys to buy them and give them to girls as a sign of affection. These aspects were also present during the major church holidays, for example at Christmas. Sundays were observed as holidays and young people could meet at the church for mass.

Women and social control

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In these small village communities where everybody knew everybody else the lines between what was private and what was public were not very clear. The community commented on and judged everything anybody did. Very effective were the public notes about people who had ignored the moral standards because by punishing one person the others were warned what may happen to them if they acted in the same way. Gossip and public criticism were the main instruments used to discourage prohibited behaviour.

Major attention was paid to the morals of female children and girls. Their parents and brothers were very strict and limited their freedom of movement. Their behaviour was also observed by the villagers. The worst treatment went to girls who had a premarital sexual relationship or got pregnant as a result of such a relationship. When it was said about someone that “his mother gave birth to him in her lap” or that “she left the child on a bare tree”, it meant that the child was illegitimate, though this was not mentioned directly. Because of the humiliation involved women often gave birth to illegitimate children in the fields. Other and more offensive words for illegitimate children were *faček* and *pankert* (bastard).

Women who gave birth to illegitimate children also were in fear of the Church. Superstition made them believe that a baby who died without being baptised would bring evil luck. The church laws were very strict and prohibited non-baptised children to be buried in the village cemeteries¹⁵.

There were cases when a girl who had given birth to an illegitimate child was forbidden to ever return to her father's house. Her family acted as if she was forgotten and so did the rest of the village. Some informants said that she was condemned by the village community. She left the child with her parents and went to live in some other city or village where nobody knew her and after some time she got married there. In this way she cut off the relations with her child, her parents and the village.

Women who were unusual in their attitudes, style of living or appearance were accused of witchcraft. This was enough for the villagers to suspect that they performed

¹⁴ Jasna Sok, Občina Šmarje pri Jelšah, Ljubljana 1991, 170–189.

¹⁵ V. P., born in 1927, Orešje – Bizeljsko, 20-07-2000.

154 forbidden acts and that they were guilty of everything bad which occurred, including storms, bad weather, etc. According to one informant an old lady picked up a stone to hit a woman suspected of witchcraft. This happened in Orešje in the Bizeljsko region in 1938 after hail “as big as a fist” destroyed all the vineyards. It was believed to be have been caused by a women called Temička. Nobody said so to her face, but the rumour spread through the village. Children were forbidden to visit women suspected of witchcraft for fear of spells being cast on them¹⁶. These women were considered guilty if a cow lost its milk and of many other things. When a woman who was supposed to be a witch died, no one from the village entered her house. It was believed that at the moment of her death the chimney of her house would be ablaze with sparks and smoke because “the devil exited from her “ and this was of course further proof that she was indeed a witch.

Women with in the system of social and property divisions

Popular opinion holds that someone is poor if he has no land of his own, but many children – a condition typical of the Bizeljsko and Kozjansko regions. Women used to bear children during their entire reproductive cycle. The reason for families with four, eight, twelve and even more children was said to be the need for labour force and another reason was that women did not use contraception. A typical saying is connected with a daughter telling her mother that she does not want to have many children. The mother told her that the only solution was to “put both her legs in a kettle”¹⁷. In itself the abundance of children was a reason for poverty and also explains why children were given little attention. The story of a mother with five children who had to beg in order to provide a living for her family is indicative. The children were left on their own in the house and her four-year-old daughter always remained on the tiled stove because she had not yet learned to walk¹⁸.

Our informants considered a woman from Bizeljsko or Kozjansko to be poor if she had many children but no husband, or a husband who was lazy and an alcoholic. Other criteria of poverty were a little, old house, old clothes, torn shoes, poor hygiene, the lack of food, and walking barefoot. Such conditions limited the communication poor women had and contributed to their isolation because they avoided meeting other people. In order to survive poor women and girls worked as season workers or as maids (*dekla*) in the houses of wealthier villagers. Poor girls earned some money by digging in the vineyards, which was very hard work. They were forced to work even during their periods if they wanted to keep their jobs. And they could not afford to take a few days off because the owners would not hire them again. While they were digging the blood ran down their legs. It was very hard for the girls who worked on the properties

¹⁶ A. F., aged 75, Orešje – Bizeljsko, 20-07-2000.

¹⁷ J. T., born in Podsreda in 1924, 24-07-2000.

¹⁸ J. T., born in Podsreda in 1924, 24-07-2000.

of others to make a living¹⁹. In order to reduce the blood flow some of them drank alcohol in the morning. This indeed reduced the blood flow during the day and intensified at night²⁰.

It was quite common in the Bizeljsko region for boys and girls to leave their homes in order to work as servants at the age of ten to twelve. Poor girls searched for employment as maids or nannies in nearby or distant towns. Between the two world wars Slovene girls from the Bizeljsko and Kozjansko regions were highly appreciated as maids by rich families in Zagreb (“Our women were accepted as servants at the homes of ministers and diplomats. They were considered to be very diligent. They left at the age of 17 to 20 when they became conscious of themselves and when their parents thought that they could manage on their own. At home they first learned to cook, do the laundry, etc. Some of them never came back from Zagreb “)²¹. 155

The social and the property status played a very important role in arranging marriages. Both partners were expected to be of equal social status and of similar means. It was a disgrace for a lad to marry a girl who had nothing, who was from a poor family (“the daughter of a day-labourer”). Day-labourers had no other income and survived by going to the village every day, looking for odd jobs for which they were paid very little or only given food. The girls from these families had a very hard life. When a boy from a rich family wanted to marry a day labourer’s daughter it caused them both a lot of problems. But in the real life there were many examples of such marriages²².

The latest field research carried out in the Bizeljsko and Kozjansko regions, combined with data from the literature dealing with the status of women in the traditional family and village community show certain specific characteristics, but they also reveal characteristics which were common in the wider South-Slavic and Middle-European regions.

Conclusions

On the manifest level and within the frameworks of the household and village community the male principle dominated. This is confirmed by the direct statements of the women who in every situation were subordinated to their husbands regarding all the rights and obligations in the family and society. Our research of the anatomy of family relationships leads us to the conclusion that in reality women were often the key persons in the family, because the husbands were not always able to comply with the “model” of the traditional culture as far as men’s rights and the obligations were concerned. It therefore appears that the women of the Bizeljsko and Kozjansko regions managed to run their households through a lot of wisdom, female diplomacy and

¹⁹ J. T., born in Podsreda in 1924, 24-07-2000.

²⁰ Jelka Pajd, ethnologist, Kozjanski park, July 2000.

²¹ V. P., born in 1927, Orešje, 20-07-2000.

²² Jasna Sok (sociologist and ethnologist), born in Rogaška Slatina, Kozjanski Park, July 2000

shrewdness without, however, endangering the traditional role model of the village community and the status of the sexes. Public opposition against the inequality of the sexes in the traditional culture were very rare. Women managed to moderate the differences between the sexes with the help of specific mechanisms of women's culture, that is by making good use of their minds and instincts instead of allowing themselves to be led by their emotions. The concept of marriage as a necessity and the rule rather than an emotional relationship provided women with the opportunity to remain firm on the ground and elaborate a strategy for living and managing the complex situations life made them face.

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BESEDA O AVTORICI

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