

Report
Serbian Folklore Summer School
Plants and Herbs in Serbian Folklore and Folk Literature
(function & meaning)
11th – 18th July 2013

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Serbian Folklore Summer School was held this year for the first time. The lectures and field-work took place at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad and at *Stara planina* mountain. The lecturers were professors and PhD students from the Faculty of Philosophy and Faculty of Sciences in Novi Sad, Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy in Niš and the Institute for Balkan Studies (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts) in Belgrade.

The field-work at *Stara planina* lasted from 13th to 18th July. The participants were accommodated in the archaeological and ethnological park at the village Ravna, managed by the Homeland Museum in Knjaževac, and in households at the slopes of *Stara planina* (Kalna and Balta Berilovac).

During the field-work, the participants interviewed informants and local collectors of herbs. They also had a short ethnographic field-trip at *Stara planina* and the region. The members of the Association of medicinal plants and nature lovers and phytotherapists – *Mellisa* from Zaječar, Predrag Sibinović from Knjaževac and Milivoj Golubović from Štrbac who helped in the activities of the School and organised small exhibition of medicinal plants. The participants were taught about the medicinal uses in traditional healing, magic and rituals. They were also offered to taste herbal tea. At the base of *Rtanj* mountain, the participants interviewed Mr Milorad Grgurov who explained how to dry herbs and to prepare tinctures of homemade *rakija* from herbs. The participants had two field-trips at *Stara planina*, climbing up to the mountaintops Babin Zub and Tupižnica which is, according to the locals, claimed to be the region with the greatest number of plants per square meter in Serbia. The participants had a direct contact with various species of plants at their natural habitats, their effects and the way they are collected, with the goal to find out how to achieve the best results in healing and to preserve the plants. The participants visited several, so called, *trunk inscriptions* in villages Inovo, Balta Berilovac and Vrtovac, which are very important places in this region. The researchers have visited the family farm *Carski plodovi* in Grza where mushrooms are collected and dried, famous *Rtanj* tea is made and wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*) is picked. The participants had an opportunity to try the truffle cream. They visited the herbal pharmacies in the *Ravanica* and *Temska* monasteries. During the past several years the *Ravanica* monastery became famous for its herbal products (tea, balms, tinctures etc.) prepared by the nuns. According to the words of their pleasant

hostess, the *Temska* monastery is famous for herbal balms for skin diseases by recipes they got from the nuns from Russia at the beginning of the last century.

The exhibition of clothes and textile object for home use (weaving and knitting with plant embroidery) from the end of 19th and beginning of 20th century was open in Ravna. The exhibition was organized by Mrs Ljiljana Mihajlović, the president of Association for cherishing tradition – *Izvor* from Knjaževac.

During the Summer school, the participants visited monasteries, i.e. churches, in Donja and Gornja Kamenica (14th and 15th century) and had a chance to hear more information about these monumental building from Mrs Milena Milošević Micić, the curator in the Museum of Knjaževac. The participants have also visited the Museum of Knjaževac where they could see a rich collection of textile objects with floral motifs from the region. At the archaeological and ethnological complex at Ravna, the most interesting were the old vinery from the beginning of the 20th century and the steles with vine motifs from the Roman period which are a proof of a thousand year long tradition of the grape breeding in the Timok region. In addition, the complex is surrounded by the vineyards which are of great importance for the local inhabitants even today.