



Quelle

Vucinich, Wayne: A Zadruga in Bileća rudine (1976)¹

MY FAMILY IN OTTOMAN DAYS

[...]

My family's history is obscure. According to legend, the family came from the Montenegrin tribe of Piperi, though the toponymic and ethnographic data suggest that it may have descended from the tribe of Drobnjaci. The legend tells how one Gajun Vucinich murdered a Turk, sometime late in the eighteenth century, and escaped to avoid Turkish reprisal. He first settled near Trebinje, later moved with his family to Bileća Rudine, and put down an the landed estate (*agaluk*) of a feudal landlord in the village of Mosko. After a short stay Gajun asked his landlord for permission to settle on the latter's land in the village of Orah, and the request was granted.

According to the legend, Gajun raised a family which included three sons and four daughters. After marriage, the sons, with their spouses and children, continued to live together, while the daughters married and left the family. Gajun died about 1815. His surviving sons lived together until about 1830; Todor, the eldest of them, was the head of the house. When the *zadruga* broke up, Todor remained in the family house in Orah, while his two brothers established homes on the *aga's* estate in the adjoining village of Panik. This is all that we know about the family's origin, and only a part of the information may coincide with facts. Moreover, nearly every family in Bileća Rudine has a similar family legend.

My great-grandfather Todor died in 1863 and was survived by four sons and three daughters. The four sons with their spouses and children continued to live together in a *zadruga*, while the daughters married and left home. The eldest of the four sons, my grandfather Jeremije (1822-1890), was the head of the house; he started a *čitulja*, the record of births, marriages, and deaths in the family. Even this sole document on the history of our family is incomplete, since no one in the house was literate and the priest failed to record the changes which occurred in the family.

Like every *zadruga*, my grandfather's *zadruga* family made a strenuous effort not only to preserve its inherited patrimony intact, by preventing the loss of land through inheritance on the female line or through sale, but to expand it. Only in dire necessity would a *zadruga* family sell parts of its patrimony, which belonged to the living and the yet-to-be-born in the family. [...] (S. 165-166)

MY ZADRUGA FAMILY UNDER AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN OCCUPATION

[...]

In 1885 my grandfather's *zadruga* split up. Three brothers and their families moved out, while the fourth, my grandfather Jeremije, the eldest of the brothers, his wife Marija (1848-1895), five of his sons and five daughters, remained in the *zadruga* home, which was eventually rebuilt and enlarged. Before death overtook him, Jeremije had married off two of his five daughters and one son, Ivan. Until he died in 1890, grandfather Jeremije was the head (*domaćin*) of the *zadruga*.

Uncle Ivan succeeded his father as head of the house and remained so until the end of the First World War in 1918. He married my Aunt Andja in 1896 and had ten children. Four children died in infancy, one was killed in the Second World War, and five survived him when he died in 1943. By 1905, my remaining three aunts and one uncle, Rade, were also married. Between 1905

¹ Vucinich, Wayne, A Zadruga in Bileća rudine, in: Communal Families in the Balkans: The Zadruga. Essays by Philip E. Mosely and Essays in His Honor, ed. by Robert F. Byrnes, Notre Dame 1976, pp. 165-166, 167, 169, 171-172, 172-173.

and 1910 my father, Spiro, and uncles Djoko and Todor emigrated to the United States. The three brothers who went to America retained full rights as members of the zadruga; they occasionally sent money to the brothers left at home, which enabled them to purchase more land and to build a water cistern and several outbuildings. Each brother, like many an emigrant, hoped to return home after saving some money. My father was the only one who married. He had five children, two of whom died in infancy. My father and mother died in Butte, Montana, in the 1918 flu epidemic, leaving behind three children. One of my uncles, Todor, also died in America, while the third one, Djoko, returned to Bileća Rudine. [...] (S. 167)

OUR ZADRUGA IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Not a single member of the family lost his life during the First World War. The only visible change in the zadruga was that Uncle Rade replaced his older brother Ivan as the head of the house at the very end of the war. Uncle Rade and Aunt Pava had eleven children. Four died in infancy, and seven survived, five boys and two girls. Uncle Rade cherished power, but Uncle Ivan was happier without it. Uncle Rade, moreover, developed cancer in one of his legs and had the leg amputated below the knee. He could no longer do hard work in the field, but he could manage the household and do lighter chores, such as slaughter animals, plant tobacco and cabbage seedlings, and classify tobacco leaves, from a sitting position.

Uncle Rade was a clever person who had two years of school, and he could read and write. He managed the household autocratically but efficiently. He kept an eye on the squabbling women and children, and maintained domestic tranquility with an iron fist. Because one of his legs was amputated, he could not chase the children to mete out punishment when they irritated him. However, he had a long memory, patiently waited for a child to stray within his reach, and then struck with his heavy cane.

Another change that affected our zadruga at the end of the war was the arrival of Uncle George and three orphaned children from the United States. I was one of those children, then five years of age, and the oldest of the three. The zadruga was obliged to provide for us. The zadruga family then consisted of twenty-nine members, three married brothers, their wives and children, an unmarried uncle, and the three orphan children. [...] (S. 169)

THE ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF ZADRUGA

The zadruga resembled a miniature state in which the sovereign power rested with the members of the family (*čeljad*). The executive power was vested in the head of the house, chosen by older male members of the family. The most desirable head was one respected by his family and the community. Although the eldest male member of the family was usually chosen, often the head was selected for his ability rather than his age. Should a family lack a suitable male to represent it, a woman might either usurp the leadership or be chosen for it by the family. One zadruga family within our clan had a woman as head for nearly twenty years. The head of the family retained his position so long as he managed the family well and enjoyed its confidence.

Normally, the head consulted the older male members of the family on all important questions. His task included resolving disputes among the feuding members of the family and, when called upon, arbitrating disputes among individuals or families outside his own zadruga. The head of the house managed the family's properties and issued work assignments to individual members of the household. In the evening after dinner, the head of our zadruga, Uncle Rade, barked out assignments for the following day. He called each person by name, usually directing two persons to herd the goats and sheep, one to watch over the lambs and kids, one to assume responsibility for the cattle, and when needed, one person to go to the flour mill, and one or two to the market. Several persons were always assigned work in the fields, or to mend fences, repair walls, and build corrals. If the head of the house mismanaged the family possessions, caused embarrassment to the family, or abused his position in any way, the older males in the family could replace him.

The headwoman (*domaćica*), who was ordinarily either the mother of the headman or his wife but could also be another married woman, was in charge of the housework. In our *zadruga* Aunt Pava, the wife of the head of the house, was the headwoman. She assigned work to other women and supervised them. Some women did kitchen chores and others herded animals, milked them and made cheese, or worked in the fields. The women, however, had their preferences; the headwoman of our *zadruga* preferred work outside the house. Aunt Andja, on the other hand, took charge of the kitchen and was better at it than the other women. [...] (S. 171-172)

No one in the patriarchal society of Bileća Rudine lived a more miserable life than an old maid. She was abused daily by her brothers' wives and sometimes by the brothers themselves. Like young unmarried maidens, she wore a white kerchief; like them, she obeyed and waited on older members of the family.

When left alone in the family, a woman in Bileća Rudine on occasion chose a life of celibacy. One of my first cousins, Ruša, an unmarried daughter of Uncle Ivan and an old maid, considered it her sacred duty never to abandon the hearth and never to marry. She repudiated the role of a woman in a patriarchal society and took up the role of a man. The records tell us that in earlier periods of history such a woman even wore man's clothing and bore arms like a man. Ruša did not go that far, but she did the work traditionally reserved for men. She plowed the fields, sowed grain, mowed hay, took livestock to the market, and bargained with merchants. She celebrated the family patron saint and other major holidays. She swore like a man.

Ruša's worst critics were her closest relatives, with whom she shared the roof of the former *zadruga* house. Her male cousins feared that she might marry and that an outsider might inherit her lands. The relatives harassed her and tried to persuade her to sell her property to them. [...] (S. 172-173)

Eine Druckversion der Übersetzung dieser Quelle findet sich in Hohls, Rüdiger; Schröder, Iris; Siegrist, Hannes (Hg.), *Europa und die Europäer. Quellen und Essays zur modernen europäischen Geschichte*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2005, S. 88-90.

Auf diese Quelle bezieht sich ein einführender und erläuternder Essay von Mitterauer, Michael, *Persönliche Familiengeschichte als Zugang zu einer vergleichenden europäischen Familienforschung im zuvor genannten Sammelband*, S. 84-88.

Eine Übersetzung dieses Dokuments ist in der Rubrik Quellen im Themenportal Europäische Geschichte (www.europa.clío-online.de) zu finden.