

SINGING ON THE VILLAGE PATRON'S FEAST AND NEW YEAR'S CAROLS THE CASE OF THE VILLAGE OF UGOVIZZA (ITALY)

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Do nedavnega so prebivalci Kanalske doline (it. Val Canale, nem. Kanaltal, furl. Val Cjanâl) govorili slovensko, nemško, italijansko in furlansko, a danes prevladuje italijanščina. Članek predstavlja šegi žegnanja in novoletnega koledovanja v vasi Ukve (it. Ugovizza, nem. Uggowitz, furl. Ugovitse), kjer sta se najdlje ohranila slovensko narečje in večjezičnost, ki prepletata celotno obredno dogajanje. Sodelavci Inštituta za slovensko narodopisje in Audiovizualnega laboratorija ZRC SAZU iz Ljubljane so se več let udeleževali teh šeg, snemali dogajanje, pripovedi domačinov in prizore iz življenja v vasi in na planini. Avtorica se osredinja na petje, pesmi in jezikovno komuniciranje ter opozarja na velik pomen večjezičnosti za ohranjanje tradicionalne kulture in nasprotno. Še posebej, kjer je prebivalstvo prikrajšano za šolsko izobrazbo v maternem jeziku, ki je tudi sicer izrinjen iz javnega življenja, nudi tradicionalna kultura ljudem redko javno priložnost za sproščeno govorjenje materinščine oziroma domačega narečja. V njem je izražen pomen celotnega rituala.

Ključne besede: žegnanje, novoletno koledovanje, slovensko ziljsko narečje, večjezičnost, Ukve, Kanalska dolina, slovenska manjšina v Videmski pokrajini (Italija).

Until recently, the inhabitants of the Val Canale (Sln. Kanalska dolina, Ger. Kanaltal, Fur. Val Cjanâl) spoke Slovenian, German, Italian, and Friulian, but today Italian predominates. The article presents the folk customs of the village patron's feast and New Year's caroling and greetings in the village of Ugovizza (Slo. Ukve, Ger. Uggowitz, Fur. Ugovitse), where the Slovenian dialect and multilingualism, intertwined thoroughly in the ritual events, have been preserved for the longest time. The collaborators of the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology and the ZRC SAZU Audiovisual Laboratory from Ljubljana participated in these events for several years and filmed customs, the stories of the locals, and scenes from the life in the village and the mountains. The author focuses on singing, songs, and linguistic communication, pointing out the great importance of multilingualism for preserving traditional culture and vice versa. Especially where the population does not receive education in the mother tongue, which is otherwise suppressed from public life, traditional culture offers people a rare opportunity to speak their mother tongue or the native dialect in public in a relaxed manner. It is because it expresses the meaning of the entire ritual.

Keywords: village patron's feast, New Year's carols and greetings, Slovenian Gailtal dialect, multilingualism, Ugovizza, Val Canale, Slovenian minority in the province of Udine (Italy)

INTRODUCTION

This article on the village patron's feast presents the so-called *žegen* (benediction) (Ger. *Kirchtag*, It. *sagra*) and the New Year's carols and greetings, so-called *šapa*, in the village of Ugovizza as manifestations of the multilingualism of the local inhabitants. It is based on field research of the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana from 2006 to 2009.

Initially, our task aimed only at making an ethnographic film on the *žegen* custom on July 23, 2006, but its duration was prolonged due to a particular situation. Extensive restoration works were still being carried out in the village, which was severely affected by the catastrophic flood in 2003. The *žegen* had to adapt so that the mass, which could not

take place in the damaged church, was moved under a tent, and the course of the procession avoided the construction sites in the village. Still, the feast proved popular with a joyful atmosphere, beautiful singing, and music. That is why we decided to film it yearly until the church was restored and the solemn morning mass could occur again, which finally happened on July 26, 2009.

As our work was expanded to four years, it also widened in content. Visiting the village more often, we realized that the village youth, carrying the front role in *žegen*, is essentially involved in the entire cycle of annual customs. Traditionally, the protagonists were only boys aged 18 years (the age of military recruits in the Italian army until January 1, 2005, when general service was abolished); however, recently, they have been joined by their maiden peers. Therefore, some still call them *agruče*, “recruits,” although their current composition and role are more suited to the title *classe* (a group of peers). We met them first at *žegen*, but later at Christmas and New Year's customs, with placing of a Christmas tree in the middle of the village and with *šapa*, the New Year's carols and greetings. Thus, we decided to follow them throughout all these festivities. The video was filmed by Naško Križnar, Sašo Kuharič, and Miha Peče, with my professional collaboration. The main result was the documentary film (*Pesmi na žegnanju v Ukvah / Canzoni alla sagra di Ugovizza*, 2015). Since the beginning of our work, I have interviewed many informants and transcribed the recordings. After filming, I continued my research and published a book on the subject (Ravnik, 2015).¹

A better understanding of the reasons for our choosing Ugovizza requires a brief introduction to the history and demography of Val Canale, the situation of the Slovenian language, and the specificity of the village of Ugovizza, including an insight into its music culture.

HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHY OF THE VAL CANALE

The Val Canale is a valley some 23 km in length, in the northeast of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region in the province of Udine, near the borders of Austria, Italy, and Slovenia, and at the historical junction of Germanic, Romance, and Slavic language areas. Until recently, its inhabitants were multilingual and had preserved their ability for mutual understanding, speaking Slovenian or Slovenian Gailtal dialect, German or Carinthian German dialect, Friulian, and Italian.

Many authors (Grafenauer, 1946; Melik, 1954; Mihelič, 1983; Steinicke, 1984; Stranj, 1999) have studied the questions of its settlement, the development of ethnic relations, demography, and economic activities, though their findings, which differ in some

¹ The transcribed audio and video recordings are kept in the archive of field notes and the video archives of the ZRC SAZU Institute of Slovenian Ethnology (see the list of recorded edited and non-edited material in Ravnik, 2020).

issues, cannot be presented in extensive detail here. The Slovenian people are considered the oldest stratum of the population. According to Slovenian authors, the valley's population remained predominantly Slovenian until the Late Middle Ages, while among other authors there is no unanimous consensus on this issue. The first Slovenian settlers came from Carinthia; they were farmers subsisting on agriculture, animal husbandry, mountain grazing, and forest exploitation. An important historical date is the year 1007, when the German Emperor Henry II donated his estates in the valley to the bishops of Bamberg. Their authorities remained in fond memory of the people due to the rational use of forests and forest management and because they were then granted the rights to exploit the woods, an important basis for economic survival. During the Bamberg administration, the valley also underwent many demographic changes, with populations coming in from various directions, mainly German and, to a lesser extent, Friulian. The immigration of Germans and Friulians intensified since the 15th century in connection with mining and smelting. Subsequent waves of the Romance and Germanic populations also arrived in pursuit of non-agrarian activities; only the latest Germanic wave in the eastern part of the Tarvisio Basin was agrarian. In 1759, the Bamberg finally sold all their rights in the Val Canale to Empress Maria Theresa.

Until WWI, the Val Canale was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (it belonged to the province of Carinthia, except for the Carniolan cadastral municipality of Bela Peč (It. Villa Bassa, Fusine in Valromana). However, after WWI, with the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1919) and the Treaty of Rapallo (1920), it fell under the Kingdom of Italy. The Slovenian and German inhabitants, who had been in the majority until then, thus became Italian citizens. Immigration of Italians and Friulians followed, and the ethnic composition of the population changed drastically.

Ethnic relations were reversed two decades later when fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, after Austria had joined the Third Reich, signed a treaty in 1939 under which residents of the Val Canale of non-Italian nationality who were Austrian citizens in 1918 could choose German citizenship and relocate to Germany. Most German speakers moved, and the majority of the Slovenian speakers stayed. The first empty homes were filled with a predominantly Friulian wave from nearby municipalities, later joined by another wave from more remote areas. These developments entirely and irreversibly reshaped the old settlement structure of the valley, turning the natives into a minority that acquired a kind of alien character on their soil.

After WWII, the valley underwent many economic changes as the traditional economic activities were losing importance. In the late second half of the 20th century, it developed as a traffic intersection and border shopping hub for citizens of Yugoslavia and other Eastern European countries. However, it began to decline economically after the entry of these countries into the EU at the beginning of the 21st century. Increasingly, residents are forced to find work outside the valley, and the population numbers are sharply declining. In Val Canale (in the municipalities of Tarvisio (Sln. Trbiž), Malborghetto - Valbruna

(Sln. Naborjet - Ovčja Vas), and Pontebba (Sln. Tablja)), there were 7323 inhabitants on December 31, 2009, and 5415 on December 31, 2019. In the municipality of Malborghetto - Valbruna, to which the village of Ugovizza belongs, the number fell in the same period from 984 to 908.² According to the latest data, the village of Ugovizza has 315 inhabitants.³

THE SITUATION OF THE SLOVENIAN LANGUAGE

The situation of the Slovenian language in the Val Canale is essentially conditioned by the fact that it has never been an equal language of instruction at schools, that it has been pushed out of public life, and that it remained enclosed behind the walls of family homes and the Church. Many authors have written important works on this issue (e.g., Gariup, 1978, 2005; Venosi, Gariup, 1978; Minnich, 1989; Šumi, Venosi, 1995; Stranj, 1999; Šumi, 2000; Komac, 2002; Gliha Komac, 2009); we only briefly summarize them here.

From the middle of the 18th century, schooling was conducted by pastors, organists, and churchmen in the local language. Later, from the mid-19th century, Germanization increasingly progressed, especially when, with the school law of 1868, school supervision was transferred from the Church to the state. In 1872, Utraquist education was introduced, in which less and less space was devoted to teaching the Slovenian language.

The year 1919, when the valley belonged to the Kingdom of Italy, was also a turning point for the position of its languages. Italian replaced official German, and during fascism, there was a violent Italianization of the indigenous population. In 1923, the government introduced monolingual education. Thus, in the period between the two world wars, pastors were the only teachers who taught Slovenian while teaching Christian doctrine. However, the preservation of the Slovenian language was greatly aided by the busy contacts with Slovenian-speaking people from Gailtal (Sln. Ziljska dolina) in Austrian Carinthia as well as with those from the Soča Valley (Sln. Posočje) in today Slovenia, who also belonged to Italy in that time; many boys and men from the Soča River region came to the Val Canale for work, primarily in the forests, were employed, married and settled permanently.

The situation did not improve even in the first years after WWII when the Slovenian language could only be used in local schools for religious instruction. Slovenian school nurses organized cooking and sewing courses, teaching children to play piano and holding

² Popolazione Tarvisio 2001–2019, <https://www.tuttitalia.it/friuli-venezia-giulia/63-tarvisio/statistiche/popolazione-andamento-demografico/> (February 7, 2021); Popolazione Malborghetto - Valbruna 2001–2019, <https://www.tuttitalia.it/friuli-venezia-giulia/58-malborghetto-valbruna/statistiche/popolazione-andamento-demografico/> (February 7, 2021).; Popolazione Pontebba 2001–2019, <https://www.tuttitalia.it/friuli-venezia-giulia/91-pontebba/statistiche/popolazione-andamento-demografico/> (February 7, 2021).

³ Frazione di Ugovizza, http://italia.indettaglio.it/ita/friuliveneziagiulia/udine_malborghettovalbruna_ugovizza.html (February 7, 2021).

drama activities. Important was the action of the parish priest of Camporosso (Sln. Žabnice), Mario Černet, who organized a Slovenian language course at his own expense during the summer holidays of 1964. In 1974, a new pastor, Mario Gariup, came to Ugovizza, started publishing the parish newspaper, and, together with the local professor and researcher, Salvatore Venosi, organized a Slovenian language course in Ugovizza. This event began the continuous tradition of Slovenian private courses, which were later taken over by the cultural societies “Planinka,” founded in the 60s, and “Planika,” founded in 1993 and later expanded into a cultural center. The “Združenje/Associazione Don Mario Cernet,” founded in 1997, also organizes courses and other cultural activities intending to develop and preserve the Slovenian language and culture.

In recent years, the Slovenian language slowly entered some nurseries, kindergartens, and primary schools, together with music lessons in the Slovenian language. In anticipation of a longer-term solution for the inclusion of Slovenian language teaching in the valley’s public school system, a course and limited hours of Slovenian language in secondary and grammar schools were occasionally carried out as a temporary measure.

The situation has improved with the adoption of the laws for the protection of linguistic minorities in Italy (Zakon, 1999) and for the protection of the Slovenian linguistic minority of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region (Zakon, 2001), Slovenia’s accession to the European Union (2004), and the fall of the Schengen borders (2007). However, as Nataša Gliha Komac notes, the Italianization policy of the school system and education has already penetrated deeply into the language practices of the local population, and the consequences of the long absence of schooling in Slovenian are evident today – the Slovenian language is barely heard in the Val Canale (Gliha Komac, 2009: 76–78).

Nevertheless, in recent years efforts to introduce multilingual education have intensified and have been successful with the start of experimental multilingual education in the 2020/2021 school year in all final years of kindergartens and first and second grades of primary schools, where Slovenian, Italian and German are supposed to play a parity role.

Throughout this time, church activities played the most crucial role in preserving the Slovenian language, most comprehensively and for the longest time in Ugovizza, with a Slovenian (bilingual) mass and a choir singing. However, this tradition has been under threat for several years. The last bilingual priest was Mario Gariup, who served in Ugovizza until his death in February 1919. After his passing, there was no more spiritual care in the Slovenian language in the valley. Church singers under the direction of organist and choirmaster Oswald Errath are now the only ones to preserve the old traditional presence of the sung Slovenian word in the Ugovizza church. For a short period, from the end of 2018 to November 2019, a Franciscan from Slovenia stayed there to help. After his departure, the people of the valley sent a letter to the church authorities of the Archdiocese of Udine asking that he be sent back. Some 1000 valley inhabitants signed the letter. They are still waiting for an answer (Lister, 2020: 114).

THE VILLAGE OF UGOVIZZA

Economic attachment to agriculture has been traditionally present in Ugovizza. Since the village in the valley has little fertile land, mountain livestock farming with forestry has always been the most important. Nevertheless, in recent decades, the situation has been rapidly changing. Agriculture began losing significance as early as the second half of the past century; fewer and fewer families still graze livestock, mow meadows, and store hay in mountain haylofts, so the mountain huts are now mostly holiday homes. However, the traces of the economic and social structure that took shape in the past have not yet disappeared and still significantly characterize the village identity today.

In Ugovizza, the Slovenian dialect has been preserved for the longest time for several reasons. The fact that not many residents chose to emigrate to Germany contributed to the preservation of the Slovenian language, as the today (or until recently) Slovenian-speaking population in Ugovizza still belongs to families whose ancestors lived here before 1919. Life on the mountain, where almost all villagers moved in the summers, was likewise influenced because their neighbors there were the people from Gailtal who spoke the same dialect and were also closely related.

Multilingualism, once so characteristic of the entire valley, was for the longest time preserved by the Slovenian-speaking villagers of Ugovizza. Thus, as Gariup wrote in the 1970s, 70% of the population of Ugovizza used Slovenian as a colloquial language and spoke several languages. However, the consequences of a lack of school education were evident in the fact that people could not write it (Gariup, 1978: 16–17).

Many of these aspects of the way of life in the village of Ugovizza were researched by social anthropologist Robert Gary Minnich, who, from 1981 to 1985, spent sixteen months in the field in Ugovizza and Feistritz an der Gail (Sln. Bistrica na Zilji), most of this time on Ugovizza mountain. He noticed that the villagers of Ugovizza, members of families with village ancestry from 1920 or even earlier, generally mastered German, Slovenian and Friulian dialects, but there were differences between the generations. The oldest, who were born during the monarchy, spoke Slovenian and German vernacular as well as the basics of Italian and sometimes Friulian; those born between 1918 and 1938, like their parents, Slovenian and Italian vernacular with somewhat worse German, while generations born after WWII still knew the Slovenian and Italian dialects, but rarely any of the German codes. At the time of his research, 20% of the population belonged to families with a Romance vernacular (Italian dialect or Friulian) who settled in the village after 1920. Minnich also wrote that the village of Ugovizza and the Ugovizza mountain were known as a place where the native vernacular is spoken, referring to the local variant of Slovenian and German used by almost all middle-aged and older multilingual inhabitants (Minnich, 1989: 69–70).

The Slovenian-speaking inhabitants were the bearers of multilingualism in Val Canale because only they spoke all the languages in the valley. Thus, it is not surprising that the

researchers who in the 1990s studied the quadrilingualism “which had spread in a characteristic way in earlier epochs” found out that today it only concerns the elderly and a few other people living mainly in the original Slovenian villages of Ugovizza, Camporosso and partly in Valbruna. (Vavti, 2006; Steinicke, and Vavti, 2008).” (Hasenauer, 2020: 30)

MUSIC IN UGOVIZZA

Mario Gariup most exhaustively treated the rich musical life in the village from past to present. He wrote that “everyone in this village sang:” shepherds on the mountain, young recruits, villagers in the inn and boys in the village, at *šapa* and *žegen* (Gariup, 2005: 127). Many pastors and villagers, zealous for music, encouraged church, folk, and choral singing, folklore, and music teaching.

Slovenian church singing in the village has been ongoing for more than a century, as evidenced from the beginning of the 19th century. The first parish choir was founded in 1923. Thanks to extraordinary musicians among the villagers, singers, and organists, Slovenian singing did not stop even in the most challenging years of fascist repression, being revived after the end of WWII. Everyday singing in the choir lasted until the end of 2000 (Gariup, 2005).

The Ugovizza singers became more widely known with their two choirs, Planinka, founded in 1971, and Ojsternik, founded in 1982, which performed folk and church songs. The village also had its brass band.

In 1978, Mario Gariup opened the Music School and founded the cultural society and folklore group Lepi vrh, which performed successfully at home and elsewhere. To the present day, more choirs and ensembles arose; people from Ugovizza sang together with people from different localities in the Val Canale and included Slovenian, German, Italian, and Friulian songs in their repertoire.

Today there is a music school in Ugovizza and a brass band, the Gruppo Bandistico Valcanale, in which the youth enthusiastically participate.

ŽEGEN

The *žegen* feast is celebrated in July, on the day of St. Jacob on July 25 or the Sunday closest to it.

It begins in the morning with a mass, followed by a gathering in the square in front of the church. Music begins, and the group of male singers lined up in a circle, the *konta*,⁴

⁴ *Konta* is the name of the boys' squad in a traditional game in the nearby Gailtal in Carinthia, where riders on horseback have to break a pole-fastened barrel using a metal rod.

sing the first song. Meanwhile, the “recruits” and girls start pouring wine for singers and musicians, pinning them bouquets of carnations and rosemary. Singing alternates with music, and couples dance. After a few songs, the group leaves in a procession through the village, led by “recruits” with girls and musicians. They stop in front of each inn, where the waitress offers the singers and band wine. The *konta* and musicians continue to sing and play; there is more dancing. In the late afternoon, a closing party takes place with food, drink, music, and a ball.

The feast has changed a lot in recent decades. In the past, it lasted only one day. Most of the villagers, who lived on the mountain in the summer, went down to the village for *žegen*, with the villagers of nearby villages and relatives from nearby villages in Austria also attending. After mass, merrymaking was done with singing and music, and they returned home in the evening.

However, as early as the 1970s, the *žegen* festivity began to lengthen. Fewer young people in the village and fewer relatives from the Gailtal attended the feast, and young people wanted to have fun in other ways besides the traditional feast. Therefore, different programs are added to the feast on the days before Sunday, e.g., concerts, sports games, music with dancing, etc. According to the organizers, this keeps the feast alive because, as they say, the costs are too high and would not be repaid in a single day. Even now, though, Sunday remains the main holiday.

SINGING AND MUSIC AT ŽEGEN

Žegen is a feast of music. In the years of our filming, the village of Ugovizza was musically self-sufficient (with a little help from Camporosso (Sln. Žabnice), the neighboring village which is also traditionally the closest) not only with singers but also with two music bands playing at the procession and dance.

The underlying thread and most original component of the celebration is the singing of the *konta*, comprised of men and senior men, many of whom also sing in the church choir. Their repertoire expresses the rich Ugovizza tradition of folk, church, and choir singing, transmitted from generation to generation up to this day. Along with primarily Slovenian songs, they also sing some German songs, which are part of the old village tradition. At first, they sing separately, ritually in their circle, with the musicians playing between songs, but towards the end of the celebration, other villagers, musicians, and youth join in the singing. Some Italian songs can also be heard then, for example, “La mula de Parenzo,” “Rosamunda,” “Simonetta” (composed by Gabriel Moschitz from a Slovenian-speaking family in Camporosso), “Una paloma bianca,” etc.

The leading musicians playing in the procession through the village and at the closing dance were the Dogañirs (customs officers in Friulian), led by a man from Camporosso who founded them in 1974. Self-taught musicians and multi-instrumentalists (guitar,

violin, accordion, trumpet, clarinet, saxophone, drums) mainly played Slovenian folk and pop-folk music melodies. They sang primarily Slovenian songs but otherwise performed with a more mixed repertoire elsewhere in Friuli, Italy, Slovenia, and Austria.

However, the greatest joy of the villagers was their youngest ensemble, Opice band (Monkeys Band), formed in 2005 by young musically-talented boys, heirs of the musical tradition of their families. There were six of them at the outset, the youngest was 13, and the oldest was 19.⁵ In their words, they mainly wished to continue “*questa nostra musica*” (this music of ours), the musical tradition of the valley, at home and in the Slovenian and Austrian neighborhoods. They played in the procession through the village and at the evening dance.

ŠAPA⁶

On the eve of the Day of the Innocent Children, December 27, and the morning of January 1, “recruits” are caroling in Ugovizza. The custom is called *šapa*; they also say they carry the *brina*,⁷ a large ornate heart-shaped flat tuft woven from bushy, straight spruce branches. In the middle is sewn a red velvet heart, and on it are ornaments and symbols of happiness, health, and prosperity, e.g. a chain of love (so that husband, wife, and family members always love each other), money (never to lack any), a horseshoe (for happiness), etc. For many years, the *brina* was made by a housewife in an inn, and this tradition was passed on to younger women from innkeeper families.

Andreina Nicoloso Ciceri (1992: 603–605) was the first to describe this custom in more detail, and Niko Kuret treated it, after her description, in the broader context of magical acts with green branches or evergreen plants around the winter solstice, dating back to pre-Christian times. He believes that initially boys and adult men smacked girls and young women with branches for blessing and fertility, which has been preserved in some places, including Slovenia, until recently. He adds that it was taken over from them by children who, also in the Val Canale, on the Day of Innocent Children, on December 28, slap adults with a spruce branch and wish them health and long life (Kuret, 1989: 412–413).

⁵ All these data refer to the years 2006–2009.

⁶ *Šapa* is the Carinthian term for this ritual, deriving from the verb *šapati*, meaning to smack lightly (Snoj, 2016: 741).

⁷ *Brina* is a spruce tree, or also a ritual spruce branch and bunch of spruce or evergreen twigs.



The church choir sings Anton Hlond's song "Molim te ponižno" (I humbly pray Thou) – The composer of the song was a Salesian of Polish descent, who worked in the Ljubljana parish of Rakovnik from 1904–1914. His rich oeuvre includes Latin and Slovenian texts – at mass under the tent because the church was useless due to damage during the catastrophic flood in 2003, July 23, 2006 (videogram).



The *konta* sings the first song, "Prijatli, zdaj veseli bodimo" (Friends, let's be happy now), — The Slovenian folk song sung after the mass, in front of the tent, July 23, 2006 (videogram).



The songs in the German language – e.g., “Jå wänn wir Kärntner Buam« (We Carinthian boys) – are part of the old Carinthian Slovenian–German bilingual tradition, July 23, 2006 (videogram).



The Slovenian folk song “Pozimi pa rožice ne cveto” (In winter the flowers do not bloom) sung by *konta* in front of the dairy and cheese factory, where the mess took place because the church was not yet usable. July 22, 2007 (videogram).



Singing the German and Slovenian toast “Ein prosit!” (A toast) “Kolkr kapljic tolko let!” (As many drops as many years), July 22, 2007 (videogram).



The bilingual song “Preljuba moja srca, was hast du mir getan?” (The love of my heart, what have you done to me?), in which Slovenian and German verses alternate, July 20, 2008 (videogram).



Musicians also join in singing the popular Italian song “La mula de Parenzo” (The girl from Parenzo), July 23, 2006 (videogram).



Singing the Slovenian folk song “Kaj nam pa morejo” (What can they do to us). At the end of the procession through the village, the singing of *konta*, other villagers, and visitors continues in front of the last inn, July 26, 2009 (videogram).

SINGING AND GREETING DURING ŠAPA

“Recruits” go through the village from house to house; three enter. The first carries the *brina*, the second is a waiter with a tray of glasses and a bottle of martini, and the third carries the money. In front of the house entrance, they place a lantern on the floor, which in the old days lit up the group’s way so that they know where they are going. In the house, they greet the master and housewife with extended greetings, explaining the meaning of all the objects adorning the *brina*, in Slovenian dialect or Italian, according to wish. At our filming time, nobody wished the greeting in German, but the “recruits,” as they said, would also know it. The locals give them some cash, the waiter pours a martini, they make a toast together and, when leaving, are greeted by the locals thus: “*K letu!*” (“To the year!”)

In front of the houses, singers are waiting. When a departing recruit shouts “*Hoch!*” they begin to sing the German song “*Hoch soll sie Leben,*” and then they move on and continue singing.

On the first day of the new year, after morning mass, they go to the inns, where they greet the innkeepers and their guests. The patrons are thrilled; they sing, there is also an accompanying accordion player, and a joyful festive mood develops.⁸



The *šapa*, New Year greeting with *brina* with symbols of happiness and well-being to the housewife in the Slovenian language, December 27, 2006 (videogram).

⁸ For this research we did not complete a list of all songs, so we can only say that Slovenian songs predominated: “*Pozimi pa rožice ne cveto*” (Flowers don’t Bloom in Winter); “*Nocoj pa, oh, nocoj*” (Tonight, oh Tonight); “*Kje je moj mili dom*” (Where is my Sweet Home); “*Pri farni cerkvi*” (At the Parish Church); “*Petelinček je zapel*” (The Little Cock Crowded); “*Kaj nam pa morejo*” (Nothing they can Do to Us) etc. One can also hear examples of bilingual songs, for example a toast in Slovenian “*Kolkor kapljic, tolko let*” (A Year for every Drop) followed by the German toast “*Ein prosit*” (Cheerst)

THE MULTILINGUALISM OF ŽEGEN AND ŠAPA

Robert G. Minnich was the first to describe *žegen* as a multilingual event in 1981. There are many interesting details in it, e.g., the day's liturgy with oratio "superbly performed by the village's regionally renowned adult choir," the singing of "beloved Ukve songs performed in Slovenian dialect" (Minnich, 1998: 165–166) or the brass ensemble from Podklošter/Arnoldstein (Austrian Carinthia). The holiday was, as Minnich describes it, inspiring and joyful. In those years in Ugovizza, there was a youth dance ensemble, the "Lepi vrh," which by mid-afternoon "began performing their carefully choreographed group dances to the music of musicians, who normally accompany them during performances which they hold throughout the three country region" (ibid.: 167). These musicians and the group's choreographer were from Jesenice in Slovenia. At sundown, "another youthful group of German speaking folk musicians (recruited in upper Carinthia and well versed in the regionally popular music of the day – 'pop-folk?') occupied the dance podium" (ibid.). However, the most exciting thing is said in conclusion:

In the course of the evening I encountered several elderly "Kanaltaler" from nearby settlements (Lužnice, Naborjet, Ovčja vas) who told me that they regularly attend the Ukve žegen because it is an occasion to relive a village tradition which they recall from their youth and which is no longer practiced in their native village; it was also a public occasion, I was told, when they could easily come in contact with old friends and speak the language of their childhood, Slovenian or German dialect. On the occasion of its žeganje and firemen's ball Ukve is a magnet for Canal Valley's 'indigenous' population, regardless of whether they claim German or Slovenian dialect as their mother tongue. And this substantiates the local view that Ukve is an indigenous island in an Italian sea, something which census data readily confirm. (Minnich, 1998: 167)

In comparison with Minnich's description, the celebration of *žegen* that we observed from 2006 to 2009 was different in some details, e.g., there was no Carinthian ensemble playing in the procession, the folk dance ensemble did not exist anymore, etc. However, it is important to emphasize that the essential features, which characterize it as a manifestation of multilingualism, have remained the same or even became more expressed with Slovenian singing in the church, with Slovenian and German singing of the *konta*, with musicians playing and singing in Slovenian, German and Italian, and with the communication between participants and visitors in Slovenian and German dialects of the Val Canale and Gailtal, and standard Italian, German, and Slovenian languages.

or the bilingual song "Preljuba moja srca" (My Dearest Hearts) with verses Preljuba moja srca / was hab ich dir getan, / da jaz ne morem spati / die ganze liebe Nacht (My dearest heart / was hab ich dir getan / so I can't shut my eye / die ganze liebe Nacht).

In *šapa*, as in *žegen*, the youth plays a leading role, but it is exposed differently here. In *žegen*, they are surrounded by older singers and musicians who speak and sing in all the relevant languages, while in the case of *šapa*, they must carry themselves out the old ritual in every house in the language that people wish.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The issue of multilingualism in the Val Canale has recently been addressed by a group of Austrian and Italian researchers: Leonie Hasenauer, Peter Čede, Igor Jelen, and Ernst Steinicke, who inquired whether “Little Europe” is disappearing. They refer with this apt metaphor to the unique multilingualism of the valley. In the summary of their very interesting research, they concluded that the results

show that “Little Europe” is still evident, even though the broad existence of the area’s four official languages – the two minority languages plus Italian and Friulian – has in the meantime been almost lost. The region’s generational shift (including intermarriage) and a significant population decline have intensified this development since the nineties. Yet, echoes of the autochthonous Val Canale population are reflected in the area’s symbolic ethnicity of material and immaterial cultural heritage. This is increasingly perceived as an asset by the majority of the population, not considering the ethnic origin, strengthening a no longer ethnolinguistic but a new, regionally connoted identity. (Hasenauer et al., 2020: 29)

The findings of this group of researchers relate to the results of our research, but we cannot list them in more detail here, although this would be illuminating. Let us point out their assertion that cultures are renewed or continued through “ethnic symbolism,” which means customs, habits, and local traditions in general, together with some aspects of the landscape with spontaneous architecture and other related forms of material and social culture (Hasenauer et al., 2020: 34). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that their research would further benefit from taking a closer look at traditional customs, which they mentioned but probably did not attend to.

It is certainly not the aim here to embellish the current state of the Slovenian language and multilingualism in the Val Canale – revealed pragmatically to researchers by the number of speakers, who can be counted on the proverbial fingers of both hands – but despite this, it would seem that to attain an objective image, one must be present directly in everyday and festive occasions, listening to the singing, storytelling, and conversations of the people.

In the research mentioned above, we can read the exciting finding from the 1990s that “quadrilingualism, which had spread in a characteristic way in previous eras, now affects only the elderly, and a few other individuals mostly residing in the originally Slovenian

villages of Ugovizza, Camporosso and, in part, in Valbruna” (Hasenauer et al., 2020: 30; cf. Vavti, 2006; Steinicke, Vavti, 2008). However, at the time of our research (the end of the following decade), multilingualism was still very much alive, especially on *žegen*. Most of the communication between the participants was indeed in Italian. However, the older locals spoke Slovenian with each other and the visitors from Slovenia, and Slovenian and German with the visitors from nearby Gailtal. Multilingualism was best expressed in singing, the most beautiful and compelling part of the event – the Slovenian singing of the church choir and the singing of Slovenian, German, and Italian songs in the procession through the village.

Since we finished filming and researching in 2009, I have been visiting *žegen* almost every year, realizing how vividly the feast lives on and adapts to generational changes and other life circumstances. Among singers of the *konta*, there are fewer and fewer old singers who know traditional Slovenian and German songs. However, there are also growing ranks of young boys and men who want to learn them, assisted by the church choir leader and organist. Local musicians have been dwindling because, as I was told, the young musicians found it difficult to meet for rehearsals or play together due to schooling or employment, while older musicians had other obligations and problems. That is why the organizers invited pop-folk music ensembles from Slovenia, who play the same popular music, and whose members also know the songs sung by the *konta*.

In 2020 I attended *žegen*, which was shortened that year due to anti-pandemic measures. On the square in front of the church, a priest from Gorizia held the mass in Slovenian and Italian, followed by a short celebration with songs, music, and dance. The musicians came from the Trieste Karst. Everybody expressed hope that it will soon be possible to celebrate in a way as relaxed as before.

The same goes for *šapa*. At the 2021 New Year, people in Ugovizza were left without caroling. The lady who had made the *brina* in previous years made it again, but “recruits” did not go around the village greeting from house to house as the anti-pandemic measures forbade it. The organist made a smaller *brina* and placed it in the church in an ingenious crib in the shape of a peasant hut constructed by the villagers. That is how *brina* fulfilled its role of bringing good wishes to the people.

During the years of our filming until 2009, both rituals were multilingual. Therefore, it would be extremely interesting to analyze, in the following years, the continuity and changes in their music repertoire (the songs sung by the *konta* and the pieces of music played by musicians) and in the communication between the participants (the languages spoken), and to research whether *žegen* and *šapa* are still multilingual and to which extent. Could they otherwise persist, considering that multilingualism intertwines with them as their constitutive element? Is it presumptuous to say that multilingualism will be preserved if the Slovenian language is preserved?

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PETJE NA ŽEGNANJU IN NOVOLETNO KOLEDOVANJE: PRIMER VASI UKVE (ITALIJA)

Do nedavnega so prebivalci Kanalske doline govorili slovensko, nemško, italijansko in furlansko, danes pa prevladuje italijanščina. V članku sta predstavljena žeganje in novoletno koledovanje v Ukvah, ob katerih sta se najbolje ohranila slovensko narečje in večjezičnost. Sodelavci Inštituta za slovensko narodopisje ZRC SAZU iz Ljubljane Naško Križnar, Miha Peče, Sašo Kuharič in avtorica so več let raziskovali in snemali te šege in življenje v vasi in na planini in nastalo je več dokumentarnih filmov (Pesmi na žeganju v Ukvah / Canzoni alla sagra di Ugovizza, 2015), posnetega je bilo veliko video gradiva, avtorica pa je o tem objavila knjigo (2015). V istem času so v vasi potekala obnovitvena dela po katastrofi, ki je prizadela vas leta 2003, ko je potok, ki priteče s planine, poplavljal del vasi. Obnova je trajala več let. Inštitut je dogajanje dokumentiral vse do leta 2009, ko je bila maša ponovno v obnovljeni cerkvi.

Žegen praznujejo na sv. Jakoba 25. julija ali na najbližjo nedeljo. Je praznik cerkvene in vaške skupnosti, družine, sorodstva in sosedstva. Pripravijo, izvajajo in spremljajo ga vaščani

vseh starosti. Po maši s petjem domačega cerkvenega zbora zaigra muzika in zapojejo pevci, nato prevzamejo vodilno vlogo 18-letni fantje (to je bila starost nabornikov v času obvezne vojaške službe), v novejšem času so z njimi tudi vrstnice. Pevcem in muzikantom točijo vino, pripenjajo šopke in plešejo. Po nekaj pesmih in plesih vodijo sprevod skozi vas s postanki pred gostilnami, kjer pojejo in igrajo, pari pa se zavrtijo. Sklene se z večernim plesom. Ukljani so znani kot dobri pevci in na žegnu se izrazijo njihova glasbena nadarjenost, izročilo ljudskega in cerkvenega petja in pevskih zborov.

Šapa pa je koledovanje, pravijo tudi, da brino nosijo. Brina je šop smrekovih vej, na njem pa je prišito rdeče žametno srce z okraski, simboli sreče, zdravja in blaginje. 27. decembra zvečer gredo rekruti z brino v spremstvu pevcev od hiše do hiše in voščijo srečno novo leto.

Autorica je pozorna na petje, pesmi in jezikovno sporazumevanje ter opozarja na pomen večjezičnosti za ohranjanje tradicionalne kulture in nasprotno. Še posebej, kjer so prebivalci prikrajšani za šolsko izobrazbo v materinščini, ki je tudi sicer izrinjena iz javnega življenja, daje ljudem tradicionalna kultura redko javno priložnost za sproščeno govorjenje v materinščini oziroma domačem narečju. V žegnu in šapi večjezičnost prepleta celotno obredno dogajanje.