

# Image of Hajduks and Uskoks and its Role in Formation of Traditional Sports and Games as Intangible Heritage of Ex-Yugoslav Area

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Received on 05-02-2021, reviewed on 25-06-2021, accepted on 05-08-2021

## Abstract

The history and cultural memory of hajduk's and uskok's movements in the Balkan territory are well-documented, and even became recognized as a part of tangible and intangible heritage through the Balkan region. The historical and cultural importance of those movements is mostly reflected in oral epic literature, toponomastics, and some local traditions and customs. The research aims to analyze the contexts of "hajduks and uskoks" heritage in the territory of former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro), and in particular, the reflections of cultural remains of those movements emphasized in oral traditions and traditional sports and games as intangible cultural heritage of the region. Special focus is placed on various traditional "hajduk games and skills" which were transmitted to the traditional sports events, and reflect great similarities on a regional level. This is confirmed by a comparison of selected events of the ex-Yugoslav area within different contexts. These events are perceived as part of living folk culture and sort of public memorialization of hajduk's and uskok's movements and historic battles, recently becoming a prospective element of intangible cultural heritage with international recognition (eg. Nevesinje Olympics, Alka of Sinj, Ljubičevo Equestrian Games, etc.). However, under the process of popularization and globalization, traditional folk sports and games became a sort of invented tradition under the process of commoditization and commercialization. The scopes and popularity of such sports events and traditions are limited and endangered, demanding more public attention, reaffirmation and support.

**Keywords:** *hajduk's and uskok's movements, intangible heritage, sports competitions, former Yugoslav area*

## Rezumat. Imaginea haiducilor și uslașilor și rolul acestora în formarea sporturilor și jocurilor tradiționale ca patrimoniu imaterial al zonei ex-Iugoslave

Istoria și memoria culturală a mișcărilor haiducilor și uslașilor pe teritoriul balcanic este bine documentată și chiar a devenit recunoscută ca parte a patrimoniului material și imaterial din regiunea balcanică. Această importanță istorică și culturală se reflectă în cea mai mare parte în literatura epică orală, toponomastică și unele tradiții și obiceiuri locale. Scopul cercetării este de a analiza contextul moștenirii „hajduks și uskoks” pe teritoriul fostei Iugoslavii (Serbia, Croația, Bosnia și Herțegovina și Muntenegru), și în special de a analiza reflectările rămășițelor culturale ale acelor mișcări evidențiate în tradițiile orale și sporturile și jocurile tradiționale ca patrimoniu cultural imaterial al regiunii. O atenție specială este acordată diverselor „jocuri și abilități haiducești” tradiționale care au fost transmise evenimentelor sportive tradiționale și reflectă asemănări mari la nivel regional. Acest lucru este confirmat de compararea evenimentelor selectate din zona ex-Iugoslavă în diferite contexte. Aceste evenimente sunt percepute ca parte a unei culturi populare vii și a unui fel de comemorare publică a mișcărilor și bătăliilor istorice ale haiducilor și uslașilor devenind recent un element prospectiv al patrimoniului cultural imaterial cu recunoaștere internațională (de ex. Olimpiada Nevesinje, Alka din Sinj, Jocurile ecvestre Ljubičevo etc.). Cu toate acestea, în timpul procesului de popularizare și globalizare, sporturile și jocurile populare tradiționale au devenit un fel de tradiție inventată în cadrul procesului de comoditizare și comercializare. Domeniul de aplicare și popularitatea unor astfel de evenimente și tradiții sportive sunt limitate și puse în pericol, cerând mai multă atenție publică, reaffirmare și sprijin.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *mișcarea haiducilor și uslașilor, patrimoniu imaterial, competiții sportive, fosta zonă Iugoslavă*

## Introduction

Preservation of intangible cultural heritage represents a relatively recent activity that was initiated by UNESCO in 2003, through the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This was the most valuable contribution in recognizing the importance of intangible cultural heritage at the international level (Bozanich, 2013, p. 104). All Balkan states ratified

this convention by 2010 (Croatia in 2005, Albania, Romania, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria in 2006; Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro in 2009, Serbia in 2010), followed by the establishment of networks and national lists of intangible heritage. The intangible cultural heritage may be recognized through oral traditions and expressions, music and performing arts, handicrafts and visual arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge, and practices concerning nature and the universe.

Actually, it is about an oral traditional culture formed in the ancient past and transmitted through generations (continuum of transfer of cultural patterns). The fundamental concept of oral culture is the continuous preservation and obligation of transmitting heritage to the young generations. Oral traditional culture consists of customs, rituals, beliefs, music, skills, crafts, oral literature, and similar (Bižić & Omčikus, 2005).

The heroism and the life of hajduks and uskoks were retained in public memory through rich oral traditions that were transferred from generation to generation. This folk tradition represents an important part of national and regional cultural heritage within the Balkan space, in both, tangible and intangible manner. Material culture is represented in museum exhibits of weapons, clothes, equipment, written documents, literary works, pictures and paintings, etc. (eg. Karađorđe's konak (Topola), Konak of elder Rujan (hajduk Jovan Mičić), Museum of hajduk Veljko Petrović (Negotin); Alka Museum (Sinj), etc. Some associations nurture the tradition of hajduks, like Homeland Society "Stanoje Glavaš" (Glibovac village, Smederevska Palanka, Serbia), Historical unit "Klis uskoks" (Klis, Croatia). There even exist a self-proclaimed "Hajduk Republic of Mijat Tomić" with a seat in the motel "Hajdučke vrleti" whose owner acts as the sole ruler of this micro-republic positioned in no-one's land between mountains of Vran and Čvrsnica in Blidinje Nature Park (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Moreover, it can be represented as a part of intangible cultural heritage through various festivals, folklore, traditions, and poetry, such as social events like Days of Čučuk Stana and Hajduk's Depart (Lajkovac village, Serbia). The preservation of hajduk/uskok tradition is typically connected to oral traditions and expressions, often accompanied by traditional instruments. In 2018, the Singing to the accompaniment of the Gusle instrument in Serbia was inscribed to the UNESCO's Intangible Heritage list by Serbia, representing an ancient art of performing primarily heroic epics practiced for centuries as a form of historical memory and an expression of cultural identity (<https://ich.unesco.org/>). However, singing epic songs with a gusle instrument, but also other types of instruments common to other Balkan states (Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Albania) (Jerkov, 2018) and is part of the national register of the intangible cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Usually, the poems that were sung accompanied by the gusle glorified heroes since medieval times. Epic poems profoundly influenced the struggle for liberation from Turkish authority and helped in retaining national identity and the creation of independent Balkan states in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Folk singers, the gusle players, for

centuries performed an important role in describing significant events from national history; this was strictly an oral tradition until those songs were written down in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the efforts of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (Papan, 2013, 2015). It must be noted that the people of Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia have a rich epic tradition with remarkable similarities and patterns of expression, showing its common origin.

One way of preserving the hajduk/uskok folk tradition, besides oral epic tradition, is reflected in the organization of traditional sports and games and competitions ("hajduk's megdan", competing with expressing skills and strength). Traditional sports, games and competitions comprise elements of the intangible cultural heritage, being included in national and international lists (such as the UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list). As such, they may be detected in the observed area (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Macedonia, Slovenia). In the contemporary world, they are frequently represented in various competitions of recreation sports (TAFISA - The Association for International Sport for All (<http://www.tafisa.org/>)) and constitute part of cultural, sports and rural tourism activities (Bjeljac, Čurčić, Brankov, & Milanović Pešić, 2019). Today, such traditional games are promoted and nurtured through cultural events such as Alka of Sinj (Croatia, UNESCO ICH), Uskok battle for Klis (Klis fortress, Senj, Croatia), Nevesinje Olympics (Nevesinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, NCH), Hajduk Games (Kotor Varoš, BIH), Ljubičevo Equestrian Games (Požarevac, Serbia), Days of Stanoje Glavaš (Glibovac village, Smederevska Palanka, Serbia), Days of Hajduk Veljko (Negotin, Serbia), Hajduk Evenings (Bogatić), Hajduk's Harambaša (Osečina), Hajduk Games (Gadžin Han, Serbia), Hajduk Games (Knić, Serbia), Kursula Days (Kraljevo, Serbia), Race for the ring (Barban, Pula, Croatia), Hajduk trail race (Tomislavgrad, peaks – Harambaša, Hajduk, Jatak, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Hajduk's Depart (Vreoci, Srbac, BIH) and others. Through these sports-cultural events different sports disciplines, skills, bidding are nurtured till the day.

### **The Hajduk's and Uskok's Movements and Legacies**

The penetration of the Ottomans to the Balkan Peninsula and their firm rule over these lands lasted from the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It greatly influenced the living conditions of the population of this area (economic, socio-political, cultural). Often cruel and heavy taxes and burdens, along with various looters to the Slavic population (common peasantry) were present on all levels of Ottoman rulership (feudal

relations and rambunctious behavior of Turkish landlords – aga, spahi). Such unfavorable status resulted in rebellions and riots among local populations, which were often cruelly suppressed by the Turkish military, often by committing massacres over the rebellious population. Appearance and spreading of the so-called “hajduk” groups in the Balkans were strongly influenced by Ottoman rulership and the unfavorable position of Slavic nations with a strong military tradition of mercenary squads in the medieval states. Within Balkan space, the liberation struggle against Ottoman rule took a typical guerrilla way of fighting. Its leaders and heroes originating from the simple peasantry were acting as outlaw groups in mountainous regions. This was evidenced in Balkan nations – in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Greece, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania. Although many hajduk groups were acting more as armed bandits and far less as “freedom fighters”, their unusual lifestyle was generally seen as a last resort for Christians who found themselves in dire circumstances under Turkish rule. Thus, those movements became a part of the epic culture in the Balkan lands from the 17<sup>th</sup> to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The members of such groups were commonly called “hajduks” (outlaws, bandits). The term was used to describe an outlaw who lives and hides in the forests from spring to autumn, enduring robbery and abduction, by raiding and looting Turks, foreign and local travelers. There were various reasons for one to become hajduk: rebellion, robbery, avoidance of punishment for a crime, inability to pay taxes and make a living, as well as personal revenge. There is a folk dictum: “St. George’s Day hajduk’s gathering, St. Dimitrios Day hajduk’s depart”, marking the seasonal cycles of the hajduk activities. Hajduk groups usually gathered in the woods in the springtime (St. George’s Day on 6<sup>th</sup> May) and departed in late autumn (8<sup>th</sup> November). In Serbian, Montenegrin, Croat, and Bosnian lands common terms “hajduk” and “harambaša” were often used. In Bulgaria similar terms “hajdutin, haramija, vojvoda, bajraktar, deli, momčeta” (Nenov, 1999, p.20), and in Romania “hajduk, ritter, brigand, pribag” were present (Paun, 1973, p. 33). Hajduks in the Balkan space represented typical social bandits, defined as “peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any case as men to be admired, helped and supported” (Hobsbawm, 2001, p. 20). This is quite a common phenomenon in European folklore. Parallel with the hajduk movement, in the borderline regions with the Ottoman Empire, appears the so-called uskok movement (“uskok” or “prebeg”). The term

came from the Slavic words (“prebeći” – to escape) initially used to indicate the population that migrated in escape to the Habsburg territory. They usually joined military service in the borderline areas towards the Ottoman empire (mostly colonists of Serbian, Croatian and German ethnicity). The other term “uskok” represents men who literally jumped into the Ottoman territories to fight. Thus, they represented a special liberation movement against Turks in the Adriatic hinterland. Their activities are officially evidenced in vivid diplomatic documents between Austria, Venetian Republic and Turkey (Stanojević, 1973, pp. 175-176).

According to Barkey (1996, p. 145), uskok’s units were defined as state-legitimated irregular soldier communities in Croatia since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They were predominantly made of the colonist population from the Balkans, mostly from Herzegovina and Montenegro, but also from natives from Dalmatia (Croatia) and Boka Kotorska (Montenegro) (Samardžić, 1989, p. 2019). They differed from hajduk in the organizational system, as they fought in larger, military-like, groups, had better organization, uniforms and weapons, and were often state-financed (Habsburg monarchy and the Venetian Republic). They often invaded the areas of the Venetian Republic (the surroundings of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia), looting and collecting taxes from the wealthy population of Dubrovnik and the Venetian Republic and fighting Turks with cordial support of their people (Pederin, 1982). They were causing numerous rebellions in the borderline areas of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Venetian Republic towards the Ottoman Empire (so-called Military Frontier). Since its establishment in the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the territory of Military Frontier has acted as the cordon sanitaire against incursions from the Ottomans. It included the territory of nowadays Croatia (Dalmatia, Lika, Kordun, Banija, Slavonija), Serbia (Bačka, Banat), Romania and Hungary (Transilvania – Erdelj).

Despite examples of hajduks and uskoks acting as a sort of social protectors, defenders and avengers of the peasantry (Curott & Fink, 2012), there was abundant evidence that they did more harm than good to the peasantry of the Ottoman, Venetian and Habsburg empires. The peasantry suffered the long-term consequences of their activities, despite their entrenchment in folk poetry (Bozanich, 2013, p. 11). Hajduks and uskoks did attack and took riches from the state and feudal lords, but these were rarely shared with the rayah. Instead, goods were fairly divided among the band members. To recuperate the lost riches, the state acted heavily taxing and directly punishing the peasants. Historiography evidence some peasants’ agreements with hajduks to stop their attacks or to

defend the village from other hajduk/uskok bands (in the form of pre-modern protection deals). Thus, with the aureole of the religious fight against Turkish and feudal tyranny, the folk tradition gave them a specific romanticized "Robin Hood" conception in the public memory construct which is well-documented in oral epic poetry. The extensiveness of the hajduk and uskok movement in public memory and its influence on vernacular cultural patterns may be seen in folk tradition, legends, and even toponymastics. In folk medicine, the herb yarrow (lat. *Achillea Millefolium*) is popularly called "hajduk's grass" in the Balkan region. The plant name was developed from the records of the common use of this herb by hajduks to heal their wounds. Geographical toponyms in these areas often bear the prefix "hajdu-", like Hajdučica (Plandište municipality) and Hajdukovo (Subotica municipality) in northern Serbia, in south-east Hungary area called Hajdúság (Land of the hajduk), but also in many settlements within the Military Frontier line between Habsburg monarchy and Ottoman Empire. Geographical toponyms, mostly mountain peaks and caves, like Hajdučka Vrata on Mt. Čvrstica in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hajduk Cave (Debeljaci, Banjaluka, BiH), Hajduk Cave in Homolje Mts. (Serbia), Mt. Romania's popular name is "Hajdučka Gora", settlement Uskoci (Stara Gradiška, Slavonia region, Croatia), region Uskoci (near Šavnik, Montenegro), etc. Some streets, schools and organizations bear the names of renowned hajduks and uskoks. It is commonly used as a name of some sports clubs, such as football club Hajduk (Split, Croatia), Hajduk Veljko (Negotin, Serbia), Hajduk 1912 (Kula, Serbia), Uskok (Klis, Croatia), etc.

### **Sport Competitions and Skills (Traditional Sports and Games) as Intangible Heritage**

At UNESCO's 25<sup>th</sup> meeting in Paris in 1989, ideas in recognizing games as one form of intangible heritage expression were discussed. "Traditional and popular culture is the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture, and other arts"(www.unesco.org). The term 'traditional games' is now commonly used worldwide to describe aspects of the traditional or culturally relevant play and movement cultural heritage or cultural expressions of identifiable cultural groups. Since the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century, UNESCO recognized traditional sports games as a part of intangible cultural heritage. In 2003 UNESCO's Convention on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage - ICH recognized the central role of communities, groups and individuals in the ICH concept and practice extension. For the first time, international law was introduced as an instrument to enable the states to develop cultural policies to establish basic rights on the cultural affirmation (Anonymous, 2015). There is a staggering cultural richness of indigenous, traditional, historical, and regional folk sports and games from different nations and ethnic minorities worldwide. Many of them are fascinating not only for their differences but for the similarities of shared common features as well (Berti & Zingari, 2019; Bronikowska & Groll 2015).

Traditional games include all aspects of traditional and contemporary play and movement expressions that are or have been, developed, repeated, and shared informally and/or formally (Linaza, Kieran, and O'Connor, 2013). Different terminology was used to indicate the cultural value of traditional sports and games (Bronikowska, et al., 2015), folk games (Eichberg, 1995); ethnic games (Sogawa, 2006); old sports (Cvetković, 1982), traditional folks sports games, and skills (Bjeljac, Čurčić, & Ivolga, 2017). As Cvetković (1982) indicates, old folk sports and competitions represent the corpus of knowledge and skills that are transmitted from generation to generation. The basis of traditional sports is reflected in folk games with the outlined competitive component, represented with a variety of competitions that were mostly forgotten over time. There are various classifications. A typology, adapted since international research sponsored by the Council of Europe, was constructed based on formal structural characteristics of the games. Its main categories are ball games, bowl-and-pin games, throwing games, shooting games, fighting games, animal games, locomotion games, and acrobatics' (Renson, 1991). There is an estimation that on the global level exists over 3,000 different traditional sports and games (Liponski, 2003).

From 2008 till 2021 on the UNESCO ICH list total of 33 traditional sports were inscribed, among which: wrestling competitions such as Chidaoba (Georgia), Sirum (Korea), Kureshi (Kazakhstan), Kurkinal oil wrestling Festival (Turkey); martial arts: Tahteb (Egypt), Taekveon (Korea), Capoeira (Brasil), as well as various skills on horses. The greatest number of traditional sports games on the UNESCO list is located in the area of Middle East, South and Southeastern Asia (www.unesco.org). Those are closely interconnected with the tradition and local culture of people and nations of these areas, incorporating presentation of the folklore, customs,

rituals, music, craftsmanship, and oral tradition. In the area of former Yugoslavia, different research indicated that over 60 traditional folk sports and skills were preserved with over 80 variations (Cvetković, 1982; Marjanović, 2005; Bjeljic, et al., 2019). Among these, seven sport types are extracted: traditional athletic sports, martial arts, traditional folk sports, traditional equestrian sports, old water sports, old winter sports, traditional folk games. These sports and games may be categorized as competitive games without using ancillary items, competitive games with the use of ancillary items, competitive winter games with the use of ancillary items, and competitive games with the use of animals (Eichberg, 1995).

As part of traditional folk sports and competitions that were kept until now we recognize:

- *Old folk sports competitions and games (Narodni višeboj)* - (a set of a dozen disciplines in competing in strength and skill. The origin of the games and rules are based on

- oral tradition and folk legends, mostly of hajduk/uskok epic cycles, which is a common characteristic and present in former Yugoslav states.

- *Shepherd's Games* – as shepherds are still present in mountainous areas of the Balkans, such tradition is transmitted as a way of fun, physical activity, skills and games played in open space.

- *Folk equestrian sports.* Horses always had a very important role in human history and in the everyday life of people. Sport folk games and competitions therefore often involve horse races, horse-drawn carriage races, shooting in the target in a trot, etc.

- *Traditional martial arts.* There are old sports based on strength and fighting skills, such as different types of wrestling, etc.

During the process of inhabitation of the Balkan Peninsula, the South Slavs imparted their language, customs and culture, which included the forms of physical exercise and practices. As a warrior culture, their training focused on the skills of handling a spear and sword, and direct fighting (wrestling and fist-banging). In the middle ages, with the Ottoman invasion of these areas, as well as strong European influences, there were two different types of sports competitions: knights' tournaments (reserved for the noblemen) and competitions "megdani" for lower social classes organized during folk convocations and celebrations. Ordinary people have their own forms of competitions: stone-throwing, running, wrestling, arm wrestling, fist-cuffing, spear throwing, sword and maze fighting, archery in aiming through the ring, horse riding, jumping over various obstacles (horses, spears, fire), climbing a tree or a cliff, etc. (Bjeljac et al., 2019). Such disciplines were sung about in national epic songs. Horse riding and hunting are widely present skills valued among epic

heroes (Šiljak, 2007). Such competition was often organized in the time of resting, in between hajduk seasonal activities. Among hajduk and uskok groups, various competitions in skill and endurance were present. The common characteristics among all such groups in the territory of former Yugoslavia, was serious physical fitness (strength and fitness), highly emphasized national dimension (patriotism), specific psycho-social dimension (sociability and assistance to the weaker), and especially extreme courage and belligerence. It is important to outline that these characteristics, with exception of belligerence, were forthcoming in most hajduk's competitions. Such competitions, by some unwritten rule, always took place during some major religious holidays, mostly organized at a monastery or church courtyard, being a sport and cultural events of wider folk assembly. From a historical aspect, certain liberation battles directed against Ottoman Empire left their traces in South-Slavic mythology and epics, such as the Battle of Sinj in 1715 and the Herzegovina Rebellion of the Slavic population in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro in 1875.

Traditional sports and cultural events like Alka of Sinj (Croatia, UNESCO ICH; National Cultural Heritage; Uskok battle for Klis (Senj, Croatia, NCH); Race for a ring (Barban, Pula, Croatia); Nevesinje Olympics (Nevesinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, NCH); Hajduk Games in Kotor Varoš, BIH); Hajduk trail race (Tomislavgrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina); Hajduk's Depart (Vreoci, Srbac, BIH); Hajduk Evenings (Kotor Varoš; BIH); Ljubičevo Equestrian Games (Požarevac, Serbia); Days of Stanoje Glavaš (Glibovac village, Smederevska Palanka, Serbia); Days of Hajduk Veljko (Negotin, Serbia); Hajduk Evenings (Bogatić); and many others are regarded keepers of the tradition of hajduk and uskok games and competitions reflected in a continuous need for the revival of folk materialization.

### **Alka of Sinj a Knights' Tournament (Croatia)**

The festival Alka of Sinj represents a chivalric tournament that takes place annually. It is held on the Sunday of the beginning of August, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the town of Sinj, in the Cetinska Krajina region in Croatia. It is considered a commemorative event celebrating the victory over the Turks in 1715. The history of uskok's fighting against Turks starts with the fall of the Klis (1537), and the migration of these groups to Sinj. Most renowned such groups were those from Senj, active as a military force in the coastline for over 80 years under the patronage of Austria. Acting against Turks and often with the Venetian Republic, uskoks were moved from Senj to secluded islands and areas around Otočac and Žumberak, and parts of Istria.

Ravni Kotari near Zadar remained the only greater uskoc center on the Adriatic coast, led by Stojan Janković. Baja Nikolić Pivljanin (leader of Bokelj's brigade) returned to Perast and continued to fight in the hinterland of the Dubrovnik Republic. In the Morean war (1684-1699) these groups received a character of unregular Venetian military units. Similar to hajduks and pirates, they were fighting and robbing both Turks, tradesmen, and even local Christians (Milanović, 2017). In the Second Morean or so-called Sinj's Turkish-Venetian War (1714–1718) a great battle between the Christian and Turkish armies took place in 1715. Wherein battle over Sinj 700 town defenders were able to defend a town from the attack of over a dozen thousand Turks. The Turkish army was exhausted with hunger and dysentery, abandoning the Cetina Military Borderline (Marković, 1998). Battle with Turks in the 18<sup>th</sup> century constituted an important segment of an oral tradition of Sinj's local population. Here the unique place holds the legend of Lady of Sinj, starting with 1687. According to the legend, the clergy of Ram abandoned the monastery aiming to liberate Sinj, bringing along the painting of Lady of Grace as its greatest treasure. Thus, people believe that explanation for the defeat of the Turkish army was that the Lady sent a sickness to the enemy, causing the stopping of attacks (Vukušić, 2005).

The Alka of Sinj is an example of the traditional sports competitions that were regularly held in the Croatian coastal towns since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is closely interconnected with uskoc tradition. The event has become a marker of local history and collective memory. From 2010 onwards, this traditional event was incorporated into the UNESCO ICH list. Sinj's Alka by its origin is not fully developed from local tradition, but instead, it represents a specific conglomerate and extension of European chivalric games. "In the time of introducing Alka celebration in Sinj, the area was inhabited by people originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina. These newcomers brought in Cetina

their living habits and dialect full of Turkish words and expressions adopted under Turkish rule" (Jurić, 1988, p. 277), common in the area of Herzegovina and Dalmatia (Vukosav, 2011). The first mention of the Alka of Sinj tournament originates from 1798. It is found in the official request of the organizers and participants directed to the authorities to provide the necessary means to host the tournament (Vukušić, 2007). The oldest copy of the initial Statute of the Association "Alka of Sinj" dates back to 1833. It contains the basic information on the historic event (based on a victory over the Turkish army in 1715), the rules transferred on all subsequent versions (Jurić, 1988, p. 83), and the obligations of players and other participants (the duke, flag-bearer, a squire, guides, etc.) (fig. 1- photo 2). These terms were commonly used among uskoc groups reflecting the hierarchy in the unit. Celebrations follow defined rules during the whole ceremony, while participants wear rich traditional costumes, being armed with a spear and a saber on their left flank. In the main ceremony, two guides lead a horse that symbolizes a horse of Turkish pasha. During the competition, knights ride horses at full gallop along the main street aiming lances at an iron ring hanging on a rope (fig. 1, photo 3). The winner is the one who gathers the most points in three races. The name "Alka" of the tournament derives from a word of Turkish origin meaning a ring or hoop, used as a target. This reflects the historical co-existence and cultural exchange between two different civilizations (fig. 1, photo 1). The tournament rules, codified in 1833, promote ethics and fair play, outlining the importance of participation in community life. Participants must be members of local families of Sinj and the Cetinska Krajina region. The whole community helps to produce, conserve, restore and reconstruct weapons, clothes, and accessories to support the continuation of the tradition. The tournament is intertwined with local religious practices, social gatherings, family visits, and festivities at home and in the open air.



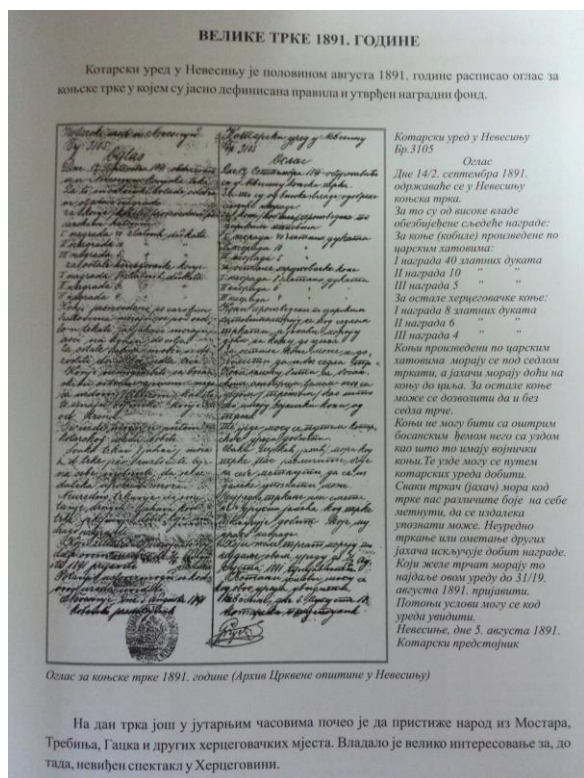


**Fig. 1: Alka of Sinj 2019. (Photos by N. Bratić, 11.08.2019; Visitsinj.com, [https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=Sinjska%20Alka&epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=Sinjska%20Alka&epa=SEARCH_BOX))**

### **Nevesinje's Olympics, Nevesinje (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**

Nevesinje's Olympics is a traditional folk sports competition incorporated in the national register of the intangible cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in 2018 nominated for incorporation to the UNESCO ICH list. These games have a 142 years long tradition and were organized annually in August in town Nevesinje. They represent folk celebration that involves about 15 traditional sports: distance jumping from a spot, jumping on the bellows, bag racing, racing with an egg in a spoon, fighting on a log, pulling a piston, throwing a rock from a shoulder, pulling a rope, horse races – of different horse races (fig. 2-photo 5), etc., and about the same number of modern sport disciplines, incorporating various cultural events (ethnographic exhibitions, music competition of gusle players, poetic and artistic shows, etc.). Nevesinje's tradition has its links with old hajduk's competitions present in the area of Nevesinje, but also throughout Bosna and Herzegovina. It can be

dated to the era of Turkish occupation, long before the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austro-Hungary in 1878. These folk competitions inevitably involved using gusle and fife instruments followed by traditional singing practices. A copy of the 1891 poster advertising Horse Racing in Nevesinje (photo 4), personally authorized by the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Envoy to Bosna and Herzegovina, is kept in the Church Municipality of Nevesinje (Duka, 2019). This celebration has historic links to the Herzegovina Uprising, led solely by the Orthodox Herzegovians (Deretić, Čosović, & Unković, 2005) supported by Montenegrin and Austrian governments. The Herzegovina Uprising was initiated with the event of 5<sup>th</sup> July 1875 with an attack of hajduk group led by Pera Tunguz (called "Nevesinjska puška") on Turkish caravan on the road between Mostar and Nevesinje (Cetina Poljana, Bišina Mt.). The Uprising was an outcome of hard loathings of Christians introduced by tax-collectors and police directed by Derviš-paša, the Governor of Bosnia.



**Fig. 2: Nevesinje's Olympics: 1891 poster of Horse Racing in Nevesinje; Nevesinje Olympics 2017. (Retrieved from: [www.princip.news/vijesti/republika-srpska/nevesinjska-olimpijada-2017-](http://www.princip.news/vijesti/republika-srpska/nevesinjska-olimpijada-2017-) and [www.Trebinjelive.info](http://www.Trebinjelive.info))**

### Hajduk's Games in Serbia

In Serbia, many competitions and events are based on traditional folk competitions and hajduk legacies. In 2019, the research within the project "Research, Evaluation and Documentation of Traditional sports games in Serbia as Elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage" funded by the Ministry of culture and information of Serbia were carried out. The realization of the project was led by the Association for promotion of traditional culture "Izvor" from Belgrade in cooperation with Geographical Institute "Jovan Cvijić" SASA from Belgrade and Faculty of Science of the University of Novi Sad. The follow-up project in 2020 "Folk games and competitions in Serbia as endangered intangible cultural heritage – research, valuation, and documentation" in the realization of Geographical Institute "Jovan Cvijić" SASA financed by the Ministry of Culture of Republic of Serbia is postponed due to the current circumstances. Among events dedicated to other hajduks in Serbia, for example, "Days of Hajduk Veljko" in Lenovac village (Negotin), "Hajduk Evenings" (Bogatić), "Hajduk's Harambaša" (Osečina), this event has particular importance due to the historical role of Stanoje Glavaš, hajduk's leader, and deputy of vožd

Karađorđe. Among several traditional sports events explored, events that promote hajduk sports competitions and skills particularly stand out are "Days of Stanoje Glavaš" (Stanoje Stamatović Glavaš (1763-1815) was hajduk and national hero "a duke" in First Serbian Uprising. He was the co-leader with Stanko Arambašić of hajduk company in Austrian-held Sylvania, which frequently crossed the Ottoman borderline and attacked Ottoman forces and caravans in the Smederevo province in the 1790s (including Koča's frontier rebellion). In the First Serbian Uprising in 1804, he was one of the leaders, along with the official leader of the Uprising Đorđe Petrović-Karađorđe (Stevanović, 2005). "Days of Stanoje Glavaš" are held in the memory of the historic figure of Stanoje Glavaš. Since 2010, in August, these games are organized in his homeplace, the village of Glibovac (Smederevska Palanka). The sports competitions include rock-throwing from the shoulder, fighting on a beam, throwing a horseshoe, jumping in height and distance, and overhanging the piston. Another important event nurturing the hajduk tradition may be seen in the organization of Ljubičevo Equestrian Games held as a traditional equestrian tournament annually in September within the Stable of Ljubičevo in Požarevac (fig. 3, 4).





**Fig. 3: Fighting on a beam and overhanging the piston ("nadvlačenje klipka"), Glibovac village, 2019. (Photos by D. Štrbac)**



**Fig. 4: Aiming with mace and spear-shooting at Ljubičevo Equestrian Games 2019. (Retrieved from: <https://ljki.rs/sta-su-ljki/>)**

These games have a long tradition, since 1963, while the Stable of Ljubičevo was one of the oldest in Serbia (established in 1853 by the Prince Miloš Obrenović and named by his wife - Princess Ljubica). At the end of the 19th century, the establishment of an association of Danube riders circle "Knez Mihajlo" in Požarevac, organization of equestrian games were initiated. At first, such games were held multiple times during the year, especially during September. The first such competition was held in 1932, while Ljubičevo Equestrian games are held annually since 1963. Besides classical horse races, Ljubičevo folk folk games were organized including disciplines like saber-cutting, spear-shooting, courier-riding, cannon-shooting, arrow-shooting, etc. Ljubičevo Equestrian games and Alka of Sinj until the breakup of Yugoslavia were in close relationships, as the winners of the Alka of Sinj participated in Ljubičevo Equestrian Games and vice versa.

### **Traditional hajduk's and uskok's tournaments and games. Invented tradition, similarities and modifications**

Based on the literature review, different attitudes and opinions appear on links (or how pervasive) of today's traditional sports games with ancient games in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Supporting the importance of these games, it is emphasized that they represent, in a certain way, a broad range of ethnographic values of local peoples. The connection between the hajduk's and uskok's sports games with today's traditional games is confirmed by many familiar aspects of the regional culture. The similarities of such traditional games throughout the former Yugoslav area can be observed in their structure and the variety of disciplines, duration, equipment and folklore of the participants. Folk songs and dances, namely, playing and singing, were of particular importance for the quality assessment of shared traditions. Analyzing traditional sports games as part of intangible cultural heritage in different parts of ex

Yugoslavia, based on spiritual, traditional and cultural values: folklore, music, language-speech, customs, tradition, etc., indicate similarities and rather insignificant differences (Vujović, 2003). However, the broader elaboration of these games and their differences is based on a wide range of fundamental elements of culture: mental-fact, socio-fact and artifact (Kale, 1983), indicating certain differences caused mainly by the economic development of wider societies. All traditional sports games, throughout history, starting from the appearance of the first hajduk movements until today, have been conditioned by the economic status of the local population.

Sports and sports events are important factors in contemporary culture. Along with the profound importance that events and festivals play in society, their role in providing tourism experiences grows to extremes nowadays. Many countries have recognized the significance of the local events and traditions. Folklore festivities, rituals and celebrations, games and equestrian displays are being part of greater cultural events linked to local history or tradition. These are used in developing specific local or regional identities. Today, these games and exhibitions are mostly organized as sports competitions or displays at local cultural

festivals, involving sports, ethnographic and artistic content, exhibitions, craftsmanship and local gastronomic offer. The traditional sports events, which retain national and even international importance and recognition like Alka of Sinj and Nevesinje Olympics, are characterized by a successful stakeholder management system. This suggests the highest and continuous national institutional support, but also local engagement, media and public support, with intense promotional activities of national and local tourist organizations. Such events are becoming renowned international tourist attractions and destinations, unlike some others (e.g. Days of Stanoje Glavaš) of predominantly local character (Table 1). The organizers of these events are primarily local sports or civic associations, either tourist organizations, supported by municipal and regional governmental bodies depending on their recognition status. Besides, these events are frequently financially supported by private companies and associations. Other, local and regional sports events, often lack institutional support, rarely surpassing local levels in organizational and audience aspects, being mostly financially and organizationally supported within a municipal level, or being self-organized (supported solely by organizers and participants) (Table 1).

**Table 1 Comparison of selected traditional sport events within former Yugoslav scope**

Event	Type	Context	Content	Recognition
<b>Alka of Sinj (Croatia)</b>	Traditional Sport Event large scale Cultural Event: large-scale	Historical: Memorialization of historical event, the Battle of Sinj, 1715 (Second Morean War between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman Empire), organized since 1798.	Traditional Sport Contest: Equestrian Games, knight tournament Cultural Event: Croatian historical, cultural and ethnographic content	National ICH register UNESCO ICH since 2010 International tourist destination
<b>Nevesinje Olympics (Republika Srpska, BIH)</b>	Sport Event Large-scale	Social and Historical: Social tradition and memorialization of the Herzegovina Uprising, 1875, organized since 1891.	Sport Contest: Modern and Traditional, multiple disciplines. Additional cultural program based on the folklore of the Serbian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina	National ICH register UNESCO ICH Tentative List since 2018 International tourist destination
<b>Ljubičevo Equestrian Games</b>	Sport Event Medium scale	Social tradition, since 1932 Ljubičevo Equestrian Games organized since 1963.	Sport Contest: Modern and Traditional Equestrian Games Additional small-scale cultural program	National Sports Event, Domestic tourist destination
<b>Days of Stanoje Glavaš</b>	Traditional Sport Event Small-scale	Historical: Memorialization of national hero Stanoje Glavaš, one of the leaders of the First Serbian Uprising, 1804, organized since 2010.	Traditional Sport Contest: Multiple Disciplines Small-scale cultural programme	Local Folk Sports and Cultural Event

"Uskok's battle for Klis" (Senj) is a historical spectacle in a form of an international event, containing various cultural, musical, entertaining, and scenic performances. It is organized by the Historical Unit "Klis uskoks". It is conceptualized as medieval archery and swordsmanship tournament, with fire juggling, archaic folk songs, sounds of bagpipes, tambourines, drums and fiddle, oriental music with belly dancers' performances, medieval camps depicting warrior life in the Middle Ages located at the northern foothill of the Klis fortress. It represents a fight against the Ottoman Empire, that happened in 1532 between Klis's defenders and Ottomans (<http://www.kliskiuskoci.hr/>). "Race for a ring" (Barban, Pula, Croatia) is a competition that was held in Barban in 1696 for the first time. After 280 years this competition was revived in 1976 with the chivalric competition organized once again in Barban. The main event is organized in August marked with the gallop of horses and traditional folk costumes (<https://trkanaprstenac.hr/>). The games have similar historical context as the Alka of Sinj with knightly games. They represent a regional tourist offer with a rich cultural program.

"Days of Hajduk Veljko" in Lenovac (Negotin, Serbia), "Hajduk Evenings" (Bogatić, Serbia), "Hajduk's Harambaša" (Osečina, Serbia), "Hajduk's depart" in Vreoci, (Srbac, BIH) and "Hajduk Evenings" (Kotor Varoš, BIH) represent traditional sports competitions and skill presentations, similar to "Days of Stanoje Glavaš". These include a dozen disciplines of old sports (throwing a rock from a shoulder, distance jumping from a spot, pulling a rope, horse races, free wrestling styles, standing high jump, etc.). Representing a regional or local events they are slowly becoming part of tourist offer as well. On the other hand, "Hajduk trail race" (Tomislavgrad, BIH) is part of the so-called "running tourism", a competition in running on mountain peaks. On the specific sections of the hiking route, some peaks are clear signifiers of the origin of the tradition: "Hajduk", "Harmbaša" and "Jatak", while the area is renowned by hajduk Mijat Tomić (from the 17<sup>th</sup> century).

A common characteristic of these and many other events taking place today in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Croatia, is that they often represent a form of "invented tradition" (Kovačević, 2007). As Kovačević (2007, p. 110) note: "Invented tradition is deliberately created, constructed by a group that took the role of community representative labeled as "traditional" due to its repetition in time and permanent periodical occurrence. It is invented and continuously transformed (reinvented), extensively using and fabricating the elements of true folk traditions." Even if specific games have left traces in public memory, today they appear in a modified

manner, reflected in the organization of various competitions and tournaments. Most often, these traditions take a form of sports recreational and entertaining competitions, being incorporated in local tourist offer. The term "invented tradition" is used in a broad sense, marking certain actions of a ritual or symbolic nature usually carried out according to rules that are openly or covertly accepted, seeking to instill certain inherited values and norms of behavior through repetition, and if possible establish continuity with the past (Hobsbawm, 2011). The term is used in ethnographic context, marking a collection of practices partly regulated by common practices, often linked with a suitable historic period, particular event or personality. Traditions that appear to be or are claimed to be the "old ones", are often of recent origin and may sometimes be invented, seeking and establishing links with some historic events or common traditions. These traditions are perceived as responses to new situations, a contrast to a constant tendency towards change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of common social life reflected in local traditions.

Modification of such traditional events may be seen in the equipment of competitors (who avoid dressing in traditional folk costumes and tend to use standard modern equipment), terrain and locations where the events are held (often relocated to more convenient spaces like a stadion, squares and parks, hippodromes). This will inevitably lead to commodification of the event. In some cases, the equestrian practice was even extended to sparingly include children or women riders (for example Ljubičevo Equestrian Games), which was not the part of the original tradition. Examining the emergence of these games as a performance of intangible heritage, its conceptualization and development seems closely linked to the cultural tourism industry and contemporary commoditization of history and heritage for tourist purposes. These events are taking a form of a tourist rather than social events, each year attracting more tourists and participants. Usually organized or supported by local governments to attract more visitors and provide greater economic effects, the original program is often overloaded with various entertainment programs for the mass-public (eg. popular music concerts) mostly not in line with the main theme of the event. It is important to note that even though these games in time gained the specific label of being "tourist events", such events mostly have only a local or regional importance. The visitors of these events outline socialization and entertainment as the main factor of visitation, with few being regarded as a sort of social tradition. Despite this, such events

are still being important heritage assets in the eyes of local communities.

## Conclusions

According to the presented results, there is a deep connection between today's traditional sports games and hajduk games, practiced by peoples of the former Yugoslav territory (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro). The sports games of hajduk's and uskoks heritage are frequently based on (or through) spiritual traditional values of culture: folklore, music, language-speech, folk games, customs, traditions, etc. Material and spiritual values, created through evolution, are often, due to their historical and artistic significance, uniqueness, and exoticism, very attractive. In this respect, the following groups of values can be emphasized: ethnographic, archaeological, historical, artistic, urban, and technical. From the domain of material traditional culture, folk costumes, crafts and handicrafts, national nutrition, etc. were emphasized. The spiritual values of culture include the following: folklore, music, language, speech, folk games, customs, tradition, etc.

An analysis of the appearance, way of life, work and warfare of hajduks and uskoks, throughout history in these territories, leads to the conclusion that they had much in common. On the other hand, observed differences are very small or insignificant. For example, all hajduk movements in this area are characterized by serious physical strength and fitness, and strongly emphasized national dimension and patriotism. They also bare a specific psychosocial dimension (sociability and assistance to the weaker), and in particular courage and belligerence. It is important to outline that all of their dominant features, except for warfare, have come to the fore during sports or hajduk competitions. These sports competitions, by unwritten rule, always took place during major church holidays. They were held in open public spaces, often in a monastery or church courtyards, as a sporting and cultural part of the wider national assembly. Analysis and comparisons of the lives of the hajduk and the uskoks are contained in literature within the Balkans. Those descriptions are intertwined with the motives of sports competitions, heroic battles, gatherings and chats, finding jacks, marriages, ambushing the enemy and capturing loot, invading enemy territories for revenge and property overtaking.

A general characteristic of these and many other similar contemporary events in this region is that they mostly represent a form of invented tradition. Even if specific games have left traces in public memory, today they appear in a modified manner to a certain extent. This is reflected in the organization of various competitions and tournaments. Most

often, these traditions take the form of sports recreational and/or entertaining competitions, being incorporated into local tourist offers. Traditions that appear to be or are claimed to be the "old ones", are often of recent origin and may sometimes be invented, seeking and establishing links with some historic events or common traditions. These traditions are often perceived as responses to new situations, a contrast to a constant tendency towards change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of ordinary social life reflected in local traditions.

Traditional sports and games on the territory of the former Republic of Yugoslavia represent a corpus of knowledge and skills transferred from generation to generation. They are based on folk sports games with a pronounced competitive component, widely represented in the past. These involved a spectrum of various competitions that have been, in time, mostly abandoned and forgotten. Today, modified games are held to a certain extent, and are most often promoted through the organization of various events, which have a competitive part (through entertainment, sports, and tourism) aiming to preserve traditional sports and games from oblivion. During the field research, it was observed that most traditional sports and games have practically completely disappeared from practice, except for certain disciplines of folk all-around. It was noticed that certain traditional sports moved towards the organization of modern contemporary sports (league competitions, modern equipment, semi-professionalism, use of modern props).

Under the globalization of popular sports, traditional sports and games became mostly forgotten, unknown, or simply not so popular in contemporary societies. This particularly relates to new generations' stands, often insufficiently acquainted to and underappreciating ancient traditions in general. Traditional sports and games are often restricted to the interests of small local communities and groups of enthusiasts in peripheral and rural areas, where possibilities for practicing modern sports are limited. In some limited form, traditional sports and games have been included in the educational process among school and preschool children. However, this is not the case in later phases of the educative process among youth. Such content can be included in the educational programs and organized in cooperation with the professors of physical culture in elementary schools and high schools. Therefore, the organization of traditional sports and games in a form of a public event contains a certain educational context. As such, it is directed to the revitalization of old folk traditions and affirmation of local identity and pride of small communities and groups. More recently there are numerous initiatives for the inclusion of traditional

sports as a cultural aspect of various local communities. It is enthusiastically supported by the UNESCO ICH program and joyfully greeted among locals and tourists. These are followed by increased interest of the academic community, and institutional support for promoting traditional folk sports and games as part of national intangible heritage. However, there is a need for the organization of workshops, lectures, public debates, conferences, and even the establishment of sports sections and associations. Such activities should be directed towards nurturing old folk sports within local communities, preserving, promoting, properly presenting, and continuously supporting such events and heritages.

### Author contribution

Željko Bjeljac made a greatest contribution in the article by defining structure of research, giving the historical outlook on hajduk's history, and an outlook on traditional sport events in Serbia and other ex-Yugoslav states. Aleksandra Terzić provided an insight into aspect of intangible cultural heritage and representation of hajduk's heritage in toponomastics and vernacular heritage of Balkan people, presenting it as shared heritage and discussing the aspect of invented heritage with special reflection to the traditional sport events. Jovana Brankov provided typology of traditional sports and related aspects of UNESCO recognition of traditional sports as part of intangible heritage. Slavoljub Vujović provided detailed outlook on Nevesinje Olympics and Alka of Sinj.

### Acknowledgement

The research has been supported by the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia (Project: Research, Evaluation and Documentation of Traditional Sports and Games in Serbia as the Elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage).

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