Carnival and carnival traditions in the Ptuj region

Ptuj, the oldest town in Slovenia, bears a strong mark of carnival traditions. The traditional carnival customs are extremely vivid in the flatland of the Ptuj and Drava fields, and on the slopes of woody and winegrowing Haloze and Slovenske Gorice hills, while the town itself has been growing into the carnival centre of European dimensions in the past two decades.

Since 1960, Ptuj has been the stage for the annual traditional carnival event called **Kurentovanje**, the biggest organised carnival event in Slovenia. The membership in the Federation of European Carnival Cities (FECC) since 1991, has without any doubt helped the Ptuj carnival to distinguish itself from other carnivals and gain an international reputation. At the same time, the carnival has grown enriched by new carnival figures and concepts. If **Kurentovanje** used to be a one-day ethnographical-carnival event, it has grown into an eleven-day carnival festival of ethnographical, carnival and musical performances. Ptuj, traditional and carnival centre of Slovenia, combines **Kurentovanje** together with other carnivals or »fašenk« in neighbouring villages of Markovci, Cirkulane, Dornava, Videm, Cirkovci, Bukovci.

The word **Kurentovanje** derives from the traditonal carnival mask **Kurent** or **Korant**, as it is sistematically called by traditionalists. The most prominent mask belongs to the so-called group of animal masks – furry masks. That means that its outfit consists of a fur coat made of different domestic animals skins (especially of sheep skin), of a cap on which cow horns or stylised horns are mounted, of a chain-belt with five bells (previously, only one enormous bell), of a wooden club with a hedgehog skin at one end called »ježevka« to be carried in its hand. The former vegetative demon represents today an important identification symbol for a wider local community, region and even the state.

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