

1. MEĐUNARODNI SIMPOZIJ O KONJIČKOJ INDUSTRIJI I 3. HRVATSKI SIMPOZIJ O LIPICANSKOJ PASMINI

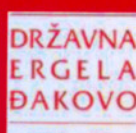
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ZBORNIK RADOVA



Contributions to historical facts on the origin of the Lipizzan horse breed

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INTRODUCTION

The Lipizzan horse is one of the eldest cultured horse breeds in the world. There were very little said about the beginning of the breed in the literature written in the last 50 years.

The general fact is that the place of origin of the Lipizzaner breed is in the Slovene Karst (sl. Kras) region precisely in the village of Lipica (Slovenia) (Illustration 1). The name of the breed comes from the name of the village.



Illustration 1: Location of Slovenia in Europe (up left); Lipica in Slovenia (up right) and Karst (Kras) in the south eastern part of Slovenia (bottom).

There are different opinions out of which horse breeds the Lipizzan horse originated. In this article we focus on the oldest literatures we could find, a lot of it has already been analyzed, but there is still a lot to be studied.

HISTORY

The Karst region has a long history of horse breeding going back to the Roman Empire. In those times horses played very important role in agriculture and especially in the army for defence and conquering new territories. They used locally bred horses for harness chariots. During the Middle Ages, those horses were in use also for tournaments (Valvasor, 1689; Illyrisches Blatt 1828; Bleiweis, 1871; Das K.K. Hofgestüt zu Lippiza 1580 - 1880, 1880; Ogrizek and Hrasnica, 1952).

The climatic conditions in this region are too hard for cattle breeding. The Karst summers are hot and dry and winters are cold and windy. The land and geographic conditions give possibilities for modest vegetation. In these conditions the horses raised were hardy, with a very effective digestive system. They

could survive with little food. Horses bred in that conditions are known to have hard hooves (Dular, 1895; Valvasor, 1689; Illyrisches Blatt 1828; Das K.K. Hofgestüt zu Lippiza 1580 - 1880, 1880).

The Royal and Imperial Court Stud of Lipizza on the Karst was established in the year 1580 (Valvasor, 1689; Illyrisches Blatt 1828; Das K.K. Hofgestüt zu Lippiza 1580 - 1880, 1880; Dolenc, 1980; Sambraus, 1994). In 1576 Archduke Charles II (son of Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor) visited Trieste with his wife. During this visit he took the opportunity to start negotiations about undertaking Lipica (Das K.K. Hofgestüt zu Lippiza 1580 - 1880, 1880). There were several reasons for the Empire Royal stud to be found in Lipica. One of the reasons was good climate and ground condition for breeding strong and healthy horses (Das K.K. Hofgestüt zu Lippiza 1580 - 1880, 1880). At that time famous Karst horses which assured the basic pool of genes for a new breed were bred in this region.

Just 15 years after its foundation Stud Lipica sent 30 foals to the ducal stud in Graz, and after year 1619, 40 years after foundation, the court in Graz and Vienna regularly received horses from Lipica. Those horses were appreciated from the court, nobility and military because of their good health, hardiness, proud movement, conformation and character (Das K.K. Hofgestüt zu Lippiza 1580 - 1880, 1880).

After the establishment of the stud farm there were periods of successful development and the struggle for its survival during the siege of the various armies. Usually, the herd was protected by moving it to a secret far off location. The first transfer of the entire herd was made to a city in Hungary about 400 km distance from Lipica. The herd had not suffered any losses. Hiding the herd from invaders and strong demand for horses of Lipica in peaceful times, suggests that these horses were highly appreciated (Das K.K. Hofgestüt zu Lippiza 1580 - 1880, 1880).

KARST HORSES

There is a lot of literature describing Karst horse as a breed which gave genes and some much appreciated traits to Lipizzaner breed. A strong proof for this statement is the fact that the Lipizzans were recognised under the name »The Karst horses bred in Lipica« (Nürnberg, 1993). The origin of Karst horse dates back to the ancient times. Since the Romans knew the excellent, sturdy and fast horses bred by the people of this region very well, they started with systematic breeding and improving with other horse breeds found in the broad Roman Empire (Krumpak, 1994). In the year 1662, Stubenberg said the following about Karst horses: "Well known are the Karst horses because of their strength and extremely long life. They are often able to work even at the age of 30" (Nürnberg, 1993).

Max Fugger described the horses from Karst as good and strong. (Das K.K. Hofgestüt zu Lippiza 1580 - 1880, 1880). He was also known as Marx von Fugger and was very famous animal scientist in the 16th century. He described and explained the relationship between horse conformation traits and its performance (Kräußlich, 1998).

In the 16th century Karst horses were known as strong, agile, enduring and longeval horses (Valvasor, 1689; Bleiweis, 1871; Erben 1866. At that times it was a great demand for these horses, many times they were sold as tournament horses for good money (Das K.K. Hofgestüt zu Lippiza 1580 - 1880, 1880).

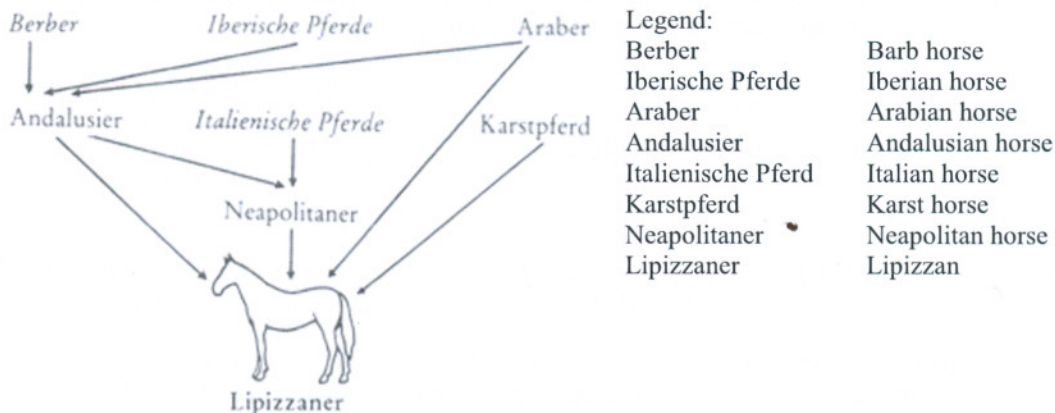


Illustration 2: Genealogy of Lipizzan (Nürnberg, 1993)

The Emperor and later the Dukes had their studs in the Karst region; the most famous was the Edlinger's stud (in Prestranek)" (Dolenc, 1980). J.V. Valvasor in his work "The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola" (Valvasor, 1994; Valvasor, 1689), gives the following reason for the strength and sturdiness of Karst horses by saying "Throughout Europe, Karst horses bred in Carniola are highly praised because they are sturdy, long-lived and can steadily bear the hard work and riding efforts. From the early age they are so trained by being left to graze on stones and rocks." Further on, Valvasor writes "The land prospers also because of its animal husbandry which is strong and of many sorts. Apart from making the plates and dairy pots full, it

brings good money too, especially with horses. Since horses are in abundance, they are often sold and sent to far places, mostly the famous Karst horses." Bishop Bakić of Djakovo writes that these horses measure 10.5 hands (150-157 cm) and are mostly of white colour. The higher ones are used for riding, shorter ones for carrying burdens. They are bred and kept completely naturally (Nürnberg, 1993).

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of older literature clearly shows that the Karst horses were involved in the formation of the Lipizzan horse. It is clear that the Karst, with its climate and hard, rocky terrain, and the relatively barren earth offered the ideal conditions for breeding a strong, healthy, long-lived horse with solid hooves. At the time of the Roman Empire the horses bred in the area were appreciated throughout Europe as horses for harnessing long-distances, horses for warfare and as flagship horses. Thus, the Karst horses had a reputation throughout Europe and encouraged the rulers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to begin with the breeding of the oldest European breeds.

For qualifying affected horse, a proportion of genes of the Karst horse included into the breed of Lipizzan horses, an in-depth study of the old literature will be needed. In most sources that describe the emergence of the Lipizzaner horse there is a very accurate description of the number of breeding horses brought onto a stud farm for breeding. But the data on a number of Karst horses in the breeding herd at the time when the Lipizzaner breed came into being are scarce.

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