

Pepeluhar



(also: **Pepeljuhar, Dobro sime**)
The pepeluhar (Ash man) is one of the most important and oldest škoromats masks. The pepeluhar character has a very special meaning to houses visited by masqueraders. His role is to cover the threshold with ash mixed with mrve (small pieces of hay). This is how the pepeluhar wishes the house a rich harvest and health for all. He has old ragged clothes, wears the ugly mask on his face and in some places, he has an old worn-out women's headscarf wrapped around his head. He also wears a skirt made of sackcloth or hessian over his trousers and an old men's jacket.

Zeleni

(also: **Ti zeleni**) The masks of the zelenis (Green People) are made from juniper, moss, spruce, frmentins (corn leaves), stržinas (wooden chippings), ivy or heath. It takes a lot of time to make such a demanding mask and twigs or moss also have to be sown and fixed all over their clothes. Ti zelenis symbolize the coming spring, birth and life.



Kleščar

(also: **Kliščar, Škopit, Klanfar, Skopljar**)
Kleščar is the only direct descendant of the medieval "scaramatti" and is the main modern day škoromat character. He is scary due to his huge wooden tongs with which he catches his victims and then blackens their faces with soot. The tongs are made from one piece of wood and older tongs are more valued due to their lightness and the louder sound they make. As the title suggests, the kleščar character is named a bit differently in every village, but his clothes and his purpose remain the same everywhere. Kleščar is recognisable by his typical headgear which is even more eye catching if a bird of prey is attached to it. Kleščar wears a wide black coat fitted with a thick chain, which he tightens on his back with a thick stake; he also hangs a buzzing bell, a lamp, a few skins, a bird or even an animal carcass on his chain.



Škoromat with bells

(also: **Zgončar, Sez zguonci, Grdini**)
Škoromats with bells look beautiful due to their wonderful hats, but their behaviour and their original meaning place them with "the ugly" characters. Their basic task is to help the kleščar hunt girls and blacken their faces with soot. On their heads they wear conical hats up to 70cm tall on which hundreds or more paper flowers are attached. The shape of their hats varies from village to village and the flowers attached to the hat can differ. They wear sheepskin coats, over which they tie bells around their waist. Apart from forged cow bells, škoromats can also have cast bronze bells, which toll loudly during the character's constant bouncing and running.



How to find us...

Podgrad is on the E61 main road between Kozina and Rijeka. The village is just 22 km from the A1 motorway between Ljubljana and Koper, 12 km from the market town of Ilirska Bistrica and just 6 km from the Croatian border. The car park is directly in front of the building. A maximum of two buses can park at the front, otherwise there is another car park just 50 m away, next to the Church of St Cyril and Methodius. Please use the contact information below to arrange your visit in advance.



GPS: N 45° 31' 25,373"
E 14° 8' 45,447"

Information & Booking:

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The Brkini škoromats

- Local Cultural & Historical Collection -



The origin of the name "škoromat", a mask wearing person in traditional costume from the villages around Podgrad and Hrušica during Shrovetide

The first we know about the term škoromat is what was documented as long ago as the 14th century. On the 12th February 1340, the local authorities of the Friuli town Cividale prohibited citizens "in habiu scaramatte", from dressing or appearing as a škoromat on the streets without the permission of the "gastald" (a Lombard official in charge of some part of the royal domain) or the town council. Another written record of the škoromat appears 82 years later in February 1422, when the name is written as "sgaravatte". These two written documents prove that škoromats are the first masks to be mentioned in Slovenia.



"Škoromatija", the events and customs that are part of the masquerade preparation and procession

Although a little diluted over time, the magic of this custom has been preserved by local people who continue the Shrovetide customs from the past. All participating groups start the process of škoromatija on the 26th December, St Stefan's name day. This is traditionally the time when men and boys gathered to talk about the škoromatija course and agreed who would wear and who would prepare which costume.



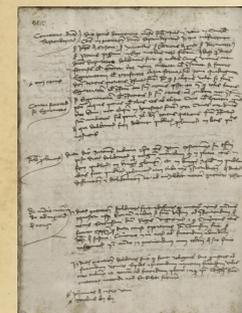
"Šjmas", the masquerade group in which each individual member is called a šjma, from the villages of Pregarje and Huje

The šjmas are the masquerade groups from Pregarje and Huje and they do not differ much from other groups' Shrovetide and poberija customs. The characters are also similar to those from other groups, even though some of them have different names.



Making of the masks for škoromats

Making the obličje (a wooden mask) for škoromats has always been a well respected skill. It was an unwritten rule that a male should carve his own mask, but today, just like in the old days, this task has been reserved for skilful carvers. The wooden obličje is carved out of one piece of lime wood (sometimes pear, plum or alder tree), as this kind of a mask is very heavy to wear on the face and the obličje has to be as thin as possible to comfortably fit the face of the wearer. Nowadays wooden masks are mostly seen amongst the škoromats from the village of Hrušica, where most of the characters wear them, but škoromats with bells must wear these wooden masks. These are ti zelenis (the green people), cingesar (characters wearing worn-out and patched clothes as a reminder of a peasant's daily life) and cunjar (characters wearing rags).



Second known written document (from February 1422), where the name škoromat is written as "sgaravatte".

For centuries škoromats have been worn in the villages of Podgrad, Gradišče, Ritomeče, Obrov, Javorje, Male Loče, Hrušica, Podbeže and Račice. The most recognisable škoromats are kleščar (Tongs carrier), a figure whose main and most recognisable feature is a huge pair of tongs and zvončar (Bell carrier), a figure wearing bells, with an elaborate and distinctive conical hat decorated with paper flowers. These can also be seen with the other masks in the villages Pregarje and Huje.



The zvončar (Bell carrier) is called grdin (Ugly man). He wears a mask made from a sieve, and in the past, his hat was also different as the crepe paper flowers decorated only the top of his hat. Just like the škoromats, women and children of šjmas did not take part in the poberija, participation was strictly reserved for men and boys. During the poberija, the main group stuck together, while grdin was always one house ahead to announce the arrival of šjmas to that house.

Just like making wooden obličja not everyone can master the art of making artificial flowers from paper! Flower making has always been a woman's job. Usually, the škoromat's hat was decorated by the women from the family of the male who would wear it. Nowadays, however, there are just a few village women who know this skill and they pass their knowledge on to younger generations. One škoromat hat with bells can be decorated with over a hundred crepe-paper flowers!



In all villages, the high point and the main event of the Shrovetide period is the poberija (mask wearers gather and walk as a group from house to house in their village to collect gifts of food and drink from the locals). This takes place on Shrove Saturday, when škoromats dance and revel around their villages. In past times, škoromats would collect their gifts in the surrounding villages as well, one week before the Shrovetide, which kept them away from home for more than a week, and on Shrove Tuesday, they collected gifts in their home villages.

