

## The Lipizzan breed history in the Republic of Croatia

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The Lipizzan breed presents an indispensable part of numerous cultural and folklore events, equestrian games, folklore festivals and horse shows in Croatia. Also this is the third most populous breed of horses in Croatia and have status of Croatian protected breed. The aim of this paper was to show the history of breeding of Lipizzan horses and their introduction to Croatia. The origin of Lipizzan breed is connected with the year 1580 when Charles II, Archduke of Austria bought the village of Lipica near Sežana in Slovenia and founded a horse breed there. The Lipizzan were initially used for the protocol needs of the Vienna Court, and later as a working aid. Due to its exceptional beauty and wide usage, this breed began to spread through the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Today, the Lipizzan breed, consists of 7 lines of stallions and 18 mare family lines. Throughout history, the breeding goal of the Lipizzan was harmonized depending on the country where it was grown, depending on the time and needs of the source of labour in agriculture and transport, but also depending on the culture of living in a particular region. More than 300 years of Lipizzan breeding in Croatia resulted in noble Baroque horse acclimated for Croatian conditions and deeply correlated with Croatian people and tradition.

**Keywords:** breeding, Croatia, horses, Lipizzan breeds

### 1 Introduction

The Lipizzan breed, is the third most populous breed of horses in the Republic of Croatia (HPA, 2018) probably due to the fact that this breed become part of the tradition and life of the Slavonic and an indispensable part of numerous cultural and folklore events, equestrian games, folklore festivals and horse shows (Lončar et al., 2016). In accordance to Baban et al. (2006) Lipizzan have an expressive head with the occasional rams nose (a trait of the African inheritance), a highly set neck, relatively low withers, a fairly long and powerful back, which runs into a muscular crupper, pronounced bodily proportions and simple profiled limbs with strong well forms joints and elegant hooves; the tail and the main are thick and fine haired – absolutely the baroque horse. The horse's size is between 155 and 158 cm. He has a springy gait with a high knee action and is particularly nimble. Furthermore, the Lipizzan matures late, but also lives to a ripe old age of often between 28 and 32 years. As for the colouring the white horse is dominant – a brown Lipizzan is a rarity, which for tradition's sake however can always be seen at the Spanish Riding School. The foals are born dark or black brown and acquire their white

apparel only further on between the age of 4 and 10 years. The breeding goals of Lipizzan breed is to raise quality animals for team sport and riding at both Stud farm and private breeding. Since this breed is one of the most popular horse breed in Croatia and have status of Croatian protected breed the aim of this paper was to show the history of breeding of Lipizzan horses and their introduction to Croatia.

### ***The origin and usage of Lipizzan breed***

The Hapsburg family controlled both Spain and Austria when the art of classical riding revived in Europe during the Renaissance. There was a need for light, fast horses for use in the military and the riding school. The Spanish horse, produced during Moorish rule by crossing Berber and Arab stallions with Iberian mares, was considered the most suitable mount because of its exceptional sturdiness, beauty, and intelligence. In 1562, Maximilian II brought the Spanish horse to Austria and founded the court stud at Kladrub. His brother Archduke Charles established a similar private imperial stud farm with Spanish stock in 1580 at Lippiza (nowadays: Lipizza [Italian], or Lipica [Slovenian]). He selected that area because it was the

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site of the former Roman city Aquileia in which ancient Romans breed excellent horses and where, even after the Roman era, fast and durable karst horses were continued to be raised on the Slovenian karst areas (Benčević et al., 1965). Here, the origin of Lipizzan breed occurred. Lipizzan horses are believed to be named after the town Lipica (Župan, 2004). Today in Europe the breed is called Lipizzan or, in America, Lipizzan.

The Lipizzan were initially used for the protocol needs of the Vienna Court, and later as a working aid (Lončar et al., 2016). According to Steinhausz, the stud farm in Lipica was created by interbreeding of the karst horses with those of Spanish, Kladrup, Italian, Danish, German, and most frequently of Arabic origin (Steinhausz 1924). It is believed that the interbreeding of different breeds of horses with karst horses, is due to Archduke Charles' wish to ennoble the karst horses. This is additionally confirmed by the fact that apart from the Arab breeds, no other breed has managed to stay present in the Lipizzan (Lončar et al., 2016). Due to its exceptional beauty and wide usage, this breed began to spread through the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and as such through Croatia (Čačić, 2011).

## 2 Materials and discussion

An Imperial herd of horses was formed on the Lipizza Estate in 1580 from 9 stallions imported from Spain and 24 Karst Mares. Of all the sires used during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, only six of these horses were accepted to found the family lines of the Lipizzan as known today:

- **CONVERSANO**, black, a Neapolitan (1767). Conversano's have Arab blood, strong ram-like heads short backs, broad hocks and dignified movements;
- **FAVORY**, dun, a Bohemian origin (1779), transferred from Kladrub. The Arab influence is noticeable in the Favory's by their lighter build but the soft curve of their nose still calls to mind their Spanish ancestry;
- **MAESTOSO**, white (not grey), a crossbred of Neapolitan sire and a Spanish dam (b. 1819), transferred from Kladrub. Maestoso's are powerful horses with a long back, extremely muscular cruppers and heavy heads;
- **NEAPOLITANO**, bay (brown), from another Neapolitan sire (1790). Neapolitans retain their original tall, rangier appearance and they have graceful movements and high action;
- **PLUTO**, grey, Danish stud (1765). Pluto's, their ancestors from Spain and Denmark, are sturdy horses with a rectangular build, ram-like heads and a high set neck;

- **SIGLAVY**, grey, an Arabian (1810). The Siglavy's typify the Arab Lipizzaner with aristocratic heads, a slender neck, high withers and a relatively short back.

In addition to the stallions, there are 18 mare family lines. Every stallion has two names, the sire's name and the dam's name. This explains the name such as Pluto Theodorosta.

Today, the Lipizzan breed, consists of 7 lines of stallions, two of which are of Kladrup origin (Maestoso and Favory), two of Neapolitan origin (Neapolitan and Conversano), one Arabic (Sigla), one Danish (Pluto), one English-Arabic (Sirdar), 1 Mezőhegyes-Fogaras (Incitato), and one Croatian-Slavonian line (Tulipan) (Steinhausz, 1924).

The tradition of breeding of these horses is also reflected today through the work and activity of 9 European stud farms. These are: Lipica (Slovenia), Đakovo (Croatia), Lipik (Croatia), Piber (Austria), Monterotondo (Italy), Beclean (Romania), Fagaras – Simbata de Jos (Romania), Topolčianky (Slovakia), and Szilvásvárad (Hungary). The Vučijak stud farm (Bosnia and Herzegovina), which in 2010 received the status of the national stud farm, may also be added to the list. In each of these, there are also national elements to horse breeding. Their bearers are various private breeders whose aim is to cultivate the tradition of the Lipizzan breeding.

The breeding of the Lipizzan on the territory of Croatia is linked to the year 1700 and the Count of Janković, who at Terezovac in the vicinity of Suhopolje, first bred Neapolitan and Spanish horses. When Lipizzan arrived to his estate, that breed also became present in that area (Horvath, 1996). Later on, the development of the Lipizzan breed in Croatia was related to the Đakovo Stud Farm which was originally owned by the Đakovo Diocese. In fact, the first arrival of Lipizzans in the territory of Đakovo is connected to the beginning of 1806, when the imperial stud farm from Lipice had to withdraw away from Napoleon's military campaigns (Steinhausz, 1924). After the imperial stud farm left from Đakovo a year later, i.e. in 1807, some of these horses remained in Đakovo.

The one-year stay of Lipizzan in Đakovo influenced the awareness of their value and further breeding. Napoleonic Wars, in addition to causing damage to buildings in Lipica, led to the destruction of breeding documentation of that valuable breed (Horvath 1996). Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, who financed the purchase of a number of Lipizzaner horses by selling oak forests, made a significant contribution to the cultivation of Lipizzaner horses in the territory of Đakovo, which after 1856 systematically began with organized breeding of that breed in the area (Župan, 2004). Along with Strossmayer's help and love



**Figure 1** Ivandvor is the second location of the State Stud Farm Đakovo where the stud herd of mares with their foals are situated  
Photo: M. Gregić

for Lipizzans, the stud farm made significant advances in the number and quality of horses, which is attested by awards at various exhibitions. Besides Lipizzans, Arab stallions were sometimes used for breeding at the stud farm. It is mentioned that in 1898, there were 56 mares, 4 stallions, and 109 foals and colts (Ilančić, 1975).

Today, in Croatia, Lipizzan breeding is predominately oriented to Slavonia as a rich region that has inherited this exceptionally valuable breed of horse (Čačić, 2011). Although, with the development of mechanization, Lipizzans are no longer used to work the fields, this breed of horses has always been considered the breed of the future. Due to their character traits and exceptional learning abilities, Lipizzans have created an indestructible link between man and horse (Lončar et al., 2016).

The popularity of a Lipizzan with the Croatian man, is illustrated by the fact that it is the third most populous breed of horses in the Republic of Croatia (HPA, 2018). The reason for this lies in the fact that the Lipizzan has slowly become part of the tradition and life of the Slavonic man for several centuries, thus becoming an indispensable part of numerous cultural and folklore events, equestrian games, folklore festivals and horse shows (Lončar et al., 2016). The organic horse breeding in the Republic of Croatia has two most important natural resources: Lipizzan and pasture (Gregić et al., 2013.). East Croatia has unused potential of originally protected horses breeds (Gregić et al., 2018.).

### 3 Conclusions

Throughout history, the breeding goal of the Lipizzan was harmonized depending on the country where it was grown, depending on the time and needs of the source of labour in agriculture and transport, but also depending on the culture of living in a particular region. More than 300 years of Lipizzan breeding in Croatia resulted in noble Baroque horse acclimated for Croatian conditions and deeply correlated with Croatian people and tradition.

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