



I FEEL
SLOVENIA

Alexandrian
Women

Nova Gorica

New adventures



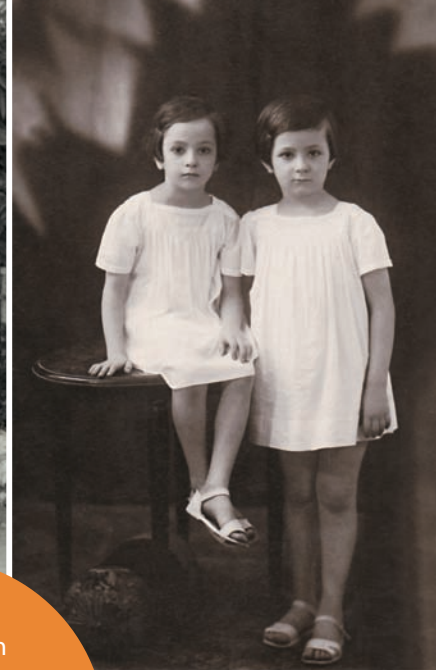
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Alexandrian Women

Alexandrian women were women and girls from the Goriška region who found their employment in Egypt. They worked as childminders, maids, cooks, housemaids, governesses and wet nurses. Approximately 8000 Slovenian girls and women emigrated to Egypt in the period from 1870 to 1940. Most of them were from Prvačina, Gradišče, Bilje, Bukovica, Miren, Renče, Batuje, Selo but also from other villages from the Vipava Valley, Goriška Brda and the Karst. The reason for their leaving

homes and families was mostly economic – lack of food and work at home, indebtedness of their domestic farms and also a wish to improve the financial conditions of their families, such as, acquiring new pieces of land, repairing the family house or purchasing a new one. All of these were made possible with the income earned in Egypt by the women, girls, mothers, sisters, aunts and grandmothers from the Goriška region.





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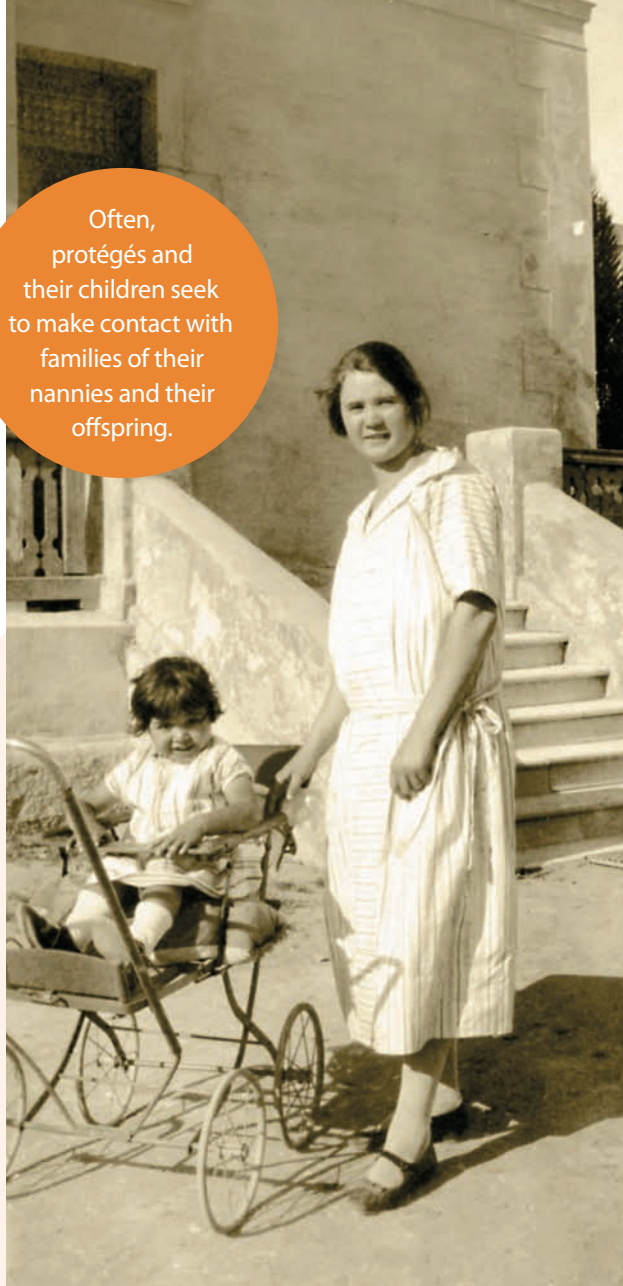
Children

Children of Alexandrian women remember their mothers, locally called "aleksandrinka" and their efforts to provide for the living of their families. The majority of children stayed at home and spent many years of their lives living only with their fathers or grandparents, some under the custody of their older sisters, or aunts but some also in foster care minded by unfamiliar families. Their memories of their mothers are painful for them even up to the present time. Some children of Alexandrian women, however, joined their mothers or both parents in Egypt when they grew up a little and went to school there or to boarding schools. Even today, their memories of their lives in Egypt sound very interesting. Many children of Alexandrian women were also born in Egypt and they spent their childhood, youth and adulthood living and then even getting married in Egypt. Today, they live almost all around the world: in Australia, Canada, the USA, Switzerland, France, but most of them live in Italy, some, however, have also returned home.

Protégés

Even today, decades after the Alexandrian women left to go home, the children they cared for, their "PROTÉGÉS", remember their lives with Slovenian nannies and many of them say that in their memory there is not a single day of their childhood that they spent without their minders, the Alexandrian women. More and more often, protégés and their children seek to make contact with families of their nannies and their offspring. Some regularly come to visit them in the Goriška region, others have taken the names of their nannies into the world, as has been done by the Douek children, the brother and sister Ellis Douek and Claudia Roden, who write about their nanny, Marija Koron from Batuje.

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Exhibitions

Since July 2006, EXHIBITIONS, presenting the life and work of the Alexandrian women in Egypt are put on display in the centre of the village Prvačina. Exhibitions have been displayed in Gradišče above Prvačina, in Nova Gorica, Gorica in Italy, Bukovica and Radovljica. Photographs, items and clothes had to be collected by the members of the Society from the homes of Alexandrian women, since such an exhibition had not existed before. That is why every year these exhibitions attract numerous visitors from the Goriška region but also from Slovenia and other countries.

House in the Square

The house in the square (in Slovenian: "HIŠA NA PLACU") is the most important contact point for everybody who is interested in the lives of Alexandrian women, for those preserving their heritage and for visitors visiting and admiring it alike. The house is the home of the memorial exhibition on Alexandrian women and other events are organised there. In 2011, the Nova Gorica City Municipality bought the house and appointed the Society for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of Alexandrian Women as its manager. The premises for further work in preserving the heritage of Alexandrian women are thus ensured, and this is very important.



Memorial plaques

Memorial plaques to the Alexandrian women in Egypt were set up in Alexandria, at the Slovenian School Sisters of the Asylum in Alexandria (2007), at the Cairo Latin Cemetery (2010). The projects were organised by the Society for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of Alexandrian Women. The Society also took part in the setting of a Memorial Chapel in Gradišče above Prvačina (2010) and a commemorative plaque in Nova Gorica (2011).





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Research

Research projects, led by the Society for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of Alexandrian Women, are taking place at home and in Egypt. In Egypt, their aim is to produce a record of all the accessible data about Alexandrian women and their families which might still be obtained. In 2010, names on Slovenian tombstones in Latin cemeteries in Cairo and Alexandria started to be registered as well as the data from their Registers of Deaths. In 2011, members of the Society continued this project by copying data from the Register of Deaths and Marriages in the St. Catherine Church in Alexandria and the St. Joseph Church in Cairo. In the Goriška region, the stories of Alexandrian women are being recorded in writing, objects, photographs and other material are being collected.





Society

The Society for the preservation of the cultural heritage of the alexandrian women (in Slovenian: DRUŠTVO ZA OHRANJANJE KULTURNE DEDIŠČINE ALEKSANDRINK) is the greatest promoter in preserving the heritage of Alexandrian women in the Goriška region and in the wider area. It was established in November 2005. A series of exhibitions have already been produced by their members, supplemented with discussions at round tables and other important projects such as setting memorial plaques dedicated to Alexandrian women in Alexandria (in 2007) and Cairo (in 2010). The Society achieved two important awards for its work. The first, the

"Murko's Deed" (or in Slovenian: "Murkova listina") was awarded by the Slovenian Ethnological Society (2009) and a "Diploma" by the Nova Gorica City Municipality (2010).

Web page of the Society - www.aleksandrinke.si - provides information on Alexandrian women, about the lives of their children and all activities pursued by the Society in Slovenian, English and Italian. Your reports and stories about Alexandrian women are especially desirable and you may submit them in order to publish them on the web page.



Marija Černe from Bilje, the Alexandrian women, told us her story:

"We bought the house and my father could not pay for it in full that is why he took a loan from the Savings Bank. My father was a carpenter but he earned little money. That is why he decided to depart for Argentina, in 1926. He did quite well in the beginning. But in 1929, there was a big economic crisis and my father lost his work, over there in Argentina. So it was me who went to Alexandria in 1931. I sent money back home every month and I paid only the interest on my father's loan from the Savings Bank. I came home on a visit for the first time in

1936, I was 24 then. I had no intention to return to Egypt but the interest on the house loan had not been paid yet and my father promised to give me one half of the house if I continued to earn money in Egypt and pay the interest. So I went back to Egypt and for nine years I was paying only for the interest on the house loan until 1939, when the war started and the Italian "lira" was devalued. But then my father again asked me to stay in Egypt in order to buy one cow at home, to survive. And so I stayed there and worked for 35 years in Egypt."



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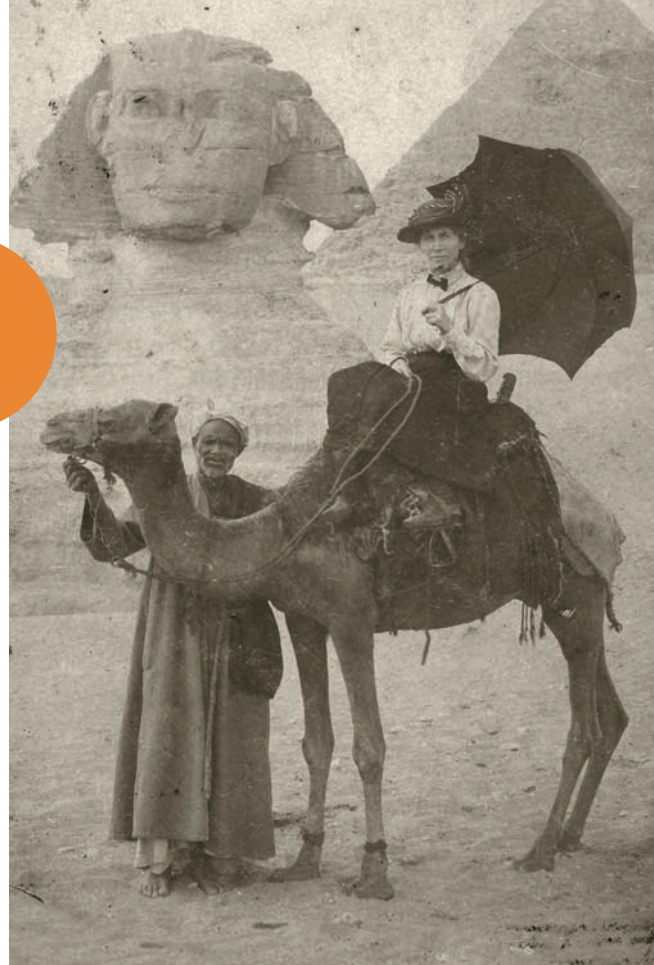
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The publishing of the present brochure was financed by the
Municipality of Nova Gorica.



Published by: Društvo za ohranjanje kulturne dediščine aleksandrink
Editorial board: Dejana Baša, Tina Mihelj

Text: Daša Koprivc

Photos: archive of Society for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage
of the Alexandrian Women and Slovene Ethnographic Museum

Translated by: Maja Vitežnik

Design: Rogač RMV

Print: A-media d.o.o. 2012

Number of copies: 2.000