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CULT PLACES ON THE BORDER

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Barna Gábor

**PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE AND PILGRIMAGE ROUTES
AS COMMUNITY-CREATING PLACES**

The pilgrimages of the Middle Ages and the pilgrimage feasts that arose from the Baroque age bore the characteristic features of their time. The spirituality of the age determined not only the forms of devotion but also the external appearance of the pilgrims, the structure and course of the pilgrimage, the tasks and duties of the pilgrimage leaders and the behaviour of the pilgrims.

In the Middle Ages pilgrimages were typically made individually or in small groups. The period was a world of big places of pilgrimage with an international influence, attracting pilgrims from far and wide and with major pilgrimage routes leading to them that gradually stabilised mainly in the form of the Saint James route and the Rome route. Besides the Holy Land, Rome (Barna 2001), Santiago de Compostella and Aachen were also popular (Thoemmes 1937; Bálint-Barna 1994, 37-40). It took months or even one or two years to reach these places. The cost was very high, so only persons within the church, members of the landowning class and more prosperous townspeople could afford to make pilgrimages (Bálint-Barna 1994, 27-52). The linguistic/cultural diversity was reflected in the universality of Latin (Csukovits 2003). The borderline between the Western and Eastern rites was and still is a sharp dividing line.

The big places of pilgrimage in Europe were places where the peoples met. It was here that pilgrims arriving from different countries could become aware of their own characteristics and notice their differences, observing the way they differed from others in language, dress, customs and even in their way of thinking. But they could also discover here the ties that bound them together, the things they had in common, many of which came from the universality of the Christian religion, its catholicism, the similarity of liturgy, the veneration of saints arising from the same basic notion. For centuries this reinforced the awareness of European cohesion, the unity of Christian Europe – and it still does today in its sacred places, through the international pilgrimages that are undergoing a revival. The language, the dress and the customs may be different, but there is one common thought: to obey God, to share in his grace in the sacred places with the help of well-selected mediators, above all through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God, and other saints.

On the basis of their catchment areas, the different places of pilgrimage were or are of local, regional, supraregional and international significance (Bangó 1979, 153). Seen from another angle this represents the geographical scope of the given cult. In the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age – depending on the location – we find shrines in each group with an attraction that extends beyond national boundaries. This can, of course, be seen most clearly in the shrines of supraregional and international significance and in the major pilgrimages already mentioned. The following examples are about the cult of such shrines linking distant regions.

The veneration of relics was very strong throughout Europe, including Hungary. The biggest mediaeval shrines arose around the tombs of our national saints: around the graves of Saint Stephen and Saint Emmerich in Székesfehérvár, Saint Ladislav in Nagyvárad, Saint Gerard in Csanád, and Saint Margaret on what is today Margaret Island (Bálint-Barna 1994, 53-62). Today it is almost impossible to under-

stand how wars could have been fought for the possession of certain relics, or how they were stolen or orders were given for them to be stolen. There was more than one example of such things happening in Hungary too. To mention a case not far from here: Péter Perényi stole the eucharistic relic from Bába and placed it in the castle of Siklós (Holub 1940; Bálint-Barna 1994, 65-68). The veneration of these saints, especially Saint Stephen and Saint Ladislav bound a whole nation together.

The veneration and cult of relics declined or entirely disappeared under the influence of the Reformation and the Turkish occupation. This was the fate of the sacred places just mentioned, from Székesfehérvár to Csanád, from Nagyvárád to Bába and Ludbreg. In the Protestant world that rejected the doctrine of indulgence and with the constant danger of war long-distance pilgrimages also ceased or at least became much rarer. The pilgrimage routes were no longer used (Bálint-Barna 1994, 89-94). But then from the Late Middle Ages the veneration of Mary increasingly spread, bringing votive images and statues representing the intercession of Mary and her power. Here in Southern Transdanubia alone the period saw the rise of such Marian shrines as Máriagyűd that has origins reaching back much further, Andocs and Búcsúszentlászló, and the shrine of Máriavölgy outside what was then the Hungarian capital and coronation city became the country's most important place of pilgrimage (Bálint-Barna 1994, 74-77).

But these sacred places that flourished in the Baroque period tended to be shrines of local, micro-regional or regional significance, the sacral centre of their region uniting its Catholic population regardless of linguistic and cultural differences. It was at this time that Máriagyűd, the common shrine of the peoples of Southern Transdanubia, began to flourish again (Barna 1988). Máriagyűd's counterpart in the Maros valley, Máriaradna, had and continues to play a similar role (Barna 2002). Its importance in religious life was so great that for years after the Trianon borders were drawn the "Radna pilgrimage" was held in Szeged-Alsóváros (Ifj. Lele 2000). From then on the Franciscan church of Szeged-Alsóváros became – in the words of Sándor Bálint: the sacral centre of the "Szöged nemzet", and even of the south of the Great Plain. Its cohesive role and power can be seen in the fact that right up until the dismemberment of the country the people who had migrated from Szeged in the 18th-19th centuries to around 150 different settlements regularly "returned home" for the Feast of Our Lady of Snows in August (Bálint 1981).

Allow me to mention a few of the shrines in Southern Transdanubia, Slavonia and the Szeremség of importance for micro-regions in this period: Doroszló, Szigetvár-Turbék, Almás, Pétervárad. Among these, the votive images of Doroszló and Turbék also reflect the influence on the cult of the German settlers: in both places Mariahilf-type votive images are venerated (Báráth 1990; Szilárdfy 1994). These places, as well as Mária-kéménd, also became places of pilgrimage for the Swabians who settled in the area, while Baja-Máriakönyve (Vodica) attracted Catholic Southern Slavs, the Šokci.

Pilgrimage in the modern age was characterised by collective and votive pilgrimages. During the frequent wars of the 17th and 18th centuries and the epidemics that followed them, or in time of natural catastrophes (flood, earthquake) communities sought the help above all of the Blessed Virgin Mary, vowing to make a pilgrimage to a sacred place or to do something else: to ban work on that day, to fast, etc., if they survived. These vows formed the ties that bound the local community together and over the centuries shaped the collective historical consciousness through the shared experience of the annual pilgrimages. This is how the White church of Buzsák in Somogy County became the sacred place of the Slovaks in a few villages of the micro-region. And to give an example of the places of pilgrimage of regional and even

international significance: it was in this period that Máriapócs became the biggest shrine of the Greek Catholic world, a settlement bringing together peoples, languages and cultures. Community-type group pilgrimages were made right up to the 1970s to 1980s. Their organisational principles changed very little over those centuries.

From the spiritual point of view this pilgrimage practice was characterised by the strong veneration of Mary and the saints of the Angevin dynasty, summed up in the concept of *Regnum Marianum*. The strength of the notion of Mary's country and the veneration of the Hungarian saints can be seen in the altar structures of our churches built in this period: they all have portrayals of Saint Stephen and Saint Ladislav, and the Blessed Lady of the Hungarians also appears. The monastic orders that cared for the shrines brought their own distinctive colour into this largely uniform practice; this was especially true of the Franciscans (e.g. Andocs), but also of other orders: the Servites (Eger), Dominicans (Vasvár), Paulines (Máriavölgy and Márianosztra), Benedictines (Bakonybél), and Basilites (Máriapócs, Bikszád). The short book by Sándor Bálint – *Boldogasszony vendégségében [Guests of Our Blessed Lady]* – gives the best insight into this world (Bálint 1944a). The custom in Andocs, probably initiated by the aristocracy, of donating clothes to the statue of the Virgin Mary in gratitude for answered prayers, was first studied by Mária L. Imre (1990). And we also have sacred places that were founded in the 20th century, entirely rooted in vernacular religion, such as Dobronak and Radamos in the Mura region of Slovenia (Mód-Simon 2005, 2008, 2009).

The pilgrimage catchment areas that were intertwined but supplemented each other in time and were built on each other, together traced the borders of the *Sacra Hungaria* (Bálint 1944b), that from the societal point of view was composed of small and large, linguistically mixed, village and urban communities. Then from the late 19th century with the appearance of modern pastoral activity, feasts and shrines mobilising certain social strata and groups also appeared. It was in this way that the Dominican ruins on Margaret Island became a place of pilgrimage for young girls (Barna 2013). Wherever we look we find a mutually reinforcing network of small and large communities in this world where the shared shrines also contributed to national reconciliation (Barna 1988). And where the Croatian pilgrim could also sing hymns in veneration of Hungarian saints (Eperjessy 2001).

Máriagyűd, the most influential shrine in the former Southern Hungary was always shared: it was a place of pilgrimage for Hungarians, Croatians and Germans. The Catholics of Slavonia and Bácska also came here. The new borders after the First World War cut off parts of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from the shrine for decades (Barna 1997, 172). The most visited shrine in the Bácska region is still the one in the Hungarian settlement of Doroszló (Serb: Doroslovo). Catholic Hungarians, Bunyevci and Germans each visited its Holy Well and Mariahilf-type votive image on different feast days (Raj-Nagy 1993). Another important shrine in Northern Bácska was Baja-Vodica (Baja-Máriakönyve holy well), visited not only by Catholic Hungarians, Germans, Bunyevci and Šokci, but also by Orthodox Serbs (Bálint 1944, 56; Barna 1997, 172). The Orthodox Serb monastery of Grábóc in Tolna County was established in the late 16th century. Up to the First World War its feast of Saints Peter and Paul brought together the Serb Orthodox population of the region (Vass 2010, 142-145). Máriapócs on the north-eastern edge of the Great Hungarian Plain is the biggest shrine of the Greek Catholic world; since the end of the 17th century it has been attracting Hungarian, Ruthenian and Romanian pilgrims from the region, as well as Ukrainian and Polish pilgrims from Transcarpathia and Galicia (Barna 1988, 347-352). Many more examples could be given.

This world was broken up by the Trianon peace dictate, bisecting centuries-old catchment areas (Barna 1997), disrupting the ethnic peace that had been forged in religious practice. Then socialism crushed all the remaining traces of that world by destroying individual livelihoods practically everywhere in the Carpathian Basin. Right up to the First World War the borders were permeable, it was only the national socialists and socialist nationalisms of the 20th century (Romania, Yugoslavia, Austria) that closed them more tightly, making pilgrimages across borders in the former catchment areas practically impossible. Parallel with this, pilgrimage groups were channelled in new directions, creating new catchment areas within the changed boundaries.

Máriaradna, the big shrine of the Bácska and Banat regions divided among three countries could not be visited from Hungary and the regions annexed to Serbia. But under the constraint of the circumstances its attraction extended northwards as far as Szatmár along the border between Hungary and Romania, from where people had earlier made pilgrimages to Máriapócs that subsequently remained in Hungary. After the First World War the Serbs living in Tolna and Baranya counties opted for Serbia, causing a sharp decline in the number of visitors to the Grábóc feast. There are no longer any Serbs in Grábóc and its vicinity. However in later decades the monastery became a “national shrine” of Serbs living in Hungary (Vass 2010, 159-160).

The radical and final change in the traditional or, we could say, peasant pilgrimage came with the change of generation in the 1970s and 1980s (Barna 1992). By that time the age groups that had been socialised before 1948–1950 and grown up into this form of communal religious practice had died out or were in a marginal position. Their children were socialised by the anti-clerical and anti-religious policy of socialism.

The strongly centralised and controlled socialist world left very few opportunities for these communities. One such opportunity was tourism. And that was not available everywhere either. Especially by the 1960s, 70s and 80s for example, for the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia visits to medicinal baths was an opportunity to connect to the world of *Sacra Hungaria* already mentioned. It became a social practice, for example, that groups of tourists hired Čedok tourist buses to go to Harkány among other places. They did go to the baths, of course, but they also spent a day and a half at Máriagyúd. Or after visiting Nyíregyháza-Sóstógyógyfürdő they went to pray at Máriapócs. Many more examples could be given. Here we can also observe the role of modern means of mass transport, and the formation of communities of experience that arose for a single journey.

Technical development in the 19th and 20th centuries led to new forms (special trains, special boats, special buses), but the last third of the 20th century brought the reappearance of pilgrimages in small groups (by car) and individual pilgrimages, often made on foot (Barna 2008). Today all these forms exist side by side. Travel offices have been set up to transport pilgrims, and a growing number of pilgrimages are organised for particular age groups (youth) and other social groups (e.g. recently for pilgrimages to Lourdes by soldiers in which the Hungarian army has also become involved).

Perhaps it was on this basis that travel offices specialising in religious tourism were set up in Hungary and the neighbouring countries after the change of political system. They include Makrovilág, Julianus Tours, Misszió Tours, and numerous others.

It was after the change of system that the opportunity first opened up for Hungarians to step onto the newly flourishing major European pilgrimage routes such as el Camino, the Aachen pilgrimage route, or the big pilgrimage to Czestochowa.¹ Long-distance pilgrimages extending beyond the borders began once again, the traditional pilgrimage routes along the Trianon borders were reorganised.

¹ This was the only Hungarian connection that reached back to the time before the change of political system (1990), given that Poland was a “fraternal” socialist state that was easier for Hungarians to visit.

After the turn of the millennium – under the influence of el Camino – a whole series of pilgrimage routes have been created in Hungary: Saint James route (<http://www.szentjakabut.hu/hu/>), Saint Martin route (<http://www.viasancti martini.eu/>), Saint Elizabeth route (<http://szenterzsebetut.hu/sarospatak-arpad-hazi-szent-erzsebet-szulohelye>), route of Pearls (<http://www.viamargaritarum.info/>), Route of Mary (<http://mariaut.hu/>) and Hungarian Pilgrimage Route (<http://magyarzarandokut.hu/>). The offices and routes have both revived long-distance pilgrimages and created entirely new pilgrimage routes. These are clearly indications that such pilgrimages could be and had to be organised in all ages. It would appear from an examination of these phenomena that nowadays group or mass pilgrimages and feast days have come to an end. What we see instead are pilgrimages by individuals and small groups – with the exception of group trips organised to foreign destinations by travel offices where larger groups may also be formed. And these trips can rather be regarded as religious tourist trips. In cases or for many of the participants they lack deeper spiritual content.

At the same time the new routes consciously attempt to connect different peoples: Hungarians and Austrians (Saint Martin route and Saint James route), Hungarians and Slovaks (Saint Elizabeth route), Poles, Slovaks, Hungarians, Bosnians, Croatians and Germans (Route of Mary).

Pilgrimages and feast days were always occasions and places for meeting other people. Pilgrims meet others on their pilgrimage, come into contact with other languages and cultures, with nature and themselves, and at the end of the journey, at the shrine, with God, Mary and the saint. The encounter with others can awaken pilgrims to differences in language, customs, rites (Roman and Greek Catholic) and other things, as well as to their own characteristics. In this way their sense of identity and belonging together is strengthened. Certain ecumenical features can also be found at a number of our shrines (e.g. Csíksomlyó/Şumuleu) (Mohay 2009, 258).

The shrines and the pilgrimage routes leading to them contain the history of the place and the region in condensed form. Indeed, there are also organised and marked routes called pilgrimage routes that could more correctly be described as historical trails rather than as pilgrimage routes with a religious character. One of these is the so-called Hungarian Pilgrim Route that leads from Esztergom along the left bank of the Danube to Máriagyűd preserving the memory of the Árpád dynasty and although there is some kind of Christian thought in it, the main idea is to bring the glorious Hungarian past, the world of the leaders preceding Saint Stephen (Solt, Tass) into the present. And also to stress performance. It could therefore be called performance tourism. Typical forms of pilgrimage today are group and bus pilgrimages organised for groups of old students from schools of different teaching orders, and most recently pilgrimage trains to Csíksomlyó, Częstochowa and Mariazell. Each of these offers a distinctive blend of historical, national and religious thoughts.

What gives them their popularity is that – besides seeing the world, tourism and performance tourism – they help to re-establish the community-building ties that were broken, marginalised and branded as outdated by the inward-turning and isolating nationalism of the past decades and the extreme individualism of the post-modern age. There is now a realisation that people want to recreate the communities and bring the nations closer together in the shared Christian faith.

Pilgrimage also develops the individual, the personality. The pilgrimage can result in getting to know the other person, the environment, the past and present. And knowledge leads to acceptance. Pilgrimage serves to bring individuals, peoples, languages and cultures closer together and in doing so helps to build the future.

The pilgrimage is also a way of getting to know ourselves and overcoming our weaknesses. The religious person does penance and also makes amends. The non-religious person experiences introspection, quiet and the proximity of nature. And of course, in our performance-oriented world the knowledge that I have been able to walk all the way to the shrine gives great inner strength. Another aspect of pilgrimages on foot regarded as “modern” is the experience of being close to nature. Although becoming aware of what I am physically capable of achieving quite clearly increases self-esteem, this esteem can also be placed in context by the experience that I am at the mercy of the forces of Nature, that I too am only one small point in creation. I am a creature. I am no better than the older or younger companion perspiring beside me. This knowledge can lead to humility and accommodation.

It is the special, fixed series of actions of the pilgrimage that makes all these characteristics possible.

1. The motivation for setting out – request (in a crisis situation), gratitude; preparations – both spiritual and physical; departure;

2. On the way – walking, in a vehicle; stations on the way – a kind of via sacra and via purgativa, labor peregrinationis – (fasting, fatigue, penances, walking on the knees, carrying stones);

3. Arrival – greeting the saint; the feast day = a celebration of meeting, crowds; spending time in the sacred place – confession, communion – encounter with the saint (touching) – sleeping in the church – presenting ex votos – buying souvenirs/reminders – all this brings what is remote in space and time into the present, and

4. On the way home. And the return to everyday life.

Thus in essence the same incentives are found among the motivations of today’s pilgrims as those that moved people of past ages. They are the following:

Withdrawal from the world, if only for a short while, for the duration of the pilgrimage.

Encounter with nature – to experience creation, the feeling of being created. It cannot be by chance that many of our shrines are found in beautiful natural environments (Máriagyúd, Csíksomlyó, Pálószentkút, Mariazell).

Encounter with previous generations – visiting historical places (churches, castles, monuments, places of literary or cultural interest) and renewing our knowledge of them shows that we are part of a chain of generations, we have a responsibility to our fellows, to our predecessors, and also to our descendants! This knowledge increases and strengthens self-awareness.

Turning inwards – The feeling of achieving quiet and shutting out the world is spiritually cleansing.

Testing ourselves – The physical achievement in our performance-oriented age is almost the most important measure of value; but in the course of the journey we also face our own weaknesses; the pilgrimage is an opportunity and occasion to excel ourselves that serves to restore and strengthen the *health of the soul and body*.

Encounter with the other person – the mass of pilgrims strengthens us in the shared faith.

Pilgrimage is an encounter with God, the journey itself is a preparation for this.

The pilgrimage is also a *public declaration of faith*.

In addition to these there is also the testing of our own strength and physical limits, the performance achieved, as well as seeing the world, the demand for tourism.

The pilgrimage, a characteristic institution of Catholic and Orthodox religious culture, thus creates communities and strengthens the personality. It is a special occasion for encounters, with myself, with others and with nature, for reconciliation with God, and for the creation of harmony. Visiting shrines builds connections and a net-

work in the traditional community (parish, settlement, school, order) or in the community of experience of a travel office. The revival of the pilgrimage districts and the festive occasions at shrines can offer the opportunity to sing and pray in the mother tongue. The world of pilgrimages and shrines can be revived with a carefully considered pastoral programme, with attention to the pastoral needs of different groups, the revival of pilgrimages on foot, and the spread of information on the cultural history, natural history and church history of the pilgrimage routes. In this way they can play an important role for all national communities in preserving the national identity. But these are just possibilities: we can take advantage of them or reject them.

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Ivan Markešić

OUR LADY OF MERCY: A UNIQUE CULT IN TWO PLACES, TWO COUNTRIES, ON TWO DATES

INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimages are related to all religions, they are an important part of them, and as such, they existed in all times, countries and religions, which means they existed also before the appearance of biblical religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Many pilgrimage places can be traced to the times of plague, hunger, war, historical overturns and other disasters (Oreč 1984, 583). One of four largest Croatian Marian Sanctuaries,¹ Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sinj in Sinj, appeared during the times of war, in the times of Venetian-Ottoman disputes about the border, during the process of the “humane resettlement” of Christians from Rama to Cetinska Krajina. That process of resettlement had been conducted with the leadership of Franciscans of Rama, and it was organized by Venetian governors, and all of that was done in order to secure the border with the Ottoman Empire with the help of the army .

As the consequence of those events, for centuries now, each year, on the day of the celebration of the same cult, on August 15, Catholic believers, mostly Croats, are pilgrimage to the same Our Lady of Grace: first to Our Lady of Sinj in Sinj, in the Republic of Croatia (Fig. 1), on the holiday of the Assumption of Virgin Mary into Heaven, and then to Our Lady of Rama at Šćit, in Rama (Fig. 2), Bosnia and Herzegovina, on September 8, on the holiday of the Nativity of Mary.²

Pilgrimage of honoring the cult of Our Lady of Sinj came to existence after the victory of the Christian army against the Ottoman Turks, beneath the Sinj fortress, precisely on the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15 1715. Videlicet, Sinj fortress defenders were convinced that, during that defending battle they had the help of intercession of the Mother of Mercy, i.e. that her miraculous painting helped them, that painting that, while escaping the Ottoman invaders, actually in a staged process of the “humane resettlement”, Franciscans from Rama brought with them from Sinj in 1687.

However, honoring the cult of the Mother of Mercy, now the Lady of Rama, has been continued in Rama also after the friars left with a part of Christians from Rama to Sinj in 1687. And it has been continued up until this day. Although the local church at Šćit and the Roman Catholic parish Rama-Šćit are dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, as well as the local church and the Roman Catholic Parish in Sinj (Fig. 3), the main pilgrimage honoring the cult of Our Lady of Rama is for years now taking place on holiday of Nativity of Mary, on September 8.

¹ Apart from the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sinj in Sinj, there is also Croatian National Sanctuary of the Mother of God of Bistrica in Marija Bistrica, near Zagreb. Pilgrims have been coming there since 1684. (<http://www.svetiste-mbb.hr/>) Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Harbor in Aljmaš, visited since 1704. (<http://www.svetiste-aljmas.hr/>); Sanctuary of Our Lady of Trsat-Rijeka (<http://www.trsat-svetiste.com/>) which is the oldest Croatian Marijan Sanctuary with continued honoring of the Mother of God with the gathering of pilgrims.

² Due to the fact that on the day of the Assumption of Virgin Mary – because of the patron saint parish Rama-Šćit – it is impossible to organize pilgrimaging from Rama to Sinj, in recent years, the friars of Rama, in agreement with friars from Sinj, have been organizing the pilgrimaging from Rama to Sinj on the day of Sinjska Alka as the part of Novena!

In the first part of this paper, I will provide a brief historical review of the migration of people of Rama from Rama to Sinj in 1687, with the miraculous painting of the Mother of Mercy and a brief historical display of the emergence of the cult of Our Lady of Sinj during the defense of the-then not peaceful border (at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century) between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman Empire.

The second part is dedicated to Our Lady of Rama and the continued worshiping of her cult. Namely, with coming of the Rama guardian Fr Mate Topić in 2000 and after him, his successor Fr Tomislav Brković, in 2009, there is an intensified celebration of the holiday of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. The realization of the project of Our Lady of Sinj Route should be viewed upon in that sense, and the route goes from two directions: the first part goes from Rama to Sinjsko polje and the Sanctuary, and the second part goes from Solin to Sinj.

Since sanctuaries without “secular supplements” are rare, in third part of this paper I will provide a short review of the emergence of the secular ritual of the competition called Sinjska Alka, which has, in time, grown into the highest national festive ritual attended by almost all the heads of the state whose part was Sinjska Krajina, at the time while in the fourth part I will exhibit the latest data about the realization of the Our Lady of Sinj Route project.

EMERGENCE OF THE CULT OF WORSHIPING OUR LADY OF SINJ

Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sinj in Sinj has emerged in the time of war between Venice and the Ottoman Turks. In his book “Rama through centuries”, Fr Ljubo Lucić (2001) with bitter in his voice talks about the migration of friars of Rama and Rama's population to Sinj and Cetinska krajina in 1687. According to the letter from the governor of the Venetian cavalry, Antun Zeno, sent to Senate on October 27th 1687, it can be concluded that friars from Rama sent their messenger precisely to them, the Venetians, because it was unbearable for them to live in the Turkish region. It all happens after the defeat of Ottoman Turks by Sinj in 1686.

But, actually, the facts are the following: in the aftermath of the Cretan War (1645-1669), the region of Sinj and Cetinska Krajina, which was at one time spiritually led by the Franciscans of Rama, was mostly demographically empty, uninhabited. Due to that fact, the Venetians found themselves in a “great deal of trouble”.

Videlicet, the task was finding soldiers to guard the new established border. Therefore, they were to find people who will, by their residence, become frontiersmen. But, how were they to find them and get them to come to defend the Christian-Muslim, i.e. Venetian-Ottoman border, without financial compensations.

Venetians knew that in Rama, Bosnia, many Catholic Christians reside, that Franciscans who were from time to time coming to Dalmatia are working there, which means that they were going to Split and Sinj and who, thanks to that fact, know this area. Venetians knew some of these friars personally. In order to get “ready soldiers” and “to ensure the border without spending the State money” (Lucić 2001, 40), the Venetians have decided to carry out the “humane resettlement” of the population, in the name of its existential rescuing from the “Turkish terror”. In order to completely succeed in their plan, they also had to persuade the spiritual leaders-friars. And they have, unfortunately, managed to do so. The mediator in migration was fr Pavao Vučković. Therefore, Zeno, in his report says that the friars and the people took up to the Venetians' advice.

In October 1687, friars, 21 of them, had set out from Rama with their people to Cetinska Krajina, bringing only the most necessary things on them, as well as the painting of Our Mother of Mercy which was in the collateral hollow of the church at

Šćit. That painting, considered “miraculous”, because it had “survived” several burnings of the church and the convent (1557, 1653, 1661), has been honored by the people of Rama since the mid-17th century. However, the friars themselves, according to Zeno's report, immediately before their departure, have set the convent on fire, to prevent the Ottoman Turks from dishonoring it when they arrive.

But, the truth is completely different! Venetian Morlachs have, after the population was in a deceiving manner forced to exile from their homes, burned and stolen everything from Rama and its wider region, in order to “leave Turks with nothing to make the winter easier for them”. All of this was done so that the population would not have anywhere to go back to, i.e. so they would not even try to come back, due to the fear from the Ottoman revenge.

However, in order to keep the people in a place where they have been forcefully, i.e. “humanely” resettled, and to prevent them from “even toying with the idea” to go back to their homes, it was necessary to construe a strong agitation cult, to tie the people to a holy place, and to dedicate the place with the construction of a temple (church). And that was exactly done at the end of the 17th century in Sinj, on the border with the Ottoman Empire (Fig. 4).

On the northern part of the fortress, a small convent was built, where friars from Rama have moved in, as well as the church where the painting of Our Mother of Mercy, mass and “holy books” (incunables) (Fig. 5)³, priests' cloak and pottery to be used on a mass (chalice) were placed (Fig. 6), so the new-settlers from Rama would have the opportunity to come to a church where they could find not only their Lady of Rama, but also the cloak from Rama to be worn on the mass, pottery and books which were used by the friars in Rama.⁴

And all of that represented the rounding of a construction of a cult, but it was also a true message to the new settlers from Rama: you are here among your own, among Christians; for in your homeland, from which you were saved by our generous help, now live antichrists, Muslims, Turks, and they will stay there forever: therefore, you cannot-and have no place to go back to. Stay here, because you have everything of yours here: your family and well-known believing community (of Rama), community which you are very related to, you have your “miraculous” painting of Our Mother of Mercy with you (although it is now known as Our Lady of Sinj) and your clergy-your friars of Rama. We are presenting you with a gift of land, work it. And, in turn, you will safeguard our borders, borders of the Venetian Republic, and that way you will actually safeguard your properties and families from Ottoman invasions. And as a proof that friars of Rama, in these, new conditions, had a significant meaning, testifies the fact that the guardian of a convent in Sinj has been known as the Rama guardian up until 1703, when he was forced to renounce this title. (Lucić 2002, 44)

The occasion did not take too long to wait for. At the beginning of 18th century the Ottoman Turks have tried once again to conquer Sinj. People of Rama had

³ A record of one very valuable incunable – Bible commentary in three volumes – on which it is written in several places by hand, in Latin language, that it belongs to St.Peter's convent in Rama. Sinj friars-fr Nedjeljko Jukić and fr Gebrijel H. Jurišić provided the legend for this incunable and they have sent it to Rama's guardian, fr Tomislav Brković, and it says: “Bible interpretation by fr Nikola Liranski, published (in three volumes) in Venice in 1482, in Latin language. That valuable incunable had been brought to Sinj from Rama in 1687. That is confirmed by a Latin inscription which says that the book belongs to the convent of St. Peter in Rama – “spectat ad Conventum Sancti Petri Ramae” (it is seen at the end of the first page in the first volume)”.

⁴ Fr Ljubo Lucić says that on that occasion “friars took only what their horses could carry”, “mantles for the mass” and “very little” of other things (...) “And the rest was seized, abducted and taken by the army”. There are few books preserved in Sinj, as well as silver die-cast chalice with the “1402” inscription, mass mantle and painting of the Lady, which is today known as Our Lady of Sinj (Lucić 2002, 43).

no other choice but to defend the Town of Sinj together with the Venetian army, and they were, by doing that, also defending their properties and the members of their families (Fig. 7). The legends says that in the determining battle of defending the town in 1715, the defenders, due to the lack of other forms of resources for war which would help them to take victory against the Ottoman Turks, they have resorted to increase of the shaken fighting “morale” among the locals, by saying that there is a painting of the Mother of Mercy among the defenders. The Lady should have been defended, but the goal was to beat the non-Christians, Ottoman Turks, with her help. And that did take place in the eve of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, in the night between the 14th and 15th of August 1715. The defenders were convinced that the determining help in these battles and in the victory over the Ottoman Turks came precisely from the miraculous painting of the Mother of Mercy (Our Lady of Rama)⁵ which will only later become known as Our Lady of Sinj (Fig. 8).

The Lady has, as it is listed in the “Croatian Encyclopedia”, been attributed with different powers, because she, with her special signs, “has been giving warnings about the upcoming troubles, she healed the sick, and, according to popular belief, her painting has come to life in the key moment of the already mentioned battle and it has stopped the enemy attacks on Sinj forever” (HE 2007, 775).⁶

Many – in those times as well as today - were convinced that the “miraculous” painting of Our Mother of Mercy was truly helpful in taking victory over Turks in Sinj. That belief was strengthened by prayers of the faithful and the friars in front of the painting, so the “merciful picture” obtained its new title: Our Lady of Sinj. As a token of gratitude, the archbishop of Split, Cupilli, has organized the ceremony on 22nd of September 1716 on which he has crowned the Lady's painting with the crown made of dry gold, which even today holds the title: "IN PERPETUUM CORONATA TRIUMPHAT ANNO MDCCXV" – Forever crowned, she celebrates in 1715.

After that time, many pilgrims have started coming to Sinj, especially around the holiday of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, and thanks to the fact that the Marian Sinj Sanctuary has come to existence, which was especially confirmed with building of the Church of Our Lady of Sinj (Mother of Mercy). Pilgrimages were continued also in following times which lacked no wars, starvation, diseases. The population was trying to find a way to survive. In their troubles they have “resorted to the Lady”, they have prayed, circling her altar on their knees, “and they have been bringing thankful prayers and gifts for the received graceful acts.”

In the backyard of the church, in 2007, a bronze relief with the image of the Lady of Sinj has been placed, a detail which may also be found at the door of the church at Šćit, which is the work of the academic sculptor Kuzma Kovačić, and that additionally emphasized the historical and spiritual connection of Rama and Sinj.

All of this demonstrates that the act of honoring Our Lady of Sinj has the task of preserving the folklore about their own origin, which has been particularly visible in America, among the immigrants who have their origins in Sinj and Cetinska krajina.⁷

5 Contemporary historian fr Petar Filipović wrote: There is no doubt, that this here was a victory; even those Turks were later on stating that every night, during the time of occupation they were seeing a lady walking in a strong light. They were scared of her and that forced them to run away, “The History of honoring Our Lady of Sinj”, published in http://www.gospa-sinjska.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1346:povijest-samostana-i-svetita&catid=40:povijest-svetita&Itemid=62_ accessed at 4/19/2014.

6 „Sinjska alka“, in *Hrvatska enciklopedija*, vol. 9 (PRI-SK), Zagreb, Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2007.

7 With that in mind, Croats in Chicago, USA, in 1906, have founded the Society of the miraculous Lady of Sinj. By doing so, they have established and maintained, up until today, a recognizable tradition of celebrating the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the entire City of Chicago.

On the other hand, the act of honoring Our Lady of Sinj is also preserving the folk remembrance of the connectedness of people from Cetinska krajina with the people from the Rama Pit, but also with Catholics from the other parts of Bosnia, from which, during history, they have been “humanely resettled” to this “safe Christian region”.

And speaking in favor of the fact that the remembrance is so strong, the fact that even during the time of the Socialist regime, in order to demonstrate the connectedness of these two regions through honoring the same cult, the painting of the Lady of Sinj had been brought to Rama from the Sinj Sanctuary for the first time. It took place on September 8th 1987, precisely 300 years after the migrations of the Rama people to Sinj and Cetinska krajina. The celebratory mass in Rama has been led by the then Cardinal Franjo Kuharić.

UNINTERRUPTED CULT OF HONORING OUR LADY OF RAMA

The stone ruins of demolished religious objects (churches and convents) in Rama testify that Christians lived in this region, but due to lack of any written records it is not possible to establish which one and what was the church organization like in that region. The Franciscan sources speak about the “Church of St. Peter”, but they do not specify its location, and also they do not specify where the convent was located. In any case, it was there before the Ottoman conquering of Bosnia in 1453.⁸

The church and the convent were dedicated to st. Peter and Paul, where “since the ancient times, the Lady's painting was honored, which was placed on the side altar, and the church that has burned down in 1687, had the Madonna's door. With time, it is said in the follow up, “the church, i.e. the convent, were dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven”.

During the Ottoman rule, the convent and church in Rama have been robbed, burned and torn down for several times. The folk tradition claims that, during that time, from all the things which were kept in the church and the convent, the only thing that was preserved was the Lady's miraculous painting. And that should have been a proof to the believing population that the place where they live, God has already chosen as a place dedicated to Him, that God works in it through the painting of the Lady, and that it should be visited, honored, and that they should pray and thank the mightiest Creator in that place.

In the year of 1687, the “miraculous” painting of the Lady will, during the migration, be taken from Rama to Sinj by friars, to Split, Dalmatia, in order to transfer it to Sinj from there. The construction of a cult of Our Lady of Sinj had the intent to put down even the slightest hint of hope to return to their previous homeland, which existed in the people of Rama, and those who have stayed in Rama, who did not want to move out, which was about 60 families with 600 souls (Lucić 2001, 47) will either forget about the Lady and her “miraculous painting”, or they will stop honoring it, because, and there were some cases, they will convert to Islam. However, thanks to Franciscans from Fojnica, as well those from Dalmatia, and also the ones from Rama who were active in the region of Cetinska krajina, that did not happen, and the region of Rama was not left without care from the priests. Thanks to that fact, the memory of the cult of the Lady's painting has remained preserved (Fig. 9 and 10).

When a new church was built at Šćit (1881), the painting by Albert de Rhoden was placed in it, the one where angels are bringing Our Lady of Sinj to Rama.

⁸ Fr Ljubo states that “the chalice, which was brought to Sinj during the migration of people of Rama, has inscribed the year of 1402, which probably provides with certain basis to the claim that the convent in Rama already existed in that year” (Lucić 2002, 23).

Although the original convent and church were dedicated to the apostle St. Peter, “later, in honoring, the miraculous painting of the Lady took over the central place, so the patron has become the Assumption of the Lady, on August 15, while the outside festivity has been related to the celebration of the Lady's birth, on September 8.

In order to preserve the memory of Our Lady of Rama, the Franciscans from Rama hired several significant Croatian artists which have made some valuable works of the sacral art, such as the Lady in Glory by the academic painter Josip Bifel, and also the Madonna's Door, work of the academic sculptor Kuzma Kovačić.

SINJSKA ALKA⁹

In the already mentioned Croatian Encyclopedia, it is said that Sinjska Alka has been performed in Sinj during the second decade of 18th century as a symbol of memory of the battle between the people of Cetinska krajina and the Ottoman Turks, and their ultimate victory in 1715 thanks to the help from the miraculous painting of Our Lady of Mercy, which, as we already mentioned previously, while fleeing alongside the local population in the eve of the Ottoman invasion, the Franciscans of Rama, “took with them to Sinj, as the most valuable thing they possessed” (HE 2007, 775).

As a competition, Alka is related to the tradition of medieval knight games, and as a custom it has come to life and it maintained as “one of the most striking elements of the traditional culture and heritage in Cetinska krajina” (HE 2007, 775).

Although the date¹⁰ and the place¹¹ where it has been performed changed, Alka is in modern times performed in Sinj on first Sunday in August, in a way that the “contestants”¹² while riding on horses, are shooting at a small metal ring “alka”,¹³ which is hanging above the racing track, with their spear.

In the description of this knight folklore competition, it is more said that “the contestants, while riding horses, are shooting at the ring (*alka*) which consists of two concentric iron rings connected with three crossbars, and it is hanging on a rope which is stretched high above the running tracks” (HE 1999, 155).

Since 1849, Alka is being performed on first Sunday of August, and first two competitions: Bara and Čoja also have to take place in August. If, for example, the first Sunday is on 2nd of August, it cannot be performed then, but only on the following Sunday, because then Bara would have to be performed on 31st of July.¹⁴

9 UNESCO's Board for Intangible Cultural Heritage of the World, in 2010 also listed Sinjska Alka in its representative list- as a Croatian knight competition which is taking place every August in honor of the victory against the Ottoman Turks, and that is the time when the entire Cetinska krajina lives for this event.

10 Alka took place on two occasions in 1798, 1818, 1834, 1838, and in 1855, it has been delayed (due to cholera) until October 4. Let it be mentioned, it is only since 1849 that it is being held on August 18, on Tzar Franz Joseph's birthday, which is even determined by the Statute from 1902. Since then, Alka is always taking place in August (and, according to new rules), in the first third of that month. Published in: “History of Alka”, http://www.alka.hr/scroll_page.asp?groupID=6, accessed on 4/21/2014.

11 During its long history, Alka was held in places other than Sinj for three times: Split in 1832 (reason unknown); Belgrade, in 1922 – the wedding of Alexander the King of Yugoslavia; in Zagreb in 1946 – 3rd Congress of YCLOY (Young Communist League of Yugoslavia).

12 Nikola Cerinić made a record in winning Alka (12 times), followed by Nikola Jelinčić (8), then Jozo Boko, Janko Kelava, Anđelko Vučković and Ognjen Preost who took victory for five times – published in “History of Alka”, http://www.alka.hr/scroll_page.asp?groupID=6, accessed on 4/21/2014

13 ALKA – The word is of Turkish origin, as well the titles of some Alka officers, parts of clothing, equipment and the weapons of participants (*alaj-čauš*, *arambaša*, *čoja*, *jačerma*, *buzdovan*, *kubura*, etc).

14 Patrons of Alka were heads of the State, starting with the Austrian Tzar and King Franz I (1918), then the Yugoslav King Petar Karađorđević III (1919), the President of SFRY Josip Broz Tito, which was also present at the jubilee of 250th Alka, then the President of the Republic of Croatia dr. Franjo Tuđman, who was present at Alka in 1990, 1992, 1997, and also Stjepan Mesić, who was its patron since 2000 as the President of the Republic of Croatia, and finally the prof. dr. Ivo Josipović who was present at Alka in the year of 2010.

However, while in other knight's competitions on other places and on other occasions participate only alkars-knights, in the knights' tournaments of Sinjska Alka could also participate people from the countryside, but only those who were born in Sinj and geographically precisely specified Cetinska krajina, the fact that provided the game with a kind of domestic, folk note. Precisely for that reason, the people of Sinj and Cetinska krajina were able to identify with it, so it could have been maintained in its continuity as a folk tournament for almost three centuries, up until today.

THE OUR LADY OF SINJ ROUTE

After UNESCO's Board for Intangible Cultural Heritage of the World has listed Sinjska Alka in its representative list in 2010, people in charge of it started thinking how to take advantage of that fact in the best possible way through the "pilgrimage offer"¹⁵ regardless of the fact will the pilgrimages to Our Lady of Sinj to Sinj and from Sinj and its surrounding to Our Lady of Rama in Rama "maintain its periodic massiveness and the strength of tradition".

For that purpose, a project of the Our Lady's Pilgrimage Route Rama-Sinj has been designed, in which the Town of Sinj, Prozor-Rama Municipality, the Town of Solin, Croatian Mountain Rescue Service (HGSS), Livno Municipality and Tomislavgrad Municipality participate. This route should, as stated by its "idea architectures", could on one hand "attract the seekers from the edges of meaning of their own life values"¹⁶ as well as those who are interested in recreation without religious contents¹⁷, while on the other hand, it has the ability to "significantly prolong the so-called pilgrimage season."

The mentioned project has been presented in Alkarski Dvori in Sinj on May 25th 2013. On that occasion, it was emphasized that the Our Lady of Sinj Route is divided in two part: the first part of the path starts at Rama Lake and Franciscan Convent at Šćit, it leads toward Tomislavgrad and further across Kazaginca and Karlov Han all the way to the border crossing Kamensko, and then over Sinjsko polje to Sinj, while the second part of the path will go from Solin across Klis, Dugopolje and Dicam up until the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sinj.¹⁸

15 Pilgrimage represents a trip of a believer to a holy place, which was sanctified by the apparition of a deity or an activity of a religious teacher and the founder of a religion with the intent to present prayers on that spot in remarkably favorable surrounding" (Rebić 1984, 516). However, pilgrimage is not only a literal traveling to a sacred center, by which (a religious person) confirms its identity as a member of a specific religious tradition" (Crim 1990, 253). And to make the arriving to the holy place even possible, pilgrimages presuppose the rituals of cleansing and they are mostly done in groups, which provides the believers with the impression that they belong to one common religious community, and with that they mean "seeking God and the encounter with him in a worshiping atmosphere (Rebić 1984, 517)

Pilgrimages are, Rebić states, are used by pious people because through it they achieve several goals:

1. it engages all of its skills (audio-visual, motor, emotional),
2. it emphasizes and deepens the community relations as an important factor in religious emotions
3. It emphasizes value and it extends the remembrance of religious memories related to that place and
4. it strengthens international, social, cultural and civil (especially true for the world religions!) relations which are breaking borders of people and even races.

16 Apart from that, pilgrimage is almost always connected with "some sacrifices and renunciations" which a man makes in order to be presented with an appropriate reward from a Higher Being. Therefore, gifts which are asked for during the pilgrimage may vary significantly and they span from "getting healed from some kind of a disease to achieving the eternal life" (Rebić 1984, 516).

17 Many sociologists and ethnologists, and Arnold van Gennep among them, perceive pilgrimage as a ritual, because, by itself it contains rituals of transferring („rites de passage"), which means leaving the old place, separation from the surrounding in which an individual (pilgrim) is now, departure (transfer) to some other and different (holy) place in order to integrate in some new community, that is, to achieve a kind of a new status which has not been obtained by the person until then (van Gennep 1986, 21-22).

18 Paštar, Toni „The Our Lady of Sinj Route", published in: *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 29. 5. 2013., in: <http://www.rama.co.ba/novost/227/staza-gospi-sinjskoj>, accessed at 4/23/2014

The goal of that joint cross-border project is improving the “common tourist offer based on the shared cultural identity of the cross-border region of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, all that with the goal of increasing the competitive worth of the local tourist economy.”¹⁹

According to the quoted report, the value of the approved project sums up to about 4.3 million HRK, of which the part of the EU grant is 83%, while the other 17% will be co-financed by the above listed partners in this project. The plan is to realize the entire project during the period of 24 months. According to the report of Radio and Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina, since March 13th 2014, the European Union, from its IPA funds, granted more than 1 million KM for the project “Our Lady of Sinj Route”.²⁰

This will mean a new concept of tourism. New tourists will be coming. It is a world wide trend, people want to walk for days. But they have to have a story, and this story can last for the entire year, not only during the festivities.

Franciscans of Sinj are the first who want to participate in the project, but Franciscans of Rama want to join too. For them and their monk communities that is, as they say, “a great challenge”, because, on one hand, individuals and the community will be “sent off” to “pilgrimages in the spaces of their own spirits and souls”, while, however, on the other side, they will live their mission work dynamically, as pilgrims and the co-travelers of the pilgrimage people which will find their spiritual rest on that route and on their final destinations.

CONCLUSION

The author in this paper has shown historical, military, political, as well the religious conditions in which a unique pilgrimage cult has been formed, at the end of 17th and the beginning of 18th century, while establishing the state border between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman Empire – cult of honoring the Mother of Mercy – the cult of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Heaven: 1. at Šćit, in Rama (Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Our Lady of Rama*, September 8 and 2. in Sinj (Republic of Croatia), *Our Lady of Sinj*, August 15th.

That way of celebrating the cult remained up until today, so, in two neighboring countries (Croatia and BH), in two different places (Sinj and Šćit in Rama), the tradition of pilgrimage worshiping the same cult of the Mother of Mary, that is, the celebration of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven is continuing, but with two different names and at two different dates: Our Lady of Rama (September 9) and Our Lady of Sinj (August 15).

From these religious pilgrimage godliness emerged also one folklore national celebration (festivity), but with religious connotations and a secular ritual: Sinjska Alka – which is taking place for already three centuries. In recent times, the realization of the project of Our Lady of Sinj Route is in progress, and its construction as a part of the project of cross-border cooperation is in large part financed by the European Union from its Funds for the cross-border cooperation.

¹⁹ It is well known that alongside the religious aspect of a pilgrimage there is also a social aspect, which includes a so-called temple economy, which means that, on pilgrimages, people stop at certain places, they eat, sleep, trade, meet new people, make friends, get acquainted with other peoples' cultural values, but also they present other people with their cultural values. Therefore, pilgrimage as such, “appears late in the history of religions, namely, only then when a certain progress in social relations has been made (family, clan, tribe, people, state, roads, routes, sanctuaries, etc. (Rebić, 1984:517).

²⁰ „EU – IPA: Granted funds for the “Our Lady of Sinj Route”, published in: <http://www.bhrt.ba/nekategorzirano/eu-ipa-odobrena-sredstva-za-projekat-staza-gospi-sinjskoj/>, accessed at 4/21/2014.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig.1. Pilgrims from Rama in Sinj, August 2010



Fig. 2. Pilgrims from Sinj in Rama, September 2010



Fig. 3. The view of the church and the convent at Šćit (in the middle), surrounded by water of the Rama Lake



Fig. 4. Church in Sinj, dedicated to the Assumption of the BVM, built from 1699 to 1712



Fig. 5. Incunable from 1482 (above) and chalice (down), brought from Rama to Sinj in 1687.



Fig. 6. Chalice from 1482, brought from Rama to Sinj in 1687.



Fig. 7. Sinj fortress (Town) and a church on the hill



Fig. 8. The original painting of Our Lady of Rama, now known as Our Lady of Sinj, pictured in 1968.



Fig. 9. At the time of the celebration of the Assumption in the past (1934)



Fig. 10. At the time of the celebration of the Assumption today (2010)

Ivan Cvitković
Jasmin Peco

BLAGAJ TEKKE (TEKIJA)

A holy site is most often defined as a place, as a space that the believers consider different from other ones. Of course, the believers hold the deity to be present everywhere; still, the holy site is, after all, the one where the „holiness“ is most concentrated. A comparative study of religions shows that the holy sites can be of different values and orientations (synagogues are turned towards Jerusalem, mosques towards the Quiblah and the like). Christian churches are directed towards the rising Sun (a symbol of resurrected Christ).

Holy sites can be differentiated according to their size and the roles they play in their own respective religious traditions. Symbolically, in all the religious traditions, these are the places of the most effective communication or encounter with the divine (either by a prayer or liturgical music or by offering sacrifice). This connection with the divine is symbolized by upright objects such as trees, mountains, pillars, vaults, and the like.

What are all the places that can be regarded as holy? This depends on religious tradition. These can be the places built for religious purposes such as temples, monasteries or the places having symbolical meanings in respective religions such as some mountains, water springs, rivers, lakes or even the whole cities (like some cities in Tibet though holy sites are much more frequently located outside the cities).

The holy site is most often related to one of the religious traditions but it can also be relevant to many religious traditions concurrently (just as Jerusalem is important for Jews, Christians and Muslims).

History testifies how the holy places sites were, at times, subjected to desecration. In some cases there are certain regulations regarding those allowed to approach a holy site. If these rules are violated, then the holy site is said to have been desecrated. The regulations can refer to a person's religious affiliation, gender, caste, and the like. This requires, in its turn, the definition of the holy site's limits as well as control of the access to it. Desecration can also occur if the members of a given religious tradition have failed to observe the rules of ritual cleansing or other prescribed acts before stepping on the holy ground (head covering, hand washing and mouth rinsing, dipping fingers in holy water before making the sign of the cross, taking off shoes, taking *abdest* (ablution) and the like).

In order to avoid misunderstanding and desecration, the Universal Code on Holy Sites is developed and signed as a mechanism of preserving, accessing holy sites (especially those of importance to members of many religions) and their monitoring, etc.

The concept of the holy site can differ from one religious tradition to another. Thus, in Islam it has a somewhat wider meaning than in Christianity. In Islam it most often implies the space of the mosque as well as an area in the household in which daily prayers are bowed down. Certainly, within Islam itself not every holy site is of the same meaning, for instance, the house space for bowing-down, mosque, *tekija* (tekke) or Mecca and Medina as places of hadj pilgrimage. Mecca reminds every Muslim of important historical events such as the times of the building of the Kaaba or of the deeds of Prophet Muhammad after his having completed a hadj and

gone around Mount Arafat. All the Muslims in the world, while praying, turn their faces to this very place.

For our study, we have tried to choose a cult place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our first choice was Ajvatovica situated under Mount Šuljaga (seven kilometers from Prusac near Donji Vakuf in Central Bosnia) which is a very interesting holy site and maybe even unique among the Muslims at the Balkans (or in a much wider region). It has developed from the tradition of praying for rain, fertility and protection of summer crops by the members of the Bosnian Church. Annual pilgrimages to Ajvatovica are held on the seventh Monday after St. George's Day and has no relation whatsoever with the Hijri Calendar. The event starts with a parade of horsemen and infantry along with banners, *Takbirs* (*Tekbirs*), *ilahis*. The horsemen with banners, in national costumes, start from all the cities of Central Bosnia thus forming columns going to Ajvatovica. They are headed by Ajvaz-dedo's banner, followed by others. It is a cult place founded on the myth about Ajvaz-dedo, 15th century dervish, who prayed, for forty days, for the rock which obstructed the passage of water from its source to Prusac to crack. On the fortieth day, as the myth has it, the rock split into two thus letting water pass through and get to Prusac. In the memory of this event, there is a gathering organized for all Muslims at the very site named Ajvatovica after Ajvaz-dedo. It is interesting that women were forbidden to access the manifestation. However, we have given up this site since it is not in the border area.

That is how we have chosen a tekke in Blagaj near Mostar; the reason for it is its "borderline" position (unlike Ajvatovica) as well as its being the largest *dovište* (place of worship, from *dova*, "prayer") in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Blagaj is a settlement at 12 kilometers south of Mostar. On the left bank of the Neretva, just above Blagaj, the dominant population is Orthodox, unlike the right bank which is mainly populated by Catholics. Thus, the Blagaj Tekke is located in the "border" zone. It is a *dovište* or a place of worship that the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina get together at from the springtime till the end of the summer. This is not typical for Islam in general; rather, it is a local (Bosnian and Herzegovinian) tradition. Certainly, such small (local) shrines can be found in other religions as well.

During the Ottoman rule, another name for tekkes, otherwise erected all over the Empire, was *zaviye*. This was a small room for performing religious rites, receiving travelers and studying Islam doctrine. Regarding the fact that the *zaviye* originally was very modest in terms of its accompanying infrastructure, it was extended, in late 15th century, to include stables, barns, mill, blacksmith's and temple so that it got the name of *tekke*. It is a holy site as a place of rites and a place of meanings. It has the values typical for any other holy place in Islam; its interior is directed towards the Quiblah and the people entering this holy space have to take off their shoes. The holy site is a place of cleanliness and taking-off shoes means the preservation of the room cleanliness which enables an individual to establish a spiritual contact, that is, communication with God.

The tekke is located on the right bank of the Buna River, close to its spring. The Buna is the largest karst water spring in Europe. The tekke is defined by the edifice, the water spring, the rocks and the cave-water spring. This is a combination of the shrine (tekke) and the water spring as a cult place. Rivers and water springs have, in many religious traditions, a religious meaning, too. The rock is upright in its elevation over the spring and the tekke (great problems are caused by rock slides that, sometimes, heavily damage the tekke). In the rocks there is a dwelling place for many birds including eagles. The eagles have their own place in religious traditions, from the Aztecs to those of some present living religions.¹

¹ The eagle, one of the most powerful birds, is a symbol of heroism, hunting. In some religious traditions it is believed to be a messenger of the Creator helping in communication with ghosts.

The ground plan of the tekke is in the form of Latin „L“. In its environment there is a fish farm and a restaurant. Above the tekke and the water spring there are the ruins of the 15th century Castle of Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača (Fig. 1).

Blagaj was mentioned for the first time in the historical documents in 1423. Today it is a suburban settlement at 12 kilometers away from Mostar. The population is dominated by Bosniaks; as for religious tradition, Muslims. According to the informal data Blagaj is today inhabited by 2,684 people (another number appears on the Internet, namely 3,040).

As for visitors, the prevailing ones are Bosniaks and Turks. The tekke is also visited by members of other nationalities though within tourist tours (not for religious motives). Therefore, in terms of their religious identity, the prevailing visitors are Muslims. The tekke is taken care of by Bosniak-Muslims. Formerly, the tekke was in the care of the Drljević family from Blagaj or, more precisely, a woman named Habiba Drljević who was a dervish and a keeper of *din* and *torpak* (faith and threshold, home and inheritance). An interesting story relates how Habiba Drljević, in the middle of the last century, stood up against the former authorities aiming at turning the tekke into a hotel, that is, a boardinghouse. She asked Josip Broz Tito to stop the hotel construction and to ensure the means for the restoration of the tekke which was in a state of decay.

The basic reason for establishing a tekke was to provide local population with the possibility of spiritual upbringing and religious instruction. Later on, those individuals who opted for being educated in the spirit of faith would become sheikhs, that is, dervishes. Likewise, the purpose of the tekke was to offer food and lodging to the dervishes from other regions who were passing by. As a rule, they could stay at the tekke for three days before resuming their journey (similarly as with Sikha).

According to some sources, the tekke was built in 1470; it is assumed not to have any function at that time, namely, the function it obtained after the coming of the Ottoman Empire. Other sources state that it was founded by the dervishes of the Bektashi Order in the 16th century. The travelogues by Evliya Çelebi suggest us to conclude, with certainty, that it was at the present place in the mid-17th century and that it was founded by Zijauddin Ahmed ibn Mustafa Mujezinović who was born in Mostar (apparently he had it built on the remnants of an old *musafirhana* – guest house for travelers).

There is a myth relating to the tekke building saying how the sheikh or some other religious authority saw, at night, in his dream, a tekke (or some other object) thus undertaking its construction the very next day. The Islam tradition has it that dreams make up one fortieth part of reality. Likewise, if the local population decides to start building, upgrading or renovating the tekke, first it has to ask a sheikh or some other religious authority for permission.

The tekke was renovated for the first time in 1851 at the request of the then sheikh Ačik Pasha. Up to that time, the tekke was of modest infrastructure and in a very deteriorating state. It was renovated by Omar Pasha Latas and since then it belonged to the Quadiri Order. Today it is in the possession of Naqshbandi. In the year of 1951 the tekke was renewed for the second time, after the rock together with *koščela* trees (the Mediterranean hackberry, *Celtis australis*) had fallen down on it. The renovation was done by the Institute for Safeguarding the Cultural Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the year of 1952 (due to the attitude of the Islam community towards dervishes), the religious function of the tekke was interrupted; it was thus converted into a tourist object (a state-protected cultural monument). After the disintegration of the SFR of Yugoslavia, in 1992, the tekke's original function was restored. The last time it was renovated was in 2012. Turkey renovated a *waqf* com-

plex of the tekke comprising a *musafirhana* (room for reception of guests and *imaret* as a public soup kitchen). Maybe this is the reason why it is today mostly visited by tourists from Turkey.

Along with the tekke, Blagaj has its mosque as well as Orthodox and Catholic churches. The mosque of Sultan Suleiman I the Lawgiver in Blagaj was built in 1519/1520. The Orthodox Church of St. Basil of Ostrog was built in 1893. Its belfry was added later on, in 1934. The Church is in possession of the Eparchy of Zahumlje, Herzegovina and the Littoral. The Catholic Church of St. Trinity in Blagaj was built in 1908. The *župa* (county) of Blagaj was founded by the Bishop of Mostar, fra Paškal Buconjić, in 1891, while the county church was built by the Bosnian fra Ivo Božić, member of the Herzegovinian Franciscan province. In 1933 the upgrading of the bell tower, with concrete, was completed. The Church was damaged in the war of 1991-1995 so that it was renovated in 2012 with the help of the Return Fund, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, Federal Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons as well as the help and donation of the owners of the objects belonging to the Mostar-Duvanjski Biskupija.

Today in the environment of the tekkes there are cafés and restaurants servicing foreign tourists and local population. The tekke itself has all the accompanying infrastructure (an access road, water supply, electricity, toilette facilities, etc.) done as part of the project of its renovation and reconstruction (in 2012). It is owned by the Mostar Muftiship (*Muftijstvo*). The tekke is visited, for religious reasons, exclusively by Muslims (Bosniaks) and Turks. The believers visit it once a year for the occasion of a traditional celebration „Days of *Mevlud* and *Zikr*“ which is held every other Saturday in May. Likewise, on Thursdays and Sundays the members of the local Naqshbandi Order gather together in the tekke and perform a religious rite of *zikr*. Members of other nations and religious traditions from the neighborhood visit it primarily for tourist reasons.

When it comes to the age structure of visitors, the tekke is visited by people of all ages though they are mostly of older and mature age. There are both men and women though the religious rituals involve more men as their participants.

The tekke is visited by believers who are to participate in the rituals prayer of *zikr* for the purpose of glorifying God, so that they are educated in the spirit of Islam tradition. In the days of the traditional celebration „Days of *Mevlud* and *Zikr*“ which lasts for two days (Friday and Saturday) the most outstanding representatives of the Islam community and sheikhs gather together on Friday veining in the tekke courtyard in order to practice religious rituals of *zikr* (Fig. 2). On this occasion a lecture is held as well as sheikhs' addresses. On Saturday there is a celebratory opening of the manifestation as well as *mevlud* attended by other people. Thus, in the presence of 12 to 14 sheikhs, the representative of the Islam Community Riaset addresses the attending believers and gives a lecture after which the religious ritual of *zikr* is taking place.

On Thursdays there is a ritual of *zikr* while in May there is a religious manifestation of *mevlud* that brings together dervishes from the region as well as tens of thousands of believers (Fig. 3, 4, 5 and 6).

At holy sites one can find tombs as links between the living and the dead. This practice is evidenced in early Christianity (tombs of martyrs turn into sites of unity). A similar practice is also found in Islam. Near the Blagaj tekke there is a *turbe* with two *tabuts* (coffins) (Fig. 7). It is believed that in the tekke there is one of seven *tabuts* of Sari Saltyk that were located all over the former countries under the Ottoman rule. The accurate information about which of them comprises his remains is not known.

The holy site also relates to the practice of cleansing. It was carried out by ritual actions such as fingers' dipping into holy water before making a sign of the cross (as at the entrance to the Catholic church), taking off sandals before entering a Buddhist temple, mouth rinsing and taking off shoes before entering a Shintoist temple or taking *abdest* with Muslims. The Blagaj dervishes used to perform a ritual washing in the very waters of the Buna River. Later on, an *abdesthana* was built for this purpose (Fig. 8).

The tekke has no traditional keeper. This task, in a way, is performed by the sheikh (a learned person, a person of knowledge, a spiritual leader and religious authority whose task is to pass along his knowledge and experience to other believers). In the past the role of the tekke keeper was allotted to hizmetçi (Bosnian *hizmećar*) (organizer of life in the tekke) (Fig. 9).

**PARTS OF AN INTERVIEW WITH HIŠAM EFFENDI HAFIZOVIĆ,
HEAD (VEKIL – THE ONE TAKING CARE OF) THE BLAGAJ TEKKE:**

1. What are the reasons for founding a tekke?

The tekke was founded for the purpose of serving people's spiritual upbringing and their education. Likewise, it served for overnight stay for travelers who could stay there up to three days. The sheikh was the one who took care about the tekke and his students (*murid*)-dervishes. Today the tekke has no sheikh on its own so that we can say that I am the one assigned to take care about the tekke.

2. In your opinion, has the tekke's function remained unchanged since its foundation till now?

The function of the tekke has changed regarding its original purpose. The reasons for this lies in the fact that it is also visited by tourists who come to get to know its history and to admire its architecture. We can even say that at present the tekke represents an object of primarily cultural-historical and tourist importance.

3. Does the tekke, as a cult place, function even today?

The tekke, as a cult place, functions even today, especially at the time of the traditional *mevlud*; also, the local dervish orders regularly gather together in the tekke twice a week and practice *zikr*. From time to time, we also welcome dervishes from other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina who are passing by.

4. How is respect for the tekke expressed? By gift-giving or some other way?

Respect for the tekke can be expressed, among other things, by donations of, for instance, carpets, *tespih* (a string of prayer beads), towels that can later serve the believers in their observing rituals.

There is an old popular tale concerning gift-giving. Namely, one day a woman left a jug of water and towels near two *tabuts* (believed to be *tabuts* or coffins of Sari Saltyk and Ačik Pasha) in the tekke. The next day, when she got back there, she found her jug empty and her two towels wet.

No concrete forms of taboo or prohibitions related to the tekke exist except for observing the basic rules of conduct and dressing code (appropriate clothes and head covering for women).

There is a legend related to Blagaj tekke:

Once upon a time, in the old times, in the cave of the Buna river spring, there used to live a dreadful dragon to whom people had to bring gifts to and deliver, every night, a young girl from Blagaj. It thus happened that one year the turn came that a girl named Milica, a daughter of Herzeg Stjepan, should be given to the dragon. When they brought Milica to a rocky promontory in front of the cave, waiting for the dragon to appear, there came out from no one knows where, on a white horse, with his saber taken out and his mace ready, a handsome stranger in full gallop to-

wards her. This was Sari Saltyk. Then a terrible fighting took place that all the surrounding hills resounded with. The dragon put up a fight and with its tail it broke off heavy blocks from the cave walls until, finally, under Saltyk's strokes, it breathed out its fiery spirit. As a sign of gratitude for having saved his daughter, Herzog Stjepan gave his daughter Milica in marriage to the brave dervish and built him a house near the Buna river spring, close to the stony mass. He lived there as a sheikh together with Milica till the blessed ending of his life.

There is another popular belief: sheep liver is thrown to the fish, just under the tekke; if the fish eat it, the desire is fulfilled. By the way, fishing is forbidden there.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. Ivan Cvitković, as a graduate from the Teachers College of Mostar, standing with his colleague Fadila Handač in the doorway of the remains of the dungeon of Herzeg Stjepan Kosača Castle



Fig. 2 Traditional *mevlud* “Days of *Mevlud* and *Zikr*” in Blagaj



Fig. 3 *Semanhana* – place to perform *zikr* and other religious rites



Fig. 4 *Meidan* room – place to sit and lead informal conversations



Fig. 5 Place for having meals and talks



Fig. 6 *Kahve-odžak* – place where traditional *kahve* (coffee) and tea are made



Fig. 7 Room where *tabuts* (coffins) of Sari Saltyk and its follower Ačik Pasha are located



Fig. 8 *Abdesthana* – place to take *abdest* and to prepare for a religious ritual



Fig. 9 *Tespîh* – means served in rituals

Vladimir Bakrač

CHURCH OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN IN THE MONASTERY OF OSTROG: CULT, CUSTOM, LIFE

SACRED OR CULT PLACE

According to the Old Testament tradition, God created the world, as it is said: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (I Mos, 1/1). If God created the earth, then each step on the ground is sacred place or sacred ground. God said to Moses: "...do not go here. Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place you stand is holy ground" (II Mos, 3/5). However, nowadays sacred place is increasingly experienced as a sort of spiritual oasis, separated from secular or profane space. In these sacred places, the individual and society spend their sacred time, perform religious ceremonies such as for example prayer or a kind of meditation. It is, in fact, the sacred place where the individual feels spiritual peace, tranquillity, in a word – it is a place where the person is closer to God and the place that becomes a cult place for the individual or society. Hegel explains it as a substance that primarily represents itself as sensual, the consequence of actions, sensual definitions, that follow each other at a time and that are next to each other in space. That substance is empiric, concrete, various, but it has something inner (Hegel 1995, 114).

The sacred place, within the secular space does not have to be only a temple or a church, as it is commonly thought. It can also be any place where strong feelings arouse in the individual, such as stone, wood, top of the mountain, riverside, etc. Sacred place does not have to be only artificially constructed space but it can also be a natural area where one performs not only physical movement towards that area, but it is also a spiritual journey towards self¹ and that is why the sacred place is different from the profane space. Thus, according to Mirce Elijade there is sacred and non-sacred *amorphous space* (Elijade 2004).

Besides geographical features, sacred place has its own social and psychological functions which are usually related to rites and religious ceremonies. Djuro Susnjic makes difference between the following socio-psychological function of the sacred place: a) during religious ceremonies there is a decline in religious distance, believers from different social classes and groups who are united in a common quest for the sacred, mingle between themselves; b) current neglect and separation from social values; c) symbolization of experience and identification with the community of believers and the sacred, goes to the limit when feeling and awareness of the self is lost (compare: Šušnjić 1998, 343).

In this paper we did not focus our attention on some natural sacred place, but on the sacral architecture that is sacred and cult place for its architectural peculiarity, geographical location, spiritual importance and significance of central and north-western Montenegro. It is, in fact about a small church dedicated to the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, where are non-decayable and incorrupt relics of St. Vasilije Ostroski. The church is not only a kind of *imago mundi*, it is a transcendental archetype of divinity on earth, not only of Orthodox population but also the divinity of pilgrims from other, often non-Christian religions. When we have already

¹ Karl Jong once wrote: "Your vision will become clear the moment you are able to look into your heart. Who looks outside it – he dreams, and who looks inside it – he wakes."

mentioned the pilgrimage, it should be noted that any transition from profane to the sacred place is in fact pilgrimage, because it is actually about moving to the sacred place for the direct contact with the sacred and spiritual power, what can be really said for the cult place like the church of the Presentation of the Virgin is. To go on a pilgrimage to a sacred place means to repeat the journey of a holy man who once lived there, who did something significant for that place or in that place, like some miracles in form of healing the sick, etc. Bearing in mind the above, the monastery of Ostrog and the church of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin rightly deserve the epithet of sacred and cult place because of miraculous relics of St. Vasilije Ostroski.

LIFE AND CULT OF ST. VASILJE OSTROSKI

St. Vasilije Ostroski was born in a village Mrkonjci near Popovo polje in Hercegovina, in 1610 as Stojan Jovanovic.² From an early age his parents, especially his mother Ana, taught him a pious life, purity and fear of God, as well as the first words about the Blessed Mother Zavalska. He was educated in the monastery of Zavala, where he entered when he was eleven years old as a monastic student at his uncle Serafim who was an abbot of this monastery, as well as in TvrDOS, where he took monastic vows. Both monasteries kept close relationship with Hilandar on Mount Athos. In TvrDOS he was ordained a priestmonk with the first parish in parish of Trebinje. He travelled as an archimandrite to Mount Athos and to Russia – in yonder courtyard of the monastery Hilandar. In 1638 in Pec, he was consecrated for a bishop of West Hercegovina (Zahumska) eparchy by Serbian patriarch Pajsije. Foreign political circumstances at that time were extremely unfavourable for maintenance of the Orthodox faith: pressure of unition and emphasized Roman Catholic proselytism (for which implementation Franciscans and Jesuits were especially active in these areas), and Ottoman invaders. The metropolitan of Eastern Hercegovina with eparchy headquarters is in Onogost – today's Niksic from 1651. Yearning for a peaceful life, he goes to Ostrog around 1656, from where he continues to manage the archbishopric until he passed away on May 29th 1671. Sainly life and tireless work on defence of his and his people's religion created for him, while he was still alive, a great reputation among people who respected him as a man of God. Troparion to St. Vasilije says: *"From youth you gave yourself to God, dwelling in prayer, deeds and fast God-bearing Father..."* In the service dedicated to him, he was called a guardian and head of Zahumlje and Skenderija, Montenegro and impregnable tower of Primorje. He is like the dawn of sensible light and lighthouse of church, a representative who is *"on the scale of divine's reason you came and you approached to God, you received the gift of healing, with which you heal incurable diseases and dispel evil spirits..."* His death was not considered as final loss and parting, but he continued to be present in the life of people, in new categories, which grew into a cult (Kasic 1971, 19-34).

Seven years after the saint passed away, he appeared in a dream of the abbot of the monastery St. Luka in Zupa Niksicka, convincing him to go with the monks to Ostrog and to open his grave with Ostrog fraternity after daily fast and liturgy. Thereby, they found saint's incorrupt body and transferred it to the church of Presentation of the Virgin where it is placed until today.

The cult of St. Vasilije Ostroski began in the last years of his earthly life, as the saint manifested the gift of prayer (prayer representation) and miracles that we-

² About the life of St. Vasilije, his cult and miraculous healings that happen next to his reliquary with the relics, as well as about the history of the monastery of Ostrog, see: Popović 1973; Mihailović 1965; *Sveti Vasilije Ostroški Čudotvorac* 1971; Kalezić 2005; Nikčević 2001; *Sveti Vasilije Ostroški: čudotvorac i iscjelitelj* 2009.

re well-known to the people during the time. The cult strengthened and expanded through miraculous healings next to his relics, through which the grace of Holy Spirit acts, manifesting certain forms of liturgical life: prayer, fast, pilgrimages, oath, vow, synods, construction of temples dedicated to him, painting of icons (Ivosevic 197, 153). The service to St. Vasilije wrote the Serbian Patriarch Vasilije Jovanovic-Brkic between 1767 and 1769 and it was included in General chants to Serbian saints, and the akathist³ was written in 1947 (Ivosevic 1971, 153-156). St. Vasilije is celebrated on May 12th. In Ostrog, festive hierarchical liturgy is preceded by evening service with vigil, as well as midnight liturgy and reading of the akathist in the church of the Presentation of the Virgin where the saint's relics are. On the feast of St. Vasilije, processions in honour of the saint are held in Ribnjak near Bar, Prijepolje, Trebinje and Niksic. Ostrog is known as a place where a real ecumenical prayer is experienced, because everybody devoutly prays regardless of confessional affiliation (Ivosevic 1971, 171), as if St. Vasilije confirms the saying: "holy man is a tree on which all the birds are landing" (Susnjic). In the week preceding the feast of the saint, fasting before coming on a pilgrimage to Ostrog is practised. It is believed that the pilgrimages began immediately after the presentation of the saint with larger gatherings on the day of St. Vasilije, Duhovi, Petrovdan, Ilindan and Velika Gospojina, some travel writers (Czech Ludvik Kuba) called Ostrog a Slavic Jerusalem (Ivosevic 1971, 178-184). It is believed that of all the monasteries of Serbian Orthodox Church, Ostrog is the most visited, with the estimation between 600.000 (Janjic 2007, 43) and million (Bozovic 2010) visitors annually. During Duhovi in 1860, about 8000 devotees were under Ostrog. Avelo and Nizijer, travel writers from France, saw that on Trojicindan in 1894 came eight to ten thousand devotees from all over the Balkans, Serbia, Dalmatia and Herzegovina. Anglican priest Denton, who visited Ostrog in 1865, recorded the sayings of Ostrog monks that in some years, up to 20.000 devotees gather on Trojicindan. There are numerous testimonies of miraculous healings, and the following devotees come to pay homage to the saint: "Muslims, Latino and wild Arnauts bring their heavy patients... from physical and mental illness and everyone after the prayer and warm tears returns home mostly healthy or repaired enough" (Ivosevic 1971, 180-182). Group pilgrimages to Ostrog have a long tradition. While they were previously performed on foot they had usual relations, the leaders were older people who used to come to synods in Ostrog for many years.⁴ Today, one can come to Ostrog individually or collectively – in organization of parishes, pilgrim agencies.⁵ The motives of coming are different: asking for healing, the need for spiritual peace and prayer, asking for an advice or moral, etc.

The life and deed of St. Vasilije is connected with over ten places and temples (Mrkonjici, Zavala, Monastery Tvrdos, Misljen near Ljubinje, Monastery of Cetinje, Onogost-Niksic, Monastery Moraca, Monastery Djurdjevi Stupovi, the Patriarchy of Pec, Hilandar, Moscow, Monastery of St. Luka in Zupa Niksicka, Monastery of St. Dimitrije – Popi near Niksic and Ostrog). Many temples – churches, monasteries and chapels dedicated to him on the canonical territory of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which count about 68, speak about the spatial dispersion of this saint's

³ *Akathist* is a chant that is used in service in the Orthodox Church. During the time many akathists dedicated to Jesus Christ and other saints were composed, like the akathist that patriarch Sergije composed in honour of the Virgin in the 7th century. While reading the akathist in the church people stand.

⁴ For example, Bokelji, who came to Ostrog in groups, most frequently used the route: Krivosije-Grahovo-Niksic-Ostrog, returning via Orja Luka, Zagarac, Cevo, Bjelice, Ceklici and Njegusi (Ivosevic 1971, 183 – footnote 167).

⁵ Pilgrimage agency of Serbian Orthodox Church "Charity" from Belgrade organizes pilgrimages to Ostrog (from beginning of April to the middle of November, every weekend) as Slavic Jerusalem, the place of prayer and hope in miraculous powers of the saint (www.dobrocinstvo.spc.rs).

cult.⁶ Some of them are, for example, in the Central European area (Linz and Bielefeld), Midwest American (Chisholm, Lake Forest), Western American (Angels Camp in California) of the Serbian Orthodox Church eparchy.

THE SACRED TOPOGRAPHY OF THE MONASTERY OSTROG

It is believed that the name Ostrog comes from older form of the Serbian word „oštar,oštri“ – „ostr, ostri“, used as a term for sharp end, pillar, scale, top of the mountain and the mountain itself. The hill Ostrog in Popovo polje near Trebinje, as well as Ostrog – the hill above Budva has the same name. Ostrog, where is the monastery of the same name, is mentioned in charters of Naples king Alfonso V from 1444 and 1454, as well as in the book of Mavro Orbin from Dubrovnik “The Kingdom of the Slavs” from 1601 (*Sveti Vasilije Ostroški: čudotvorav i iscelitelj* 2009, 122-123).

Ostrog Monastery is located under the beams of Ostrog (1143 metres above sea level) in the north-west border area between the municipality of Danilovgrad and Niksic. Distance from Danilovgrad is 19 km, from Niksic 18km and from Podgorica about 40 km. The altitude in the Upper monastery is about 900 m. Below the monastery, at about 56 metres above the sea level is Glava Zete, where from Bjelopavlici plain extends towards the southeast – generally regarded it is a part of Central Montenegro’s dale. Below the Ostrog beams, towards the east and southeast there is a tribal area of Bjelopavlici (Vrazegrmci), while Bogetici and Povija – through which the highway to Ostrog was paved recently – belong to Pjesivci, Niksic. During the history, this area was considered as a border area between Old Herzegovina (to which Onogost – Niksic belonged) and tribal area of Bjelopavlici, as Vuk Karadzic explains in the “Glossary” from 1852 (*Sveti Vasilije Ostroški: čudotvorav i iscelitelj* 2009, 122). The monastery complex consists of: the Upper monastery with two churches – the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin (constructed around 1667 with an effort of priestmonk Isaija and St. Vasilije) created by building above the bounded cave area in the cliff, and Holy Cross (built in 1665 and consecrated by St. Vasilije) which is coalesced with the rock on two sides, and closed by stone walls on the other two sides; the Lower monastery with the temple of St. Trojica (constructed in 1824 as a foundation of Ostrog archimandrite Josif Pavicevic); the church of St. Martyr Stanko above the Lower monastery (constructed in 2004, baptism is preformed in this church nowadays), and Ostrog convent in Jovan do near Niksic (consecrated in 2000, dedicated to Jovan Krstitelj). The Upper monastery received its present appearance in 1926 and the Lower monastery at the end of XIX century. The refectory at the Lower monastery was founded in 1994 (it works from the beginning of Easter fasting to the Presentation), as well as the refectory at the Upper monastery that works during the whole year (www.ostrog.co). For the feast of St. Vasilije people also stay in the open, on plateau in front of the Upper monastery, depending on weather conditions.

Nowadays, Ostrog Monastery is a male monastery, while the cave hermitages at the Upper monastery (in which are both monastery churches) and in its immediate surroundings, evidence about the traces of former anchoritic life. French colonel Viala de Sommier wrote about his coming to the Upper monastery at the beginning of XIX century:

“Next day we went to visit the hermits’ hermitages. Archimandrite who followed us provided us with valuable information. Through hardly passable road we reach the foot of a high mountain, surrounded by a long row of

⁶ Data from the monograph *Sveti Vasilije Ostroški: čudotvorac i iscjelitelj* (2009), based on the calendar of Serbian Orthodox Church for 2006.

rocks or by a single cliff which top is completely sheer and it looks like it is carved. In the middle of a bare cliff there is a wide natural gape. It is the entrance to a cell which St. Vasilije visited... The cave can be reached through wooden vaulted stairs, of 103 steps, in a poor condition. It is only half of the way. The rest is carved into the rock itself. The stairs lead us to the cave over a naturally elevated entry with lots of curves that ends with a terrace. From there you enter the space, about sixty metres long, and twenty five metres wide, almost triangular in shape and facing east. In the chapel five metres long and only three metres wide, but very decorated, though without order, there is a coffin of cypress, in which St. Vasilije rests for all the time.”

The natural environment in which the monastery is, serves for the practice of anchoritic and hermit way of monastic life, that is present here at the beginning of XVII century (*Sveti Vasilije Ostroški: čudotvorav i iscelitelj* 2009, 123) – that is, before the arrival of metropolitan Vasilije (character of isolation, difficult accessibility, caves). It is known that Venerable Isaija of Onogost praised here, who was burned by the Turks around 1611 in the place Planinica not far away from today's monastery, according to the confirmation of his grandson, abbot Isaija – contemporary of St. Vasilije. The cult of Isaija of Onogost was present for a long time among the people from this region and the memory of it is still kept by Ostrog monks (Ognjevic 2002, 17). His image is displayed by a mosaic technique on a rock at the Upper monastery. Culmination, goal and final point of pilgrimage to Ostrog represents worship of saint's relics in the church of the Presentation. Special significance in the sacred topography of this sanctuary has a cross placed above the Upper monastery, which is very important from the point of forming the vertical structure of the holy Ostrog – mount. At the Upper monastery there is the Source of the Virgin – healing water. At the place where St. Vasilije presented to God, at the moment of his death, according to the record, there sprouted a vine that still exists today. This site is also called Ostrog – mount, “Serbian Sinai” (Ognjenovic 2002, 13), “Slavic Jerusalem” (Ivosevic 1971, 181) because of the landscape, importance and nature of pilgrimage place.

Monastery Ostrog had the role of educational centre. Monastery school is mentioned in records in 1712, and it is known that in XIX century, three-grade elementary school worked here and it was also active between the two world wars. Cetinje Seminary was moved here in 1873/1874 but it was soon returned to Cetinje. During the second half of XX century, Monastic school worked here, in the building where today is the refectory of the Lower monastery. The immediate surroundings of the monastery were the site of frequent historic events (events from 1714; making an agreement on peace between Montenegrins and the Turks from Herzegovina in 1723; Turkish devastation of the monastery in 1768; nine-day defence of the monastery in the war of Montenegro against Turkey in 1852/3; the battle of Montenegrins and Herzegovinians with Turks in Ostrog gorge from 17th to 25th June 1877; events from the Second World War) (*Sveti Vasilije Ostroški: čudotvorav i iscelitelj* 2009, 135-140). While he was guarding sheep not far away from here as a fifteen-year-old boy, his hands that were cut off by the Turks in 1712, are being kept in the church of Martyr Stanko above the Lower monastery.

THE CHURCH OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OF THE MONASTERY OSTROG AS A CULT PLACE

The church of the Presentation, as stated above, is located within the upper Monastery Ostrog, in which there are the miraculous and incorrupt relics of St. Vasilije Ostroski. It dates from the second half of XVII century. It is distant from place Bogetici about 10 kilometres, where the asphalt road is separated from the highway

Podgorica-Nikšić-Scepan polje. From Danilovgrad, availability is ensured by a long asphalt road⁷ and railway line Podgorica-Danilovgrad-Nikšić (railway station Ostrog about 2 km distant). This church is in the territorial range of the municipality Danilovgrad (18.472 citizens in 2011), its population is dominated by Montenegrins and Serbs. Orthodox as well as Catholics and Muslims come to pray and pay homage to St. Vasilije that contributes to its multi-religious character. Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox church takes care of this cult place. The cult place can be reached by car via road from the Lower monastery from which it is 2 km distant, and by a path that leads through the forest for about half hour walk. There is the old monastic cemetery below the church. There is a refectory for pilgrims within the Upper monastery. The cult place has regular supply of electricity and the sound system that enables devotees to follow the worship, is installed.

Typology and description of cult place. This cult place is active and represents, therefore, sacred temple – church. Trustee's inscription in the church is not preserved, but it is known that it was probably founded at the time of the first famous Ostrog ascetic from the beginning of XVII century. It was only architecturally accomplished and painted for the time of St. Vasilije. It was constructed by building above the bounded cave area in the cliff, closed by walls on north and west side. The altar is on the east side. Church is 4.5 m long and 3.2 m wide. On the north side there is a low door and on the west wall there are three small windows. The present iconostasis is recent, before which there were two – from 18th and 19th century (*Sveti Vasilije Ostroški: čudotvorav i iscelitelj* 2009, 127-128), and it is in an iron frame from 1913.

Despite its modest size, this temple is picturesque on small and rough surfaces of the cave walls on dry base (Fig. 1), though in a modest and adjusted way. His image in hierarchical vestment is painted above the place where today is reliquary with the saint's relics. St. Nikola, St. Georgije, St. Dimitrije, St. Teodor Tiron, St. Teodor Stratilat as well as imperial saintly pair – St. Konstantin and Jelena with an emblem of the Holy Cross are painted on the west wall. The image of St. Sava is painted on the north wall, while St. Sergije and Vakh, as well as the composition of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin are painted on the right side. In the narthex which was built and decorated by monk Mihailo of Vasojevici, very few traces of original painting are left (Ognjević 2002, 40-45).

Dynamics of visiting. This cult place is visited during the whole year. The greatest gatherings are on the eve and on the day of St. Vasilije (May 12th), as well as on Duhovi, Petrovdan, Ilindan and Velika Gospojina. The Orthodox (from Montenegro, Serbia, Hercegovina, Russia...), but also members of other confessions (Fig. 2 and 3), of almost all the ages and in different ways – familiarly, individually, in organization of parish priests, pilgrimage and travel agencies⁸, come here on pilgrimage. This church is the final goal of pilgrimage. Paying homage to the saint's relics and kissing it, then donating money and other gifts (usually olive oil, wine, sugar and coffee) (Fig. 4), lighting of candles for the live and the dead is performed in this church. It is a custom to take consecrated oil from Ostrog, with which believers anoint themselves especially in some diseases, and water that are sold in the monastery shop.

For reason and background of creating the cult place we can use a saga about appearance of St. Vasilije in a dream of abbot Rafailo, which Vuk Karadžić recorded from archimandrite Nikodim Raicević:

⁷ This road (Danilovgrad-Vunici-Ostrog, opened in 2012) is known as “transversal of spirituality” and “road of faith” since it connects two great shrines: monastery Ostrog and monastery Zdrebaonik in which the relics of St. Arsenije Sremac, the second Serbian archbishop are being kept.

⁸ Thus, some travel agencies from the Montenegrin Littoral organize one-day trips to monastery Ostrog during the tourist season.

“And when he died, they buried him below the monastery in the garden. Seven years after his death, the abbot of Zupa monastery had a dream in which bishop Vasilije called him, to dig him out of the ground. In the morning, when the abbot told this to his company as a kind of truth, they started to laugh at him. When he had the same dream for the second time he did not dare to say anything to his company; the third time bishop Vasilije appeared in his dream dressed as a bishop, while serving with censer in his hand and when he began to cense him, he suddenly hit him in forehead with the censer and fire popped out of it on his face, in that moment he woke up and touched the face which was covered with wounds from fire and he could not touch it because of the pain. When other monks heard and saw that, they did not laugh at him anymore but they immediately took hoes, pickaxes and shovels and went with him to dig out bishop Vasilije; when they came below Ostrog, where several monks were already there, they said what happened and then they all began to fast as pilgrims, pray to God and keep vigils, and when they spent a week in such way, they went to the grave, dug it up and found bishop Vasilije incorrupt and sacred. Then they set him in a reliquary in the church in the upper monastery where he is even today” (Kasic 1971, 32-33).

According to the words of a priest, who serves in the monastery, the feeling that you experience while visiting this cult place, can be experienced only if you live the life of the church. He points out:

“People come here because of a live contact with the saint. It is an experience that, in the words of Christ, is not from this world. That experience cannot be put in the frameworks of empirical observation. The man is a biological being, he is a rational being but beyond that he is a being of faith and a being of specific needs. Not all the people have health problems to same extent. I personally come to this holy place because I love St. Vasilije. I previously had some life experiences, where his help was of a great importance in my life. Christ is the one who unites us vertically and horizontally, the same faith and Eucharist with the body and blood of Christ, unite me and St. Vasilije, we are imbued with the same spirit, and that cannot be empirically or scientifically explained.”

Description of behaviour of the visitors and ritual. From the abbot of monastery we found out that there are no special restrictions or taboos when visiting this shrine. Proper behaviour and dressing is required. The following photo (which was recorded in the field) shows how a pilgrim should look like when visiting this cult place (Fig. 5, 6, and 7).

All the pilgrims who visited Ostrog monastery and church of the Presentation of the Virgin during our research say that they always have a special feeling during the visit of this cult place.

Seventeen year old Milica Pantelic from Krusevac, who is at this cult place for the first time, points out:

„I am at this sacred place for the first time and the feeling is very strange. I feel like there is some power, as if something is magical. I do not feel any fatigue or hunger and I travelled all the night to visit this place. It is very nice, as if my whole soul is filled. “

“My name is Zaric Laposava, I come from Mataruska Banja near Kraljevo and I live in Switzerland. I am sixty seven years old and I wanted to visit this cult place for many times but I couldn't. This morning we went on a pil-

grimage and what can I say, awesome. The feeling is strange and I heard that sacred relics that rest in this place heal the sick. The feeling is indescribable, but I am excited and that can be seen by my behaviour."

The pilgrim who wanted to remain anonymous added: *"I am thirty six years old and I come from Podgorica, I feel respect for this place. The respect is caused by tradition and religious education."* Catechist from East Sarajevo, Tomislav Pajovic points out: *"Visit to this place represents for me a spiritual birth and special condition that is difficult to explain in words. I have heard for the grenade which was directed to destroy the monastery in war, but which remained in the rock and did not explode."*

Zoran from Podgorica, a taxi driver, told us a number of stories about the saint's wonders and miracles of this cult place. The story about his client, whom he drove from Podgorica to Ostrog, was interesting for us. It is about a man who lives in Dusseldorf (Germany) and who escaped from Croatia during the war in the nineties. He comes from a mixed marriage; his mother is a Muslim and his father a Roman Catholic. He did not have children for a long period of time and he was about to be divorced. After pilgrimage to Ostrog and after paying homage to the relics of St. Vasilije in the church dedicated to the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, he has got a daughter. Since then, he celebrates May 12th, the day when St. Vasilije is celebrated.

As it is customary in every Orthodox temple or church and in this shrine, believers light candles (Fig. 8), as custom dictates. A pilgrim comes barefoot, if he is able (Fig. 9), and that is a kind of peculiarity of this cult place.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

Although this is a paper in which we tried to evidentially describe the cult place, the church of the Presentation in Ostrog monastery, it is possible to derive several premises. First of all it is about a shrine which is important not only because of the number of pilgrims but also because the religious opus of pilgrims is very diverse. This cult place is not visited only by Orthodox pilgrims but also by Roman Catholics and often by members of Islamic confession of faith. That is the best proof it is a place which causes a lot of respect and which is rightly labelled as a *cult*. Furthermore, we found out a number of (in our opinion) interesting data associated with this shrine. One of these is, of course, the pilgrim, whose prayers were heard by the saint and who celebrates the day of St. Vasilije (May 12th). Pilgrims with great awe and proper behaviour visit this shrine. Thus, we can rightly conclude that it is a very visited and respected cult place in central and north western part of Montenegro, and from the sociological perspective it is a place that has a very integrative effect upon the Orthodox population. Hence, we should not wonder why, in this part of Montenegro, the swearing *Ostroga mi* can be frequently heard.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. The interior of the Church of the Presentation of the Virgin



Fig. 2. The pilgrim who approach to worship



Fig. 3. The pilgrim after paying homage



Fig. 4. The pilgrim leaves gifts



Fig. 5. Pilgrims dressed appropriately wait to pay homage 1



Fig. 6. Pilgrims dressed appropriately wait to pay homage 2



Fig. 7. Pilgrims dressed appropriately wait to pay homage 3



Fig. 8. Pilgrim lights a candle



Fig. 9. Pilgrim comes barefoot to pay homage

Petko Hristov

FAMILY RITUAL PROCESS AND THE SACRED PLACES (The Celebration of 'Svetăc' in the Bulgarian-Serbian Borderlands)

INTRODUCTION

"The Bulgarian popular religion is similar, even identical with ours, so it can be assumed that it was the same with us."

Slobodan Zečević

The decision for writing this article was provoked by the study, done by Slobodan Zečević on the 'institution of *zavetina*' in Northeastern Serbia and his conclusion, given on the basis of the materials, conducted by Dimitar Marinov' research on the territory of Northeastern Bulgaria, saying as follows: "*The Bulgarian popular religion is similar, even identical with ours, so it can be assumed that it was the same with us*" (Зечевић 1973, 5). A solid foundation of particular investigations on the family and the village feasts of the type of Serbian *slava* and Bulgarian *služba* (also called 'svetăc' in the local dialects on both border regions), celebrated at home, and *obrok* and *zavetina*, celebrated on the family sacred places in the fields, marked with stone crosses, especially in the border areas, was built in the Bulgarian, as well in the Serbian ethnologic literature; despite the researches, which were done in the latest years (cf. Христов 2004), a summary of all the data is still to be done.

All the authors, who have written on the topic related to the rituals performed at home, as well as on these, performed around the sacred wooden or stone cross (*obrok*) or sacred tree (*zapis, miro*), are unanimous on the identification of the mythological and paganistic roots of the ritual complex of this cult for the family ancestors and for the Mother-Nature, inherited from the Antique Balkan population (Thracians) and from the South Slavic tradition. Later on in the process of Christianization, these rituals are "given" a Christian facet "hidden" under the image of a certain saint, but its pagan nature is evident (Зечевић 1973, 43; Ђорђевић 1934, 113-116; Маринов 1981, 720; Стаменова 1985, 154-155; Мутафов 1989, 217; Васић 1998, 199). In the European Ethnology, as well as in the ethnography from the ex-Soviet academic circle the peculiarities of social structures and ritual processes among Balkan peoples have always been used to underline their difference from "civilized Europe" (conclusion by Kaser 1999, 21), despite the non-detrimental (even "good") intentions of many authors; the "archaic" (or archaized) social institutions on the Balkans and their ritual process were identified as a sign of patriarchy – one of its main expressions was the existence of a common patron saint of the family-kin community and his or her ritual worship on the common feast *slava/ svetăc* (Косвен 1963; Стаменова 1985). Family-kin celebrations like the *slava* in Serbia and *služba* in Bulgaria were viewed in literature as an "ethnographic curiosity" (quote by Митрепавел 1994, 20) in a European context.

In Western European ethnology and American anthropology, the sacrificial rituals dedicated to the patron saints of different family and kin communities on the Balkans were proclaimed without doubts as both the most important Christian celebration (the "Feast") in the family's annual calendar feast cycle and as the most obvi-

ous sign of the “Balkan Family Pattern” and “Balkan Patriarchy” (following the model of the “Patriarchal Civilisation” on the Balkans, proclaimed by Jovan Cvijić). Thus, torn from its natural context, with no special research¹, the *slava* feast was proclaimed as the main ritual characteristic of the ancestor cult, which was thought to present the main ideological-religious basis (different from canonical Christianity) and core of “Balkan Patriarchalism” (terminology by Halpern, Kaser and Wagner 1996, 436) and of the patrilineal family model on the Balkans (Mitterauer 1996, 390).

What truly challenges the ethnologist that study the family ritual process on the Balkans is how patrilineal kinship and family groups symbolised their unity and solidarity through ritual practices on the feast dedicated to the patron saint of descent groups and multiple family households, functioning as a basis for identity. In his last book – which had the rather indicative title “Patriarchy after Patriarchy” – Karl Kaser wrote that celebrations of the Serbian *slava* type can be interpreted as a Christianised form of a pre-Christian ritual celebration of the lineage ancestor and provided the extended patrilineage with a sacred, religious identity. Based on my own research in Western Bulgaria and North-eastern Serbia I will show how the feast called *svetāc* in the border regions “could also be regarded as a reminder of distant kinship even when the actual ties had been lost” (Kaser 2008, 51). Particular descriptions of the feast are relevant to Nasalevci village, Trān region in Bulgaria (during the first half of the 20th century) and *slava* in Ošljane village², Timok region in Serbia (during the second half of the 20th century).

Herewith we should state that in the period, in which the family ritual process can be still researched “on field” (i.e. after 1930s), the ritual complex as a whole is perceived as a Christian-Orthodox, i.e. in a popular (rural) surrounding, the pagan origin of the ritual practices and the performed behavioural strategies, “covered” under the Christianized ritual, are not realized as such. In this context, my aim here is not to set an evolutionistic stratification of the researched ritualism, related to the cultural phenomena of the family holiday *svetāc*, but to summarize the preliminary results of my fieldwork researches, conducted since the 2000.

In my present article I will deal with family ideology and traditional family ritual processes at the Central part of the Balkans during the early 20th century. The main goal of my research conducted in 1998-1999 in the region of Trān (Central Western Bulgaria) and in 2001 in the region of Zaječar (Northeastern Serbia) was to study the connection between the traditional “ideal” of extended family household and the ritual patterns for communal union creation identified in the family festive cycle. This study had a historical and ethnographic character – as we shall see in the two case studies the ritual re-confirmation of the kinship ties during the family festivals in Nasalevci (Bulgaria) and Ošljane (Serbia) is a form of organization of the cultural memory which re-produces the cultural identity of the kindred group (Асман 2001, 55). In the regions I have investigated the family festivals of the type *svetāc/slava* function throughout 20th century as a mile-stone of the patriarchal family ideology. By “family ideology” I mean the relationship between the ideals about family, formulated in a given social environment, and the family practices through which this ideal is realised as an expression of the family system of values (cf. Tyszka 1974, 74).

My ethnological research conducted in the villages of the Bulgarian-Serbian borderland showed the prominent social functions of the ritual cycle that build cohe-

¹ Existing analytical research of the patron saint feasts in families and kin groups, such as that by David Rheubottom (Rheubottom 1976) about Skopska Crna Gora in Macedonia can be counted on the fingers of one’s hand.

² Fieldwork research in the villages of Ošljane in Serbia was conducted in 2001 together with my colleague and friend Dejan Krstić. Thanks to his priceless help this research was conducted.

sion in the family/household community, rather than archaism and/or paganism. My thesis is that this cycle of celebrations and rituals, related to the so-called “traditional Christianity” among Orthodox people on the Balkans, is part of the yearly feasts celebrated in a family-kin environment. My respondents view them as Christian, part of “our folk religion” (“*naša narodna vera*” – cf. Христов 2001/2002, 28), the main function of which is to preserve the sense of unity among patrilineal kin groups, even when the particular family-kin couples live in separate households or when they are spatially distant as a result of the intensified migration from the villages to the towns in the second half of 20th century.

The main questions are: How and why was the common patrilineal model of “Balkan Family Pattern”, presented by historians, ethnologists and anthropologists developed as a “patriarchal ideology”? How does the ritual performed on *svetāc* and the common table of the descendents of a common patrilineage create the basis for the reproduced cultural identity of the extended family? What is the place of these places of cult, marked by stone crosses on the both sides of the border, in this family ritual process?

FAMILY CELEBRATIONS IN THE BULGARIAN-SERBIAN BORDER AREAS

The study of the main characteristics of the ritual process in family-kin and territorial groups in the villages in the Bulgarian-Serbian border area – both among Serbian and Bulgarian population among both sides of the border – contributed to both confirming and re-evaluating some of the already formulated conclusions in ethnology and anthropology regarding the characteristics of the “Balkan Family Pattern” ideology, the model they were placed in (Kaser 1996, 383). The same is also relevant about the patron saint feast in agnatic communes (in its regional variants, *svetāc*) as part of the ancestor cult.

In the regions I studied, the family-kin structure based on agnatic kinship descending along the male line has for a long time formed the backbone of the village social system and the structure of the households as its basic element but after the 1920s it no longer guaranteed predominant complexity of family households. It is important to specify that according to the ethnographic data this complex organisation of family households in the studied regions from the Bulgarian-Serbian border area includes family couples from several generations of relatives descending along the male line: the father with his undivided sons and their families, or (more rarely) the father, his married sons and his grandchildren with their own children, with the number of household members varying usually between 10 and 20 people. In the predominant case in the first half of 20th century the undivided family couples are incorporated in joint family households by living together and sharing common property, production and consumption. The members of patrilineal kinship family communities (*vamilija* in local dialect) who lived within a given complex household, and the group of households related on agnatic principles inhabited localised parts of the village (so called *maala*), often scattered a few kilometres away from each other within the village territory.

As a group, kinship patrilineal groups are situated not only on Earth, but also in “Heaven”. Each of the family-kin groups in the village has its own fixed place in the village cemetery, often referred to by the name of the kin, as well as its dedicated spot for the village-wide rituals of honour for the dead – the so called *zadušnica*. Each family-kin group has its own dedicated spot (often marked by a special stone “*chair*”) at the village-wide sacrifice rituals (*kurban* or ‘*molitva*’ – ‘prayer’) in honour of the patron saint of the local church, also celebrated as a village feast (*sobor* or *seoska slava*). The family-kin households preserve their ritual places in the sacred

space of the common festive table where the ritual food for the participants is distributed even after the partition of the common property.

The idea of the agnatic family-kin group as a separate ritual and religious community (cf. Mitterauer 1996, 390), clearly distinguishable in a village aspect, was expressed in the feast dedicated to the patron saint of the patrilineal union, celebrated at the home and/or the kin's plot of arable land. In the regions I have studied (cf. Христов 2001/2002, 27-34) this type of festivals are a symbolic evidence of the fact that the most primary and effective means for social binding and identity development are the kinship and the farms (Асман 2001, 141). It is a fact, that in different variants from villages in the Bulgarian-Serbian border area, a number of elements and ritual activities related to honouring the ancestors and to maintain family and kin cohesion, were typical not only for the feast known from literature as *slava/služba* (also as *svetác* in local dialects on both sides of the border). But in the villages on both sides of the border, several models of family-kin ritual processes were exhibited, related to worshipping the patron saint of the agnatic kin. Due to the diversity of ritual activities – carried out at the home and the field by patrilineal kin groups on feasts and known as *slava/svetác* and *obrok* – but also due to their typological similarity in a socio-anthropological perspective, I will describe only two examples that are representative of the regional variety on both sides of the border.

SVETÁC IN NASALEVCI VILLAGE

In Nasalevci village, Trăn region (Bulgaria), the family-kin celebration *svetác* is one of the most important feasts in the annual calendar cycle. Ritual activities related to worshipping the family-kin guardian of every “*vamilija*” were attached to celebrations from the Christian calendar, dedicated to saints that were viewed as patrons of the respective kin commune. Often this is the saint whose name the founder of the family or group of families bears. In Nasalevci one can hear: “*We celebrate svetác in our grandfather's name, on St. Nicholas's day*”³. What mattered when choosing a saint was not his rank in the church calendar, but namely his connection to the home's kin community and his worship as a patron saint – “protector” (cf. Миррепаяев 1994, 21). Due to the above mentioned specifics of male labour mobility in the region and the seasonal absence of men from the village, ritual activities were concentrated in three Christian celebration from the autumn-winter calendar cycle, after the builders returned from *gurbet* (seasonal labour migration) around *Mitrov-dân* (St. Demetrius's Day – 26.10⁴). The most common patron saints in Nasalevci were St. Nicholas (used as a patron by 9 family groups), Archangel Michael (used by 7) and St. Demetrius (used by 4).

Here is what the rituals on the feast of the family-kin *svetác* in Nasalevci look like. In this form, the rituals were carried out until the early 1950s when widespread migration towards the quickly developing cities and the capital of Bulgaria depopulated the villages: today, only several elderly women live in Nasalevci. The main complex of ritual activities carried out on *svetác* had a single common type and was persistent in different kin *vamilijas*; the ritual did not change and did not depend on the Christian celebration itself. The focus of ritual activities was pointed towards the feast table for the kin families, followed by the ritual raising, cutting and breaking up (“*lomene*”) of the ritual bread (*kolač*), done with a number of blessings at the day of the feast.

³ Respondent Lenka Pejčeva, born 1919 in Nasalevci village, of the *Conkini* kin.

⁴ All quoted dates for Christian celebrations in Bulgaria are in accordance with the so called Revised Julian calendar (so called “new style”), adopted by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church at the end of 1969 and coinciding with the Gregorian calendar in the cases when there are fixed dates for the festivals.

Each family-kin group made special preparations for the feast. The ritual bread had cross-shaped decorations and was baked by the oldest women in the house. The oldest man in the house (the householder) prepared the blood sacrifice – *kurban* (lamb or sheep; never goats, pigs or birds). It is his duty to provide red wine for the feast: in Trãn region, where grapes do not grow, wine is taken into the home only for *svetãc* and for Christmas Eve (i.e. for the home rituals of a Eucharist nature). If the *svetãc* celebration falls during periods of fasting (e.g. St. Nicholas's day), a ritual fish meal – *ribnik* – is prepared in honour of the saint.

When celebrating *svetãc*, all relevant families gather for the main ritual at the feast table – the families that belong to the kin family union and descend from a common ancestor; despite living in separate households, they most often shared a common patron saint. In a given village, the entire *maala* or a part of it may celebrate the same patron saint. This is why all elderly men from the kin families in the neighbourhood take part in the main rite – raising the ritual bread, cutting it up and pouring wine over it – along with the host householder. Starting at the early 1930s, the men's wives took part in the ritual as well. As a tradition in the past, however, only men took part in the ritual activities for *svetãc*; more specifically – those that were direct descendants of the patriarch of the family-kin union: “*Women do not go to sluzhba, only men do*” (Пемева 1960, 740).

Led by the eldest, the men householders (heads of households in the family-kin group) visited in turn every house in the neighbourhood in which related *vamilijas* lived, and carried out the bread and wine ritual. They did not follow a specific pattern, but it was preferred to vary the order and start at a different house every year. In Nasalevci this group of ritual figures was called *sveãari* ('consecrators'). In no house did the feast ritual begin before the *sveãari* arrived. The feast table would be prepared, and all members of the patrilineal family would be present at the house: two to three generations of family couples, along the male descendant line. During the 1930s it was common to have guests from other villages for *svetãc* – relatives from affinal groups (daughters of the householder with their husbands), but only if they did not feast on the same day.

When the *sveãari* arrived, they were met solemnly. One of the women in the house would pour water for them to wash their hands “so that fertility may stay in the house.” The householder consecrates the feast table with incense and embers from the hearth, reading the prayer “Our Lord”; the other guests would take off their hats and cross themselves, repeating: “God bless!” At newer times, the prayer was sometimes read by some boy in the house while the eldest man is performing consecration. The householder would take the ritual bread (*kolaã*), raise it over his head while saying blessings for health and fertility, and then make a cross-shaped cut on the underside, pouring red wine in the cut. He would first cut it vertically up, saying “*May God give us good harvest!*”, then – horizontally from left to right, saying “*May God give health to the people so they can reap the harvest!*” While pouring the wine, other blessings were said as well: “*May our house flow over with children, our barns with wheat, our pens with sheep and cattle*” and so on, making wishes for fertility and success for the home, the land and the cattle⁵. The *kolaã* was broken upwards in two by the householder and the eldest of the male relatives, and after that in two again – with the eldest son or the housewife. Afterwards, everybody in the house including the *sveãari* must take some of the *kolaã* and wheat (or corn). When a person takes a piece of the *kolaã*, he or she must kiss it and say blessings for health and fertility in the household. After the celebration ritual is over, the mem-

⁵ Respondent Milko Simov, born 1924 in Nasalevci, from the *Mađgarovi* kin. Author's recording in 1997.

bers of the household stay at the table while the eldest man (at more recent times – along with his wife) joins the *svečari* and visits the next kin house in the neighbourhood. Celebratory ritual activities on *svetāc* most often end late at night, when all kin family houses have been visited; according to respondents, it was often the case that “*svečari* would sing along with the roosters.”

The feast *svetāc* in the village of Nasalevci is a typical example of how shared participation in a food feast functions as a common ritual means for defining and reaffirming the full extent of the human and sacred community (Bell 1997, 123) of the kindred family groups. The families which migrated to the big city after the collectivization in the 1950s and the accelerated socialist industrialization gradually neglect the traditional celebration of *svetāc* and the kinship ties transform into the proverbial social networks of fellow countrymen aiming mutual aid in the capital.

SLAVA IN OŠLJANE VILLAGE

In North-Eastern Serbia, in the villages on the border with Bulgaria, every household had two *slava* celebrations (in the past also referred to as *svetac*) – one in the winter calendar period, when the ritual was carried out at the home, and the other – in the summer period, when the feast was carried out in the field, near the family’s stone cross (*zapis*) dedicated to the respective saint. For example, in Ošljane village (Timok region): *Đurđevdan* (St. George’s day in the summer – 6. 5.⁶) and *Sveti Đorđa Zimski* (St. George’s day in the winter – 16. 11), *Sveti Nikola Letnji* (St. Nicholas’s day in the summer – 22. 5) and *Sveti Nikola Zimski* (St. Nicholas’s day in the winter – 19. 12), *Sveti Jovan Biljober* (7. 7) and *Sveti Jovan Krstitelj* (20. 1), *Sveti Vrač Letnji* (14. 7) and *Sveti Vrač Zimski* (14. 11), *Sveti Randel Letnji* (26. 7) and *Sveti Randel Zimski* (21. 11) and so on. Every village was divided in several large groups of related households – for example *svetiđorđinci*, who worshipped St. George (*Zimski* and *Letnji*), *svetiničolinci* – who worshipped St. Nicholas (*Zimski* and *Letnji*) and so on. Such folk “classification” according to the home’s *služba* was also recorded during the 1970s in Gramada village, Vidin region (Bulgaria) where the population is divided – according to the family *svetāc* – into *varvarčane* (those who worship St. Barbara) and *nikulčane* (those who worship St. Nicholas)⁷. In the villages of Stakevci, Kračimir and Praužda, Belogradčik region (Bulgaria), every family-kin group (*vamilija*) in the village also has two celebrations – winter *svetāc* at the home and summer *svetāc/obrok* near the stone cross dedicated to the same patron saint in the field, on the kin’s plot of land⁸. Due to insignificant differences in ritual activities on *svetac* on the two sides of the border, I’ll give a more thorough description of the ritual in Ošljane village in Serbia, focusing on the described in literature “classical model” of *krsna slava* among Serbians (for the description, cf. Kazer 2002, 217-218, after Schneeweiss 1935, 205-208).

Ritual activities – including pouring wine, raising and breaking up/giving ritual bread (*kolač*) and cooked wheat (*kolivo*) – were repeated twice every year: during winter, separately in each household, and during summer – collectively near the stone cross (*zapis*) in turn for each household (relatives or not).⁹ The *svetac/slava*

⁶ All quoted dates of Christian celebrations in Serbia are according to the Julian calendar, officially adopted by the Serbian Orthodox Church (so called “old style”).

⁷ Records are done by the renowned Bulgarian ethnographer Tatjana Koleva (cf. Archive of the Ethnographic Institute with Museum, № 452-II, c. 23).

⁸ Fieldwork research in the villages of Stakevci, Praužda and Kračimir in Bulgaria was conducted in 2001 together with my colleague from Serbia Dejan Krstić (cf. Archive of the Ethnographic Institute with Museum, № 573-III).

⁹ The joining of a non-related family at the feast near a family-kin cross (*zapis*) was done by personal *zavet*, i.e. by pledging.

celebration here was closely related to the common family home and the patrilineally inherited land (*baštinija*) or the land which a bride in the family brought at her wedding as dowry (*miraz*). Hence the saying: “One honours the *svetac* on a *pro-per-tu*” (Крстић 2001, 88); the bread, wine and *koliwo* ritual was carried in the household the same number of times as the number of plots of land inherited with it. *Svetac* was feasted for property inherited from the father (land and the house), but a *kolač* would be poured over with wine and broken up for wedding dowry (*miraz*), as well as for land inherited from non-relatives (i.e. in exchange for taking care during old age). If the same household had two inherited plots of lands with different origin, but the *slava* honoured the same saints, then at the home feast two *kolač* breads would be poured over and broken up, i.e. the ritual was carried out as many times as necessary to honour all the plots of lands with identical *slava* (Крстић 2001, 88). Thus it turned out that during the 1930s and 1940s a single household could hold three or four *svetac/slava* feasts.

Here is what the *slava* ritual process carried out by family-kin groups at the home and in the field looked like in the village that we studied – Ošljane, Timok district. The *svetac* feast lasted four days, with the start of ritual activities being on the evening before the patron saint’s day – *povečerje*. Four ritual breads were prepared for the ritual activities during the next days – *večernjač*, *kolač*, *leturđija* and *ljubenko*, decorated with 5 “flowers” in a cross shape (or with 5 Christian stamps in a cross shape). Boiled wheat (*žito*) was also prepared for *svetac* – in a dish, sprinkled with sugar in a cross shape. In the middle of this dish, a candle was lit that burned throughout the ritual of pouring wine and breaking the *kolač*. If the celebration fell on a feasting day (when meat was to be eaten), then a lamb (or a sheep) was also slaughtered for the meal, even though it was not a required ritual dish.

Separate invitations were made for the saint’s feast, as well as for the remaining days. The principle observed was that if the invited person was unable to attend the first day of the *slava*, they would attend the second or the third. On each of the feast days, the ritual included several main moments: arrival of the guests who said blessings when greeting the hosts, gathering around the feast table and ritual activities for pouring wine over the respective bread for that day and breaking it up: *večernjača* (the evening before), *kolač* (the first day of the feast) and *leturđija* and *ljubenko* – on the second (*paterica* or *okrilje*) or third (*paničkin dan* or *rasturnica*) day of the *slava/svetac*. The ritual was carried out by the householder; only in rarer cases, if one of the guests was good at saying blessings, he was “appointed” as “*pop*” (‘priest’) and given the task of pouring the wine. The householder would first consecrates with incense three times, cross himself, and then make a cross-shaped cut on the upper side of the *kolač*, put some wheat in the cuts and pour some wine in. Afterwards, he would break up the *kolač* with one of the guests (or with the “*pop*”) in half, then in quarters. At the end, the men would raise and bring together the quarters of the bread, while the host would say: “*Ristos posredonos*” (“Christ among us”) and the others would reply: “*Jes i da budet pomeđu nama*” (“And may He be among us”). It was observed that the central “flower” stay with the householder: whoever got the quarter with the central “flower” would be the “lucky ploughman” and bring fertility to the home (Крстић 2001, 150). The connection with fertility in the home and the family land was clearly visible, in both the blessings (after each breaking, the halves were raised with the blessing “May the wheat be this tall!”) and the magical activities: ritual breads were given around the table, but always one quarter was put high on a shelf “so that the wheat may grow tall”.

Similar to breaking the *kolač* were ritual activities with boiled wheat (*koliwo*). The householder (or the “*priest*”) would pour wine over the wheat in a cross

shape, giving the candle to a male child to hold. All men at the table would carefully lift the plate with the wheat and say the blessing “May the wheat grow as tall as this”; after this, everybody present had to eat from the wheat. It is easy to see the patrilineal side of the ritual activities: those men and boys who could not reach the plate during its ritual raising would grab the shoulders of one of the men sitting at the table. Thus, everybody was involved in the ritual activity.

In Ošljane village, apart from the *svetac* rituals of pouring wine and breaking up the *kolač*, carried out by each householder of the family-kin community in his home (at the winter version of *slava*), a collective version of the same ritual was carried out at the saint’s stone cross in the kin (or village) plot of land at the summer feast. In Staro selo neighbourhood, for example, at the St. George Day’s celebrations (06.05.) a gathering would be held for households from the Topolovci kin (*svetiđođiinci*); *svetnikolinci* (several kins) would gather at the cross of St. Nicholas (on 22.05.) and so on. All households with identical family *slava/svetac* (not always relatives in modern times) would gather at the ritual place in the kin plot of land, marked by a stone cross (*zapis*) and *slava* tree (one or several), dedicated to the respective saint, and carry out the ritual activities described above: pouring wine, raising and breaking the *kolač* and giving wheat – as many times as the number of households gathered at the cross. Ritual activities were carried for all households in turn by the eldest men (or the one who was best at saying blessings), and each time breaking the *kolač* was done with its respective householder.

In the contemporary version of the ritual – as witnessed in May 2001 – the main leader of the ritual activities (the so called “*pop*”) changed every year by passing a quarter of the *kolač* to another householder. The interesting thing is that whereas each house prepared their own *kolač*, the wine poured over the breads was collected from all houses; same with the wheat, from which the *žit*o was prepared – a handful was taken from each house. After the Second World War, the new Socialist authorities prohibited the collective cutting of ritual breads, while policemen removed the cross and chopped down the trees (near the St. George *zapis*). During the socialist period, every household did the *kolač* ritual for the summer *slava* for *svetac* at home – until the 1990s, when collective ritual activities near the cross (*zapis*) were renewed. However, in Eastern Serbia the mass migration towards the towns also sets its mark on the feast – the ritual actions are reduced to only one day and are performed by the kinship families which are coming back from the town especially for the *slava*.

A similar picture is witnessed in neighbouring Bulgarian villages “beyond the border”, in North-Western Bulgaria, along the Stakevska river. Here, too, every patrilineal/patronymic family has its *svetac* during winter, passed on from the father to his sons after they divide, as well as a “*služba* at the cross” (*obrok*), placed near the arable land or the pens (*turlo*) of each respective family-kin group. Winter feasts (*služba*) begin on St. Petka’s Day and continue until Christmas (*Božić*), while summer rituals mandatorily involve blood sacrifice (*kurban*) near the family’s stone crosses (*obrok*) and are held after *Gjurđovđan* (St. George’s Day).

The described rituals related to the honouring of the patron saint of the family, the household and its land show clear indications for the way the patrilineal ideological unity is kept even after the division of the kin families in separate households. It becomes clear that by means of the ritual of *svetac/slava* this patriarchal ideology is preserved for decades after the decay of the social system of complex family households in which many authors see the “mysterious” *zadruga*.

CONCLUSIONS

Contrary to the various different interpretations of the family-kin celebrations *slava* and *služba*, which were discussed in the beginning, collective rituals near the family stone crosses (*obrok/ zavetina*) during the spring and summer calendar cycle – carried out even today on both sides of the Bulgarian-Serbian border (cf. a thorough description in Христов 2004, 119-167) – did not become a subject of research attention until recent years. All researchers agree that the integrative functions of this type of ritual for patrilineal family-kin groups are beyond any doubt. To these existing interpretations I would add the evident agrarian characteristics of the ritual activities that have magical practices clearly aimed at producing fertility.

What's more: if we view from the perspective of the common village feast calendar and ritual year, we would recognise in the feast rituals carried out on family-kin *slava/služba* and *obrok/zavetina* a ritual matrix that is multiplied and reproduced in different places in the village space (at home and at the plot of land of each family-kin group) and time (in honour of the primary saints of the Christian liturgical cycle). This gives me grounds to think that this is not only a question of descent thinking, in which “dead and alive are one fictional community”, but also of a ritual process (and its respective ideology) that is typical for the traditional Christian calendar cycle in this part of the peninsula, carried out at the home during fall and winter and at the field during spring and summer, with clearly notable agrarian (producing and preserving fertility for land, people, cattle). This is particularly true for regions, in which in the past there was no strong presence of the Bulgarian or Serbian Orthodox church; this allowed for folk Christianity.

My study on the festivals in honour of the patron-saints of the family-kin households in the villages of the Bulgarian-Serbian borderland shows that the family ideology which is directly related to the ideal of the living-together patrilineage groups considerably outlives the actual existence of the joint family households in the social structure of the village. The ritual practices performed on *svetac* and *slava* show the vitality of this family ideology which gives a meaning to the preservation in time of the patrilineal cultural identity. It is precisely by the collectiveness and the personal participation in the ritual activities of the festival that the particular family couples and individuals are incorporated into what Jan Assmann calls “cultural memory of the group” (Асман 2001, 55) or in our case of the families derived from the joint family-kin household. We can only agree that “the ritual repetition ensures the temporal and spatial cohesion of the group” (Асман 2001, 55) and thus the reproduction of its kinship identity through the family-kin group places of cult – in the home and by the stone cross in the field.

The search for pagan origins of these festivals is also only a speculation. Ritual practices of *slava* and *služba*, done at home and near the stone cross in the field – related to family-kin sacrifice of a Eucharist nature in honour of the patron saint – are viewed as “Christian” by my respondents, part of “their folk religion”. Their analysis shows a sacred ritual connection between the family-kin *community* and its *home* and *land*, passed on patrilineally as the father's heritage (“*baštinja*”) – one archaic agrarian idea, a clear indication of the antique and traditional nature of the entire ritual cycle in this part of the Balkans. The connection between individual and saints – basic for Christianity – has been simplified through the ritual mediation of the intimate community to which the individual belongs: family-kin and most often also territorial in the mountainous parts of the peninsula. This is what made family-kin ideology in the mountainous regions I studied on both sides of the Bulgarian-Serbian border so vital – despite migrations, resettlements, repressions by socialist authorities and atheist ideology. Even when the actual ties had been lost, the common feast

of the saint-patron and family protector continue to function as a remainder of the (now) distant kinship and family unity, as a memory of the lost family-kin ideology.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. The stone cross for Đurđevdan, village of Ošljane: Children at the feast.



Fig. 2. The stone cross for Đurđevdan, village of Ošljane:
Ritual at the cross – men bring together their candles.



Fig. 3. The stone cross for St. Nicholas' Day (Sveti Nikova Letnji), village of Ošljane. The evolution of a cult place.



Fig. 4. The stone cross for St. Peter' Day at the Čepan peak near Dragoman in Middle Western Bulgaria

Ivaylo Markov

**TRANSFORMATION OF A RELIGIOUS SITE:
THE ROCK CHURCH “SAINT PETKA” OF TRAN
BETWEEN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP AND TOURIST ATTRACTION**

Tran is a small town in Western Bulgaria situated within 80 km of the Sofia and very close to the Bulgarian-Serbian border, in Znepole – the valley of the Erma River. The rock church “Saint Petka” is located within 1, 5 km of the town centre in the quarter “Barintzi”, in a rocky hill on the right side over the river and the road leading to border checkpoint Strezimirovtsi. The church is connected to a religious worship and an interesting legend about Petka, the patron Saint of Tran, narrated by locals. This worship site and the specific cult to St. Petka in the past, as well as nowadays have an important role in the structuring of religious life and the constructing of identity of the local community (see Вълчинова 1999). In her monographic study Galina Valtchinova examines in details the formation of the St. Petka’s cult in the region and its development during the years till 1980s (she conducted her ethnographic fieldwork at the region in the mid 1990s). Proceeding from this, the current article focuses rather on the present day characteristics of this religious site – the restoration of the church interior and worship practices during the 1990s, the changes which come after the fieldwork and study of G. Valtchinova, the use of increased popularity of this site (not only in local contest, but even across the border), its identification as “cultural heritage” and inclusion within tourist advertisement as one of the most attractive landmarks in the Tran region during the 2000s.

HAGIOGRAPHY AND CULT OF ST. PETKA

In the Orthodox religious tradition three saints with the name Paraskeva/Petka are known: Saint-martyr Paraskeva of Rome, martyr of the 2nd century (commemorating on July 26); Saint-martyr Paraskeva of Iconium, a Christian virgin martyr of the 3rd century (commemorating on October 28) and Saint Paraskeva of Epibata, who was an anchorite and a hermit of the 11th century (commemorating on October 14).

Saint Paraskeva of Rome

The Roman Paraskeva was born as a result of many prayers by her parents. After their death she gave her property to the poor and began to preach the Christian faith. For this she was arrested by the emperor Antoninus Pius, who attempted to force the Saint to denounce her faith. She was hrown into a vat of boiling oil, but the Saint stood in it unharmed. When she was accused of using magic, Paraskeva responded by throwing the liquid into the emperor's facem which blinded him and made him beg for mercy. She responded to the emperor that only Jesus could cure him. Thus he regained his sight and this miracle made him end all persecutions against the Christians in the empire. However, the fallowing Roman emperor, occupied the throne after the death of Antoninus Pius, resumed persecution of the Christians. Paraskeva again were arrested and were put to harsh tortures. On the end, because of her steady faith, she was executed by decapitation.

Saint Paraskeva of Iconium

The cult of St. Paraskeva of Iconium is particularly strong in Russia; she „developed a personality and functions of her own on Russian soil” (Grossman 1980, 39). Paraskeva was a daughter of wealthy Christians in Iconium. The young girl with all her heart loved purity and the loftiness of the virginal life, and she took a vow of chastity. She wanted to devote all her life to God and to work to spread the Christian Faith among the heathens. In the year 303, a military leader charged by Emperor Diocletian to extirpate the Christians, entered the city. Because Paraskeva refused to offer sacrifice to the idols, she was submitted to torture: after stripping her, she was tied to a tree and was beaten with rods. Then the torturer raked her pure body with iron claws. Finally, she was thrown into prison, exhausted by the torture and lacerated to the bone. But God did not abandon Paraskeva, and miraculously healed her wounds. The torturer was not enlightened by this miracle, and continued to torture her. He ordered she to be hanged from a tree and burned with torches. Finally, she was beheaded with a sword.

Saint Paraskeva of Epibata

On the Balkans, however, the commemoration of these two Saints is narrower and most often associated with the glorification of the Saint Petka/Paraskeva of Epibata (Станкова 2006, 105-106). It is well known that the cult of this Saint crosses the ethnical and national borders in Southeastern Europe, by reason of which she is known as St. Paraskeva/Petka the New, St. Petka of Tarnovo/Bulgaria, St. Petka of Belgrade/Serbia, St. Petka of Iași/Rumania.

According to her vita Saint Paraskeva the New was born into a wealthy and pious family, living during the eleventh century in the village of Epivato, on the shore of the Sea of Marmara, between Silivri and Constantinople. Her older brother Euthymius became a monk, and later he was consecrated as Bishop of Matidia. When she was 10 years old, Petka heard in a church these words from the Gospel: “Whoever wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” The words became imprinted on her heart, and from that time she began to distribute her clothing to the needy.

After the death of her parents Paraskeva went to Constantinople. There she spent her time in prayers, meditating on the words of Jesus Christ and the relics of the Saints. She met some zealous ascetics who instructed her in the spiritual life. She settled in the church of the Protection of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos in Heraclea Pontica where she spent five years in concentrated prayer and fasting before making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where she had long desired to venerate those places where Jesus Christ had lived and walked. After that she crossed the River Jordan into the Jordanian desert. There she lived the ascetic life. Once after many years in the desert an angel of the God ordered her to return to her homeland, saying: “Leave the wilderness and return to your homeland; it is necessary that you render your body to the earth there, and your soul to the habitation of the Lord.” St. Paraskeva obeyed, and returned to Epivato in the village of Katikratia where she lived in ceaseless fasting and prayer.

St. Paraskeva departed to the God after two years, and was buried near the sea. She was given a Christian burial, but as no one knew who she was or where she was from, she was buried in an unmarked grave. Years after, the body of a dead sailor washed ashore. It had already begun to decay and give off a horrible stench before a stylite Saint nearby detected it and asked the villagers to bury it. They unknowingly dug the grave right over the relics of St. Paraskeva. That night, one of the gravediggers, a pious man by the name of George, had a dream. He saw a queen seated on

a throne, surrounded by a glorious company of soldiers. One of them said to him, “George, why did you disdain the body of St. Paraskeva and bury a stinking corpse with it? Make haste and transfer the body of the Saint to a worthy place, for God desires to glorify His servant on earth.” Then St. Paraskeva herself spoke: „George, dig up my relics at once. I can't bear the stench of that corpse.” And she told him who she was and that she was originally from Epivato. That same night, a devout woman, Euphemia, had a similar dream.

On being told about these dreams the next morning, the villagers took lighted candles and went to the cemetery, where they dug down and discovered St. Paraskeva's relics, fragrant and incorrupt. The relics were taken to the church of the Apostles Peter and Paul, where, by the prayers of the holy ascetic, many people were healed of various diseases and the blind received their sight (Mesnil and Popova 1994, 744-745).

In 1238, the relics were moved by Bulgarian tsar Ivan Asen II from Kallikrateia to Veliko Tarnovo, then capital of Bulgaria and became a patron of the city and got her second name, Trnovska. When the Ottomans occupied the capital in 1393, the relics were translated to Vidin, town still unconquered and ruled by the Ivan Stratsimir. In 1396 however, Vidin was too occupied. Then the Petka's relics were transferred again to the Ružica Church in Belgrade and the Saint became a patron of this city and her relics remained there till Ottomans conquered the city in 1521 when she was moved to Constantinople and placed in the patriarchal cathedral. In 1641, during the time of Patriarch Parthenius the Old of Constantinople (1639-1644) and of the Moldavian Prince Vasily Voevod, the Patriarchate of Constantinople found itself in great financial need. The Patriarch arranged with Prince Vasily to give him the relics of St. Paraskeva in return for a sum of money. He transported the holy relics to the Monastery of the Three Hierarchs at Iași in Moldavia, where many healings took place and St. Petka became protector of Moldavia. In 1888, after being rescued from a fire, St. Petka's relics were placed in the Metropolitan Cathedral at Iași, where they remain until the present day (Вълчинова 1999, 53-54).

St. Petka has a strong presence in the folk traditions, as well as in the feast-ritual system on the Balkans. In the minds of the population, she embodies many pre-Christian traditions, in which are woven the patronage on the dead and on the infant. Her feast on October 14 indicates the time of transition from the summer to the winter season (Георгиева 1984, 8). Combined in understandings of Petka is her patronage of the home and family, of female domestic work, of domestic animals and the fields, and of health and wellbeing (Popov 2005, 91). This cult of St. Petka is massively widespread through the broad Balkans area. Its nucleus coincides with the contact zone between Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek ethnical element. The rock church in Tran is located practically in the middle of this region (Вълчинова 1999, 57-59; see also there the Map №2, 146).

THE STORY OF SAINT PETKA OF TRAN

For the town inhabitants she is first and foremost St. Petka – patron of Tran. Nowhere in the hagiography and scientific literature St. Petka is found under the name of Tran; there is not hagiographic evidence that she was passing through Tran region or lived there. However, the cult of the Saint in the region is stable and it is maintained by an interesting old legend, according to which the Saint was living there in the small cave where nowadays is situated the rock church.

How this cult can be explained? A wrong association of Tarnovo (Veliko Tarnovo) and Tran is one possibility. This hypothesis has already been suggested by Konstantin Irechek (Иречек 1899, 501). Thus the St. Petka's cult is seen as a result

of typical for Ottoman epoch tendency toward adaptation of old realities to the new cultural outlook. In this way the name of Tarnovo which had a high symbolic status was transferred to the small Tran, which were lacking in such symbolic capital. The transfer of the name involved also a transfer of a part of this symbolic capital (Вълчинова 1999, 63-66).

G. Valtchinova refers to the following passage of *relacio* of Petar Bogdan Bakshev to Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dated 1641: “... *la sua festa celebrano li 14 di Ottobre [...], et questa Santa si chiama Santa Petka di Tam, il qual luogo e vicino Sofia in Bulgaria...*”. She argues that *Tam* very likely is today's Tran, moreover – in the passage is written that *Tam is a place near Sofia (luogo e vicino Sofia)*. Based on this the author proposed that it comes not to a mechanical transfer or mixing of toponyms Tarnovo-Tran, but this passage is the earlier evidence for the existence of St. Petka's cult in the region (*ibid*).

Undoubtedly during the second half of the 19 century the St. Petka's cult was a part of religious life of the population and the small cave was functioning as a place of worship. In the end of 19 century K. Irechek wrote: “[...] *on the northern side in another rock one can see bigger cave built with a small door [...]; inside according to the narrations of population has lived St. Petka.*” (Иречек 1899, 500). In 1925 a lyrical poem devoted to St. Petka was published in the local newspaper “*Transki kraj*”. The poem was written in 1901 by Georgi Nikolov, a school teacher in Tran (he was born in Tsaribrod, nowadays Dimitrograd in Serbia).

*Във рех се в тъмни едни отвори,
– „Скала, продънена от светица!”
Вратар набожен ми проговори.
И тамо осветена водица
На капки падаше от стените,
А шум Божествен се озаря
В кандилца трепетни из ъглите...
И форми сочеше ми вратаря,
Чудати, сложени по средата;
– „Това са стъпките на Светица,
Коя живеела е във скалата...
И странна, истина, бе туй гледка:
Колач и стъпки окаменели,
Личаха в „Трънската света Петка!”*

*I clambered in dark holes,
– “A rock staved in by a Saint!”
A pious door-keeper to me spoke.
And there holy water
Trickled from the walls,
And godlike noise light up
In tremulous float lights in the angles...
And the keeper showed to me shapes
Fantastic shapes laying in the middle;
– That are the steps of a Saint,
Who lived in the cave cut in the rock...
And this was a strange, but true sight:
Round loaf and petrified steps,
One can see in the Saint Petka of Tran!*

(Трънски край 1925, 4)

In this poem are described all elements which are known by the contemporary legend (narrated below in the article): the cave-shelter, the concaved in the rock steps of the Saint and the turned into a stone round loaf. Thus in the period before the World War II the rock church “St. Petka” became a symbol of Tran in several other publicistic and lyrical works, printed in the local newspaper. A special merit in the popularization of the rock church and its insertion in scientific circulation has the local priest Svetoslav Jordanov who in one of his studies of the churches and monasteries in the region of Tran wrote:

“The ancient cave church ‘St. Petka’ is situated near to the massive church ‘St. Petka’ on the shore of Erma river. It has existed since time immemorial and the legend says that in this area with wild nature the Saint Petka who was persecuted, took a shelter in the cave. In order to come here where she settled

and lived, the Saint passed through the place called ‘Kavaci’ near the village of Vrabcha [...] The cave church is small but it is loaded with mysticism. Today’s church board and town’s priests should improve this holy place by building in front of the rock a larger church where the priest will be able to celebrate a liturgy. And surroundings should be turned in a park for restoration and a place of entertainment of the citizens (Йорданов 1940, 215).”

During the socialist period, however, in the context of atheistic propaganda the rock church was abandoned for a long time. Its interior was ransacked and according to the locals treasure-hunters dug the earth floor. The cave was even used as a goat shed. However, the cult toward St. Petka and especially the local knowledge about her have not disappeared. During the late 1970s and 1980s started a new policy toward the churches and monasteries in Bulgaria – these religious sites were evaluated as material symbols of the glorious national past and were transformed into cultural monuments with high historical (but not religious) value. Some churches in the region were examined in details from historical and art point of view and included in programs for conservation and reconstruction (Вълчинова 1999, 137-138). Although the exterior and interior of the rock church “St. Petka” were not reconstructed, during this time the literary modified legend of Tran’s Saint were printed again in the local newspaper (cf. Трънски страж 1976, 4; Трънски страж 1977, 4).

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROCK CHURCH AND RESUMPTION OF THE WORSHIP PRACTICES

The restoration of the small rock church started after the political change in Bulgaria in 1989. The main actors were local women financially supported by a local businessman. They declared that their actions were led by sincere faith: “*I have devoted my live to Saint Petka*” (G.). During the first few years following her retirement (1989), G. was frequently visited in her dreams by her dead grandmother, who persuaded her to commit to paper all old legends and stories about St. Petka and to restore and take care of the semi-ruined rock church. In this way G. became a gatekeeper (her home lies near to the church) who is called to open the church for pilgrims and to narrate the “true” story of the Saint’s life and death, as well as of the miracle accomplished by her.

The Tran St. Petka’s legend

The ethnographer G. Valtchinova (1999, 146) reports in her study the following story about St. Petka, narrated by G. in 1995:

“For Saint Petka that she came from the South, but it was not known whence she passed... This is known from our tradition. ...She was persecuted by a Turkish posse. ... She passed – this is known that she passed – this is the village of Vrabcha. It is known by the fight from 1885... it is divided even now. The place she stopped for restoration is called Kavacite – there were high trees. But the persecutors overtook her – she snatched up her bag and came here. When she came here to our area the village was not situated here – it was higher in the mountain. And she found this hollow, the cave – and she sheltered there. But she kneaded bread – she got hungry and she needed to eat. Probably in the bag she carried some meal. She baked it there and she broke a piece, but the persecutors came. She started bustling how to escape. Then she found a way out from where the smoke sucked out the cave. Here on the rock where she climbed her trace were imprinted. And she went out. Got helped her to rescue herself, to pass through the rift and to come out in the other side. When she came out she passed the cliff there, she crossed the wood along

the path I showed you and she climbed there – there is a rock where she stopped to look over – and there on this rock her steps were also imprinted. From there she passed through Klisura, it is situated next to Yugoslavia's border... And she went to Belgrade... And when the persecutors came inside the cave they found the baked round loaf and one of them tried to break a peace and it petrified at this moment. This is what is known for St. Petka.

(Why she went to Belgrade?) Well, she followed the Christian faith and she just wanted to preach it. She devoted to the Christianity... This occurred in 10th century. Petka was living in 10th century, wasn't she? That means ten centuries after the Christ. But she continued to be faithful to the Christian faith and for that reason she went about.

(Well, she went to Belgrade, and after that?) After she came back again in Veliko Tarnovo, remained there for a time and she went to Romania. There she died. And because of this her relics lies in Jash.

(Have you read this?) It is written in the book "Transkiyat kray", but this I tell you, our history teacher told us in the school, although she was not born in Tran.

In addition G. and the others "keepers" of the church (S., K., M. soon joined her efforts of the church's restoration) speak of "the tears of St. Petka" – the drops which trickle down the rock ceiling of the church. They are collected in bowls because of the belief these drops are "holy water" and have healing power against eye diseases. A part of interior is a small plank-bed where every true believer who has some health problem can spend the night and to find healing. There are many stories about people who were seriously ill, but miraculously healed after fulfilling this ritual. Nowadays on the walls are hung icons of St. Petka, as well as other Saints – the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, St. Ilia, St. Georgi etc. The whole interior's order is based on "transmitted through the generation memories" and keepers on the church argue that it is restored in its pre-socialist mode.

The legend and cult of the "Tran's Saint" shows multilayered local character of the Saint in which we can find an interweaving of different historical contexts and elements, typical of the three Saints of the same name. Undoubtedly, the contemporary narratives are result not only of a transmission of oral cultural knowledge through the generations within the family, but there is an important influence of cultural memory which is institutional by nature – teachers, educated clergymen, publicists and writers (cf. Добрева 2013, 134).

Continuities and shifts in the local St. Petka's worship

In the early 1990s this knowledge about the Tran's Saint is not shared by all inhabitants of Tran. However, in the course of time the cult to Tran's Saint Petka gained a new popularity. Moreover in 1990 the Saint Petka's day is proclaimed officially as a feast-day of the town of Tran. Every year on 14 October locals living around the rock church cook *kurban* and knead round loafs which look just like the stone one. People from the whole region are coming for this feast. The priest celebrates a liturgy, but in the larger homonymous church ("St. Petka"), which is situated below, near to the rock hill. The round loafs and the kurban are sanctified, and they are distributed to the believers to be health. After that the procession led by the priest moves to the rock church where the people address their prayers to Saint Petka. The cult crosses the border and many pilgrims from Serbia also visit the church. Among the bank-notes and coins left in the church Serbian dinar and even euro often can be seen. Several icons among which – the icon of King Stefan Uroš II Milutin, are donations by Serbian pilgrims, too. G. narrates:

“Worshippers from the regions of Breznik, Kyustendil, but also from Klisura and other villages beyond the border come. When in 1994 the border was open hundreds of worshippers from these villages in Serbia came with many gifts and they pray to Saint Petka with tears in their eyes”. Another story relates about a Serbian priest and his ill wife. One night he dreamed about a place with a church and close to it another one – a rock church, which also is patronized by St. Petka: “And he started seeking such place, ask many people and on the end came here. He did not know that here were such place with two churches of Saint Petka, but he dreamed this place and when he came here – all things were as in his dream. He bring his wife, she spent the night here and were healed...”

At the end of 1990s the rock church is better arranged than the big church “St. Petka” which was even plundered and many ancient icons were stolen. In contrast – the icons in the smaller rock church became more and more. The cement stairs replaced the muddy path, leading to the church in the rock hill. On the top of it the big wood cross was set. The legend also went through some changes during the years. If in the early version recorded by G. Valtchinova the hagiographic elements were very slightly noted, in 2005 when I heard the legend for the first time, the official hagiography had already become an important and sizable part of the narrative. S. narrated precisely all moments of St. Petka of Epibata’s vita – her birth, roaming and death. When the story reaches the moment of the Saint’s return to Epibata, both stories tie together: In Epibata Saint Petka was put under persecution, which made her leave Epibata for second time and then she came in the Tran region. The local legend noted above starts from here. In the end S. turned back again to St. Petka’s vita and relating about her death and the following transfers of her relics through the Balkans. In 2010 after narrating the legend, besides the imprinted in the rock steps of the Saint, M. started showing not made by human hand images on church’s stone walls and ceiling – St. Petka, the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ etc. The number of the stories about miraculously healing people grows. Development of the cult and transformations of exterior and interior of the rock church, however, is connected to one more important factor – the increasing role of tourism in municipality of Tran during the last 2 decades.

The rock church St. Petka as cultural heritage and touristic attraction

Alternative tourism have been assigned a very important place within the municipality’s development strategy, which aims to achieve sustainable development and economic stabilization of the region:

“There are splendid opportunities to develop tourism in the Municipality, which are not used to the fullest of their potential, though... Actuated by the conviction that our local natural and cultural-historical sites, which we have at our disposal, are the basic resource for Tran’s economic prosperity, we shall focus our efforts on programmes that are connected to motivating local people to offer tourist products related to nature and a good deal of cultural-historical monuments... (Стратегија 2003).”

The political, economical and cultural context in 1990s and 2000s has an important influence and creates thinking of the local culture as heritage and resource for sustainable development. The religiosity and religious sites are one of these cultural elements which have been considered as important symbolic capital used in the actual processes of (re)constructing the heritage. The enhanced pilgrimage after 1990 has also been creating preposition for such evaluation of the religious

sites – the religious tourism has become one of the rapidly developing alternative touristic branches (Ганева-Райчева 2013, 47). In this respect the rock church soon has caught the local authorities' attention and it has been valued as one of the most attractive sites in the Tran municipality.

The small church and the local legend of St. Petka take a front line in all touristic brochures, guides and promotional movies in the section of cultural-historical heritage. For instance, in an information touristic brochure (made in 2006 in the frame of the UNDP initiative "Sustainable rural development project") one can read:

"During Middle Ages the Tran region formed and developed as a spiritual and cultural centre. Episcopate was established in Znepole at the end of the 10th century at the latest and this is a signal for the unwinding of significant church construction. Today there are 8 *monasteries and 26 churches*. Don't miss to visit *the medieval rock church "St. Petka"*. This place is wrapped in mysterious legend. Today, Aunt Gina will tell of the misadventures of the Saints. There is a centuries old petrified round loaf of bread as well."

Several tour agencies from Sofia have included the church as a visiting site in one-day trips to Tran – as well as visit to the Erma River's gorge and Tran eco-trail, the museum of pottery in of Busintzi and museum of yogurt in the village of Studen Izvor (both villages are neighboring, situated within 8 km from Tran). In 2012 one of these tourist trips coincide with the celebration of St. Petka's day. Visitors joined to the feast.

There are also visits of Serbian groups – according to the church keepers' stories it is difficult to say whether they are tourists or pilgrims because the personal motivations are different, but very often the rock church is just one of the religious places visited within bigger pilgrim routs including several churches and monasteries.

The tourist interest is another important cause of changes of the church interior and surroundings. During 2000s the stairs have been reconstructed and extended. Wooden benches have installed on the top of the rock hill affording a fine view. In 2009 the rock church was proclaimed as one of the three most beautiful, but unknown tourist places in Bulgaria in a competition announced by the TV show "Guide BG" of Bulgarian national television, supported by the Bulgarian Agency of Tourism and the Bulgarian Construction Chamber. During the next year the Municipality of Tran constructed a new parking lot in front of the church and mounted a new metal cross on the top of the hill replacing the old wooden one. A light installation was set up in order to illuminate the rock church in the evening.

However, following the death of S. in 2010 and M. in 2013 the problem who to open the church for pilgrims and tourists emerged, especially during the summer when there are sometimes several groups and dozens of individual visitors wishing to see the church. Because of her age (81) for G. is also very difficult to climb up the hundredth stairs up to the church's entrance. There is not another local believer who is ready gratuitously to take charge of the reception of worshippers and tourists. At this situation the local administration has found a solution and for the first time the keeper of the church has become person who receives a salary for this activity. A plate with weekly work time already has been hung on the church's door. And one more novelty – inside the church one can not only light a candle and pray to St. Petka and God, but also buy a souvenir – small icons of the Saint or magnet with various pictures – the rock church, the icon of St. Petka, the Gorge of Erma River etc. A young woman is currently appointed to maintain the church and to welcome visitors. In

order to legitimate herself not just as employee, she argues that she has received the knowledge about St. Petka by G. and Tells a story about the Saint’s personally appearance in front of her as a shadow on the rock walls. She shows short video recording of this vision on her phone.

Thus although at the beginning of 1990s the rock church St. Petka was an important element of religious identity for several local believers and was mainly related to worship practices of local religious cult, in the course of time under the influence of different factors and changing conditions it has become more broadly popular and the religious site more and more acquires characteristics of tourist attraction. At first the restoration and the maintenance of the church were totally initiative “from below”; currently the initiatives come “from above” – the main actor is the local administration. Besides of all transformations the rock church and the cult towards Saint Petka remain important symbols of local identity. The processes are dynamic and interweaved and because of this reason the topic will remain interesting in the future.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. The rock church “St. Petka”, the quarter of Barintzi, Tran



Fig. 2. The entrance of the rock church “St. Petka”



Fig. 3. The rock church's interior, a general view



Fig. 4. The rock church's interior, the petrified round loaf



Fig. 5. The rock church's interior, icons.
Left up is the icon of Serbian king Stefan Uroš II Milutin



Fig. 6. The rock church's interior, souvenirs



Fig. 7. The Saint Petka's day (2012), the priest in the rock church “St. Petka”



Fig. 8. The Saint Petka's day (2012), locals and tourists are dancing



Fig. 9. Outlook of the rock church “St. Petka” in 2014

Violeta Periklieva

**PLACES OF CULT IN THE BORDER REGION OF PETRICH,
BULGARIA, AND STRUMICA, MACEDONIA – RELIGIOUS
INVESTMENTS, SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL, IDENTITY**

The paper represents an anthropological approach towards religion and places of cult in particular. It deals with the religious activity of the people in the form of religious investments which has as a target places of cult and with the social role of this activity in gaining symbolic and social capital and constructing identity.

The investments in religious objects which have symbolic meaning and are important markers of communal identity are part of strategies for gaining capital. According to Bourdieu's view "capital" refers to the qualities that one has which put the person at an advantage or a disadvantage in the social system. In his terms religious investments are means for gaining two types of capital. On the one hand, it is the symbolic capital, which consists of how a person is judged by his community. It would include the degree of social honour paid to the person or in Weber's terms (Weber 1980), it is a reference to one's prestige within the community. On the other hand, it is the social capital, defined by Bourdieu as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu 1986). Bourdieu employs the concept of social capital to demonstrate a mechanism for the generational reproduction of inequality. He thus points out that the wealthy and powerful use their social capital to maintain advantages for themselves, their social class, and their children. Here I would like to look at the concept from a more positive perspective – not as a tool in the armoury of the elite, deployed to ensure that the "wrong" kind of people don't enter their circles but as a force binding groups together in a way which is basically good for the people concerned.

The religious investments could represent individual or institutional strategies for gaining capital. In the case when the investment is made by a particular individual the strategy could lead to several results. On the one hand, the investor may gain symbolic capital, that is to say prestige, for himself and/or for the community. On the other hand, he may gain social capital which has two possible manifestations: social capital for the investor himself, i.e. a chance for strengthening his position on the upper levels of the communal hierarchy or making his way up in the hierarchy; social capital for the community, i.e. increase in the number of resources from which the community may benefit. If the investment is made by an official institution the results (gain of social and/or symbolic capital) are mainly oriented towards the whole community.

We shall illustrate this with examples from the bordering regions of Petrich, Bulgaria and Strumica, Macedonia. The studied phenomena flourish in both regions after 1989 and could be characterized as part of the so called post-socialist "religious revival". The data is collected during several fieldworks conducted in the period 2011-2013.

One of the basic forms of individual investments inherent for both regions are oriented towards the *kurbans* (blood sacrifices) and the communal tables related to the cult places and their patron saints' days. Often local well-off people and busi-

nessmen decide to pay the expenses for the organization of the *kurban*s. Depending on the scope of their popularity and reputation or on the extent to which they want to advance their influence they chose churches in their home villages or cult places with regional significance. One of the most glaring examples is the celebration of the patron saint's day of the monastery of the Holy Fifteen Tiberiopolis Martyrs in Strumica. The saints are honoured as patrons of the town of Strumica and their feast (11 of December according to the Julian calendar) is a public holiday. The monastery of the same name is a centre of attraction for the population of the whole region. The celebrations begin on the eve of the feast with a liturgy after which there is a festive table for the pilgrims. After the morning liturgy on the next day there is also a festive meal. This meal is called *ruchok* and is one of the examples of the success of the Bishopric of Strumica in replacing the traditional *kurban* with the so called "tables of love". Every year the church board chooses *kum* (sponsor) of the feast who takes the responsibility and pays the expenses for the organization of the festive lunch in the monastery. Usually these people are heads of well-off local families who were baptized by the Father Superior of the monastery or who have taken a vow to ensure the *ruchok* in order to receive help from the patron saints. Those who are willing to be *kums* have to inform the Father Superior as early as on the feast the previous year. The religious investment of the *kum* gains him symbolic capital, that is to say he is recognized by the community as possessing more prestige in comparison to the other well-off people and businessmen. Bigger financial investments and better organization means more prestige, that is why sometimes the sponsoring of the festive lunch takes the shape of a competition between the different *kums*. On the other hand, being sponsor of the patron saints' day is a way of strengthening one's position in society. At the same time the community also benefits – the feast becomes a symbol of prestige and a resource for social profits.

A tendency which gains popularity in the regions of Petrich and Strumica are the religious investments in the form of restoring old or building new churches. It has however different character in each region.

In the villages from the region of Petrich the religious investments are usually individual, i.e. a particular person or family initiates and finances the restoration of an old or the building of a new church in the home village. In some cases these are people who have repaired their fortune and have made their way up in the social hierarchy after leaving the village. Through the investment in the religious life of their home place they have the chance not only to gain capital (symbolic and/or social) for themselves and the community but to provide themselves with "indulgences". Such example is the well-known businessman Ivan Kochev – Chombe who is recently actively engaged in religious activities. Due to his "merits" in 2011 he was ordained archon by the Bishop of Stara Zagora, Galaktion. Chombe built a church in his home village of Parvomay and every year organizes a *kurban* for the feast of St. John of Rila (19 of October according to the Gregorian calendar).

In other cases the religious investments are made by people with more modest means which are not necessarily recognized by them as intentional strategies for gaining symbolic or social capital. Usually such people decide to restore old or build new church because they have dreamt about it or in order to "have good health". Their investments are always oriented towards their home places even if they don't live there anymore. For example, former inhabitants of the mountain village of Bogoroditsa which is surrounded by the remains of seven chapels¹ rebuild them one

¹ "St. Elias", "St. Paraskevi", "St. Spas" (the Ascension of Jesus), "St. Athanasius", "St. Kyriaki", "St. Menas" and "Blessed Virgin Mary".

by one. Thus they gain prestige and social capital for themselves and the village which (not without the help of the local media) became famous among the people of the region as the “Bulgarian Mount Athos”.

While in the region of Petrich the Church gladly embraces such initiatives and consecrates the new or rebuilt churches, in the region of Strumica the Macedonian Orthodox Church is not so tolerant. The wish of the Bishopric of Strumica to fully control and manage the religious life in the region hinders personal initiatives for building churches and in some cases condemns the already built churches to remain unconsecrated. This is the case of eleven chapels built in the vicinity of the village of Angelci by local people after a “dream”². All those people believe that they are “enslaved” (*zarobeni*) and “tortured” (*mačeni*) by a Christian male or female saint who appears in a “dream” and gives instructions of where and how to build a shrine. Usually after a small or a larger chapel is built, the “torture”, or possession, stops for a short or a longer period of time, then the saint starts appearing again, requesting something else from the person who is like his (or her) “servant”: a specific element for the interior of the chapel, an icon, digging a well in the vicinity, etc. All started back in the mid-1980s, when a local man, Simo, went to the nearby town of Petrich, in Bulgaria, to seek help from the famous prophetess Vanga. The latter predicted that one day there would be a very special holy place near Angelci, with numerous shrines. After Simo told the story in the village, local people began “dreaming” of and hearing saints’ voices intimating them to build shrines in the locality specified by Vanga. Shrine after shrine popped up, and the wave of “dreams” keeps producing its effects still today.

The Bishopric of Strumica persists in its refusal to consecrate the chapels in Angelci. As subsumed by the current Bishop, this refusal is grounded on doctrinal as well as practical considerations. The Orthodox Church denies “dreaming” as a justification of lay people’s initiative, “dreams” being part of the so called traditional faith which the institution fights: the “dreamers” who initiate such buildings are stigmatized as “seers” and “sorcerers”. On the other hand, the Church refuses to consecrate the chapels before assuming full possession of them. Everyone who wants to make a donation should donate directly to the Church which will decide what the best way to spend the money is.

Although the shrines born from “dreams” are still not consecrated, today the chapels around Angelci gain more and more popularity among the believers in the region and other parts of Macedonia who come to seek help. Initially legitimated by the prophetess Vanga, the birth of a “holy place” and subsequently of a set of shrines in the vicinity of Angelci came into the focus of the activities of Branko Ivanov, the first person in the village to have dreams after Vanga’s prophecy had been publicly announced, and to believe to have been “enslaved” by the saints. In contrast to other “dreamers” in Angelci, who had only occasionally the experience of dreams and the feeling of being possessed by saints, Branko persisted in this posture, developing a special relationship with the saints appearing to him. He not only has built several chapels (*manastiri*) dedicated to different saints, but has gradually assumed the role of religious specialist. On the one hand, he verifies through his dreams those of his fellow-villagers and on the other hand, he starts to practice a higher form of contact with the invisible world, with a hint to an altered state of consciousness (a trance). The religious investments in the form of building chapels after a “dream” gained prestige for the “dreamers” and helped them become part of a special “elite” in the village. However, one of them, Branko, developed an additional strategy for social and

² For this cultural idiom see Handman 1996, 87-88; Вълчинова 2006, 364-366; Георгиева 2000.

symbolic capital gain which put him on top of the others. After his death his wife, Galaba, decided to take his place. She not only transformed the building of chapels into a competition – the more shrines you have the closer relation with the divine you have and therefore the more prestige you gain – but began feeling and presenting herself as a manager of the newly-emerged religious complex. She clearly manifests her wish to control the process of building chapels by her fellow-villagers as it was when her husband was still alive and at the same time to run the complex by keeping the keys to all the chapels in it.

Besides the individual strategies the set of chapels in Angelci is a target of institutional strategies as well. In 2010 the mayor of the village of Vasilevo³ enterprisingly decided to use the religious complex in order to gain social prestige for the entire municipality. Thus for three years now a Festival for folk dances and songs “St. Petka” is celebrated on August 8, which is the commemoration Day of St. Paraskevi of Rome according to the Julian calendar. Named after the first shrine built after the announcement of Vanga’s prophecy, the festival is held in the locality with the shrines.

Although restricted in a way there are enough initiatives for restoration or building of new churches in the region of Strumica. However, in order to bring them to an end the whole process, from its very beginning, should be managed by the Church. Thus, no matter whose the original initiatives was at the end it assumes institutional character and all the members of the community are urged to make donations. The biggest project in the region of Strumica today is the building of the cathedral church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the centre of the town. The initiative belongs to the mayor of Strumica, Zoran Zaev. The foundations of the church were laid fourteen years ago but the project was not approved by the Bishop of Strumica and the construction works were ceased. Three or four years ago Zoran Zaev once again took the initiative and after long negotiations and disputes with the bishop on Easter 2012 the construction works were renewed.

The Municipality and the Bishopric saw symbolics in the year of the reneewing of the construction works. It was announced that the church will be the biggest one in the Balkans and that its building is on the occasion of the 1650 anniversary of the death of the Holy Fifteen Tiberiopolis Martyrs, the 100 anniversary of the church “Sts. Cyril and Methodius” in Strumica and the 45 anniversary of the autocephalous statute of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. All the inhabitants of the region of Strumica could make a “religious investment”. They receive donation blanks with their monthly water bills in which they only have to fill the amount. However, these individual investments remain anonymous whence the people do not benefit personally but through the community as a whole. The building of the church gains symbolic and social capital for the entire community and to a certain degree for the mayor and the Bishopric of Strumica in particular.

A tendency which is new for the region of Strumica but has a longer history in the region of Petrich is the religious investment in places of cult related to the personality of Vanga,⁴ the famous female clairvoyant in this part of the Balkans. Her biography relates her to both regions. She was born and gained her abilities in the region of Strumica but spent most of her life and won recognition as a prophetess in Petrich. After her death a natural and purposeful process of developing a cult and of transforming her into a “folk saint” begins. Gradually her house in the town of Petrich and the church “St. Petka” built by her in the nearby place of Rupite become

³ The village of Vasilevo is a centre of a municipality in the area of Strumica which consists of 18 villages among which is Angelci.

⁴ For the seer and prophetess Vanga see Iliev 2000; Valtchinova 2009; Вълчинова 2006, 36-57.

places of cult and gain popularity as destinations for religious tourism and pilgrimage not only among the people from the region but from the entire country and even from abroad. At the same time they become a target for religious investments and strategies for gaining symbolic and social capital and sometimes even “indulgences”. A glaring example is the already mentioned businessman from Petrich, Ivan Kochev – Chombe. In 2001, on the occasion of the 100 anniversary of Vanga's birth, Kochev donated a bronze bust of the prophetess which is now placed in the front yard of Vanga's House Museum in Petrich. A scandal caused by the businessman's shady reputation exploded over his act. Yet, the Municipality permitted the placement of the monument but on one condition: the name of the donator must not be written on it. This condition, however, was not observed by Chombe whose name is written in capital letters on the front side of the pedestal. Today the curators of the museum place large flowerpots in order to hide it.

The use of Vanga's image occurs in the strategies for gaining symbolic and social capital of representatives of the Church as well. Such an example is the vicar of Petrich, father Angel Kochev. He is one of the main supporters of the idea of Vanga's canonization which roused the spirits in 2011 as well as one of the people who love to often emphasise their close relations with the prophetess. There is no doubt that father Angel is aware of the enormous potential of the developing cult of Vanga and his actions speak of his wish to put it under the control of the Church. In spite of the official position of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church which stigmatizes Vanga as sorceress father Angel tries to manage the religious life which is being formed around Vanga's personality – he officiates services in her church, blessed her house in Rupite etc.

At the moment the cult of Vanga is managed mostly by the Vanga Foundation in whose possession is the church in Rupite and the complex developed around it, and to a certain degree the Municipality of Petrich in whose hands is the House Museum in the town and her house in Rupite. The struggle for the “management” of Vanga's cult is in fact a struggle for personal symbolic and social capital. Yet, the community also profits because the region wins recognition and develops as a popular religious and pilgrimage destination.

Although while still living Vanga was a popular alternative for those Strumica people who needed help, after her death she did not manage to become an object of mass religious worship in this region. Even though for many people from Strumica her church in Rupite and her house-museum in Petrich are popular destinations the visits are rather a manifestation of gratefulness and homage than of a religious cult. However, Strumica people do not remain detached when it comes to Vanga's great popularity and the developing of cult to her. They are proud to share the prophetess' birth place and never miss the opportunity to mention that she is “*strumichanka*” (from Strumica) and received her gift exactly in the region of Strumica. Today the opportunity which the popularity of Vanga gives for the developing of strategies for gaining personal and communal symbolic and social capital starts the same processes which are observed in the region of Petrich. Following the example of the Foundation of Vanga and the Municipality of Petrich in 2012 the mayor of the village of Novo selo where Vanga spent some years of her life and received her gift decided to transform the village into a destination for religious tourism and pilgrimage similar to the one of Rupite. He came up with the idea of building a memorial park of Vanga at the place of the fountain called *Anska cheshma*. Vanga's blinding and receiving an unusual gift is associated by the local people precisely with this fountain. The project provides for reconstruction of the old *Anska cheshma*, building a memorial park of Vanga around it and marking the places in the village related to moments of Vanga's life and to the process of her transformation into a seer. The

funding consists mainly of donations from local companies and individuals whose names are written on boards in the frames of the memorial park. According to the mayor some businessmen from Petrich are also expected to donate. There are negotiations between Novo selo and Petrich for future collaboration aiming to develop Novo selo as a tourist destination connected with Vanga's church in Rupite and the house-museum in Petrich.

Although there is no developed cult to Vanga in Strumica the realization of the mayor's initiative in Novo selo already puts in circulation some forgotten or new stories and "legends" about the prophetess. The people proudly share their personal memories and stories about Vanga, show the place where she was lifted by the whirlwind and the one where she was thrown.

Thus, the personality of Vanga becomes a basis for religious investments which lead to the appearance of new potential places of cult. Thanks to her popularity not only the local community and local people develop real or potential strategies for gaining social capital and prestige but also the Municipality of Petrich and people from the other side of the border. At the same time the Municipality of Novo selo declares a willingness to become a "manager" of the developing cult of Vanga in the region of Strumica.

If we think of the social capital as a force which binds groups together, therefore depending on the resources used for religious investments, we could judge for the identity of the respective investor. Investing in something means recognizing it as "your own", as something that has significance for you and that is somehow related to you. In this respect the religious investments and the strategies for gaining social and symbolic capital which are based on them represent forms of attesting identity. The examples showed that the main resources which the religious investments use are part of the respective local religiosity⁵ (existing places of cult or devices for the appearance of new). On the one hand, this means that they are forms of attestation and manifestation of personal identity related to a village or region. On the other hand, by transforming the respective places of cult into resources constituting the symbolic and/or social capital of the community, the religious investments turn these places into symbols of local/regional communal identity and devices for consolidation of the community. At the same time these places of cult could be recognized not only by the people of the respective community but by people outside of it as long as they are related to an element which is shared by all of them. Thus, the religious investments in these places could also be recognized outside of the respective community and the results of them (symbolic and/or social capital gain) could affect a broader group of people and thereby bind them together. A glaring example in this respect is the case of the religious investments related to Vanga. They result in symbolic and social gain for the whole community which recognizes itself in her as a symbol and in her cult and which community is extended on both sides of the Bulgarian-Macedonian border. This creates preconditions for common identity construction.

Thus, the relation places of cult–religious investments–social/symbolic capital–identity presents one aspect of the social role of religion and of the bidirectional relation between religion and society.

⁵ Local religiosity includes religion in its institutional form and organization as well as various and unregulated reflections of the religious in everyday life (Вълчинова 1999). It directs the attention to the interaction between the universal religious doctrine and its local variants which belong to particular local communities and are specific for them.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. The chapel of St. Elias – one of the rebuilt shrines in the village of Bogoroditsa, Petrich, Bulgaria



Fig. 2. The chapels in the village of Angelci, Strumica, Macedonia



Fig. 3. A monument made by Galaba with the names of some of the chapel in Angelci



Fig. 4. Festival for folk dances and songs “St. Petka” organized by the Municipality of Vasilevo in the complex with the chapels in Angelci



Fig. 5. The bust of Vanga in the front yard of her house-museum in Petrich, Bulgaria, donated by the Petrich businessman Ivan Kochev-Chombe



Fig. 6. The *Anska cheshma* in Vanga's memorial park in the village of Novo selo, Strumica, Macedonia



Fig. 7. "From this yard "babaVanga" was lifted up by a whirlwind and thrown in a place called *Anska cheshma*" – inscription on a signboard in Novo selo, Macedonia

Ružica Cacanaska
Maja Angelovska Panova

SAINT JOVAN BIGORSKI – CULT PLACE

INTRODUCTION

In the close vicinity of the Rostushe village, standing on the slopes of Bistra mountain, above the left bank of the river Radika, and opposite to the villages of Trebenishta and Velebrdo, in the colorful forest ambience of the National Park Mavrovo and on the rocky limestone massif, on 740 meters height above sea level is located the St. Jovan Bigorski monastery. The monastery is dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The monastery complex is considered to be one of the most important cultural-historical monuments and spiritual treasures in Macedonia. The monastery is located within the border municipality of Mavrovo and Rostusha (bordered by Albania to the West, and Kosovo to the Northwest).

“Inheriting the spiritual values of the ancient cult place of the 11th century, and built over the foundations of older, medieval buildings, the monastery that was renewed in the period from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, represents a compact architectural whole which together with its constructional and artistic qualities is a true representative of the cultural identity of this region (<http://npmavrovo.org.mk/?id=161>).”

The central place of the monastery complex belongs to the church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, the charnel house is next to it, then the seimenian defense tower, the library, the old monastic dormitory, fountains. Special value to the monastery is added by the unique masterly wood-carved iconostasis, relics and, of course, the far and wide famous miraculous icon of Saint Jovan. This paper will specifically emphasize the impact of this miraculous icon on the promotion and the cult life in the Saint Jovan Bigorski monastery.

THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL FRAME OF THE PAPER

The Saint Jovan Bigorski monastery as a cult place, and together with its saints it has a great importance for the people (who can be, or not, believers, and at the same time can or cannot belong to the orthodox religion) because they have influenced their life in different ways (Bandić 1980). That is the reason why the people try to establish a special relationship with the monastery and at the same time a series of norms are being prescribed, stating the manner of behavior of the people both in that place and in certain given situations in order to be favored or to obtain the help they ask for. Some of these norms are written down, while others are not. In that context, the cult is here researched as a “total of religious beliefs and practices related to a particular saint” (Swatos) which have led him and influenced the course of the believers’ life and all those who have turned to it. During the establishing of the behavior standards at the cult place, certainly, the role of the monastery management is very important.

Another specifics of the Saint Jovan Bigorski monastery as a cult place is the fact that although it originates from Orthodoxy, it is also accepted by the members of other religions, especially the Muslims, who also build a “specific own relationship” toward it.

The basic subject matter of this paper is the sociological-historical analysis of the cult life in the monastery, focused on the miraculous icon of Saint John the Baptist. In that context the two research questions are also defined, as well as the relevant methodological procedures for collecting the empirical material.

The fundamental research questions this paper is based on are the following:

1. When, how and from whom they got knowledge about the healing power of the miraculous icon of Saint John? and
2. How much the monastery is being visited because of the healing power of the miraculous icon of Saint John?

For the preparation of this paper, besides the use of secondary data sources (historical records, articles published in the media as a text, video material, blogs, forums), eleven unstructured interviews are conducted, predominantly with believers and visitors of the monastery. Besides these eleven interviews, another interview was carried out by e-mail with the management of the St. Jovan Bigorski monastery. The sample of the research is defined as a „snowball“ (Bryman 2012, 424) sample and the interviewees were selected among the persons who were already known to us and later they proposed other persons for interviewing. The sample included persons who acknowledged during our first conversation that they have visited the monastery and that they have had direct or indirect experience related or concerned with the “miraculous icon”. These features were determined as the basic criterion for selection of the sample in order to see, on one hand, how the information on the miraculous icon is spread and how the icon finds its way to those who need help, creating in that way the “rich” cult life of the monastery. Some of the interviewees were inhabitants who live in this municipality or in the vicinity of the monastery, and some of them were from Skopje who have stayed in the monastery in different time intervals. Common feature for all respondents was the fact that they all knew the history of the monastery very well.

The sample of the research included 7 female interviewees between 37 and 52 years of age and 4 males between 38 and 44 years of age. Eight of the interviewees had completed higher education, two of them had completed high school and one person had master degree. Two interviews were conducted by phone, 3 interviews by e-mail and 6 interviews were conducted face to face 8.

During the elaboration of the answers, the authors of the paper made efforts to transmit the experiences of the respondents as much as possible in their style of expression; they also tried not to group the answers by themes and to present them as total attitudes.

HISTORICAL GROUNDS

According to the legend, during the rule of the Byzantine Emperor Vasilius II (976-1025) in this area, the monk Jovan has noticed a wonderful light in one occasion. When the monk approached the light, he noticed the icon of John the Baptist hanging in the air close to the spring. In the honor of that light he has built a temple which has soon become a monastic and spiritual-religious center. It is assumed that later this monk has been appointed the head of the Ohrid Archdiocese.

During its history, the monastery experienced rises and falls, especially in the 16th century, in the time of the sultan Selim II, when the monastery was almost completely ruined. There is an interest legend according to which during those turbulent times the icon disappeared and then returned back later in the church in a mysterious way. The historical data show that in 1743 Illarion, the monk and later the prior of Bigorski monastery has restored both the monastery and the monastic brotherhood (Иванов 1931, 84; Zajkovski 2013, 150–151).

In 1814, during the time when the archimandrite Arsenius was the prior of the monastery, the construction of the large dormitory started, and few years later, the construction of the dining room. The prior Arsenius has compiled the monastery commemorate book (pomenik), and he was also responsible for the manufacturing of the big coffin wherein the relics of a large number of saints are kept and which are priceless for the spiritual life in the monastery.

Concerning the present facade of the monastery in architectural sense, it dated from the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. Today, the monastery complex, besides the monastery church includes the charnel house, the defense tower and the old monastic dormitories.

In the context of the woodcarving activities in the monastery, it should be also mentioned the impressive iconostasis, which is a work of the Miyak wood-carvers Petre Fylypov-Garkata, his brother Marko, Markarij Frchkovski and Avram Dichov with his sons Vasil and Filip. These are the same people who have also manufactured the carvings in the church St. Spas in Skorje (Траичевъ 1933, 129). The iconostasis made of walnut tree and having extraordinary artistic value was manufactured in the period between 1829 and 1835; many of scenes from the Old and New Testament have been engraved, and the beauty of the iconostasis is enriched with many animals and birds interwoven with floral ornaments.

During its existence, the monastery at the same time represented a spiritual center where the choir service was cherished and a significant scriptorium (Велев 1990, 32), where large number of translations of literary works with a religious content, as well as works with authentic articulation were created. One of the assumptions is that the well known church singer Jovan Kukuzel, who lived in the period from the end of 13th and the beginning of the 14th century (Панов 1999, 118–130). stayed there and drew his spiritual inspiration. It is also assumed that the famous Macedonian leaders of the national revival Joakim Krchovski, Kiril Pejchinovik and Parthenius Zografski resided and worked in the monastery.

The educational tendencies, irrespective the liturgical obligations are also the compound part of the contemporary monkhood, and in the light of it we should certainly mention the rich publication activity, as well as the realization of the exhibition of approximately 70 icons dating from the 12th, 13th and 19th centuries.

During the period of communism, the monastery was largely neglected due to the dominant influence of the atheistic tendencies, but after Macedonia became independent this was drastically changed. Significant contribution in the process of rehabilitation of the monkhood and the restoration of the monastery life at all was provided by the archimandrite Parthenius whose initiatives had significant impact on the religious life in Macedonia.¹

THE MIRACULOUS ICON OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST AS A PILLAR OF THE CULT LIFE OF THE BIGORSKI MONASTERY

Bigorski monastery is located in a place which according to the data of the 2002 Census has mixed ethical composition. Half of the population is Macedonians, and the rest of them are Albanians, Turks, Roma, Serbs, Bosniacs,² so accordingly, the religious affiliation of the population is different (Orthodoxy and Islam). However, although confessing different religions, the population in this part of the country has mainly peaceful religious joint life.

¹ More information on the activities of the monastic brotherhood visit the official site of the Bigorski monastery at: <http://www.bigorski.org.mk/index.php>

² The Municipality of Rostusha has 8618 inhabitants in total, out of which 4349 are Macedonians, 1483 Albanians, 2680 Turks, 10 Roma, 6 Serbs, 31 Boshniacs, 593 others (Source: State Statistical Bureau of Republic of Macedonia, 2002, Volume X).

The Bigorski monastery was a cult place not only for the Christians, but also for the members of other religions, among other, because of the belief in the healing power of the miraculous icon of St. John the Baptist.³ The legends say that even one Albanian bey has experienced the healing power of the icon; after he had a vision of John the Baptist, he came to the monastery and by the help of the icon cured his ill child. As a sign of gratitude, he gave to the monastery a property planted with olive trees as a gift.

There are written materials that the miraculous icon of Saint John the Forerunner has arrived to the place wherein the very church was built. As it is written in the chronicles of this monastery, the icon was miraculous and in two occasions when there was a risk of the monastery to be burnt down, the icon simply disappeared and later was returned back in the monastery.⁴ The natives usually say that the healing powers of the icon were and still are felt by the ill persons, childless parents who soon after their prayers were directed to the icon, got children. The monastery manuscripts mention the fact that the icon was protected, that is, coated with silver armor not until 1885.⁵

The miraculous icon of Saint John is placed next to the entrance to the church and it is assumed that it has been found exactly there in 1020. The tradition says that the icon has found its place by itself, hanging over the water spring. In the 19th century, the monks from this monastery had added third hand to the armor of the icon, to witness the miracles that the Baptist makes with its help.⁶ On the icon, John the Baptist is depicted as a saint having three hands, symbolizing his power for treating the childless parents.⁷

According to the official records about the icon that are available at the monastery's website the icon brings a simple, peaceful and colorful message which descends from the Divine Jerusalem. It emanates the unchangeable and eternal Truth which resurrects something deeply in the human. The miraculous feature of the icon comes from the very icon, „from the face of the saint represented on the icon, it floods as a blessing and gift from the Holy Spirit, one uncreated and not ever lasting light which brings peace, tranquility and joy“. About the icon, the chroniclers of the monastic life have written that it is “blessed” and it “fulfills everybody with consolation”. Both the Orthodox and the Muslims find solution to their problems in front of the icon. Monks are those who read the prayers to the believers and visitors, and then they pass under the icon and apply olive oil from the icon on their faces.⁸ The prayers are different depending on the religion (one prayers are intended for the Orthodox, and other for the Muslims).

³ In this part of the country it is not unusual for the inhabitants to visit the religious temples and to ask for help not only for their own religions, but also from the religion of their neighbors, co-villagers. For example, in the village of Broshtica, populated by Macedonians-Muslims, the inhabitants go to the mosque and also light candles and leave money beside the icons. They say that if they cannot find a solution to a particular problem in the mosque, then they turn for help to the church. „There are no prejudices for these matters, and there would not be“, said the 62-year old attendant in the Broshtica church Dzevat Limanovski. (Biljana Stojanovska, *In Broshtica, the Muslims light candles for their health also in the Orthodox Church*, Nova Makedonija, online edition, No. 22556, 14. 4. 2012).

⁴ Special stamp to the monastery is given by the relics of the saints which are exhibited there. There are the relics of St. John the Forerunner, St. Apostle Petar, St. Apostle Yakov, St. Marina... “As it is the case with the miraculous icon, the relics of the saints are also kissed!”, it is written in the chronicles of the monastery.

⁵ Practices of the Orthodoxy witness that only the miraculous icons are covered by gold or silver.

⁶ This is the sole icon where St. Jovan is depicted with three hands.

⁷ See more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZNQDLG8d00> (Video titled Healing – Iscenie – To restore St. John Bigorski, Uploaded on Nov 24, 2009, (No description available); Exploring Macedonia, Mavrovo, <http://www.istracijamakedonija.com.mk/storii.aspx?id=5>; Macedonian, Reportage on Macedonian Monastery of Saint Jovan Bigorski (1/5), Uploaded on May 27, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4i2gpw4tqA>, (Accessed on 08. 5. 2014).

⁸ *Miraculous Icon of the Saint helps the people for 200 years*, author Ljubica Grozdanovska, Dnevnik No. 1858, 18 March 2006.

The very act of praying in front of the miraculous icon in the interview with the management of the monastery is described as follows:

“Usually, when a prayer is read in front of the miraculous icon of St. John the Baptist, the believer stands in front of the icon, kneels or bows, and the monk puts the end of the epitachelion over his head, while the prayer is being read. When a prayer is read to a married couple who due to whatever reasons cannot have children, usually both of them hold each other’s hands, and the epitachelion is winded up around their hands. After the prayer is finished, the believers kiss the epitachelion, the priest’s hand and the icon, and the priest-monk anoints their foreheads with the oil from the icon candle in front of the icon.”

Because of their gratitude for the “numerous miracles” experienced by the believers and visitors of the monastery, the icon is “over-decorated with gifts” (see the photography in attachment). The silver baby-shaped medallions are gift of the numerous parents for whom this icon made a miracle “gifting them children”. “The number of the Macedonians Muslims who had find consolation here is also not small”, said one of the inhabitants of Rostusha. He said that he has told the story about his older sister to all he had met; she prayed before this icon several times and soon she gave a birth to a child. As a sign of her gratitude, she left on the icon a gold and whenever she comes to the monastery she prays to the same icon and she also leaves other gifts“. In the interview with the management of the monastery, it was cited that some bestow St. John with jewelry, others – gold coin, money, or various things which the monastery needs. However, some show their gratitude by coming and helping in some monastery jobs“.

Many unexpected guests came to pray to this icon for many different problems and their testimonies are posted on the website of the monastery. They are talking about it and at the same time they confirm the miraculous feature of the icon. “The silver case, which covers the icon“, at the same time covers many of the miracles of Saint John, „ leaving only a part, which the new brotherhood made efforts to record and keep, as a testimony for the icon’s sanctity“. However, „miraculous grace is wonder making“⁹ from the miraculous icon and, as the natives from the neighboring villages say, it is not a secret that from now on we will heard for many miracles.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS FROM THE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The character of the empirical results of the qualitative research on the cult life in the monastery of John Bigorski, as well as the analysis of a part of the materials available both from the media and various internet domains, compose the database which provides a possibility for profound analysis. According to the draft research in this paper, the data obtained are elaborated by the research questions, on the same basis as the very research was conducted. In principle, during the presentation of the results, we as authors considered being important to recapture the experiences, attitudes, considerations and the points of the interviewees as real as possible and that is the reason why in the larger part of the paper, the answers are recorded in the form of citations.

⁹The text (*Miraculous Icon of the Saint helps the people for 200 years*, author Ljubica Grozdanovska, Dnevnik No. 1858, 18 March 2006) contains a citation that the restorers from the Institute for protection of the monuments opened the silver case only once when they had to retouch it. „They were astonished when they saw that it was completely undamaged. Only the year (1021) which the restorers had put in the lower right corner of the icon is confusing because it is in opposition to the year of its finding.“

Research Question No. 1: When, how and from whom you have been informed on the healing power of the miraculous icon of Saint Jovan?

The monastery complex Saint John Bigorski is well known and for a longer period of time it is an important part of the tourist offer for Macedonia. In the media, in the tourist offers and in the orthodox circles at all, it is famous and treated as a pearl for the orthodoxy. The proactive tourist promotion, as well as the current activities, contacts and certainly the active monastic communities contribute to becoming a very “popular destination”. The monastery John Bigorski has gained and continued its popularity through the dynamic managing of the monastery activities in accordance with the requirements and the standards of the new age; the rich history; the actual events and, surely the spectrum of shapes of the rich cultural heritage, represented by the monastery complex, the timeless iconostasis, fresco, the many relics and of course the far famous miraculous icon dedicated to Saint Jovan.

On the question when they have been informed on the healing power of the icon, part of the interviewees cited that they were informed from the media and from reading the website of the monastery. Part of them cited that soon after they got knowledge or somebody recommended the monastery to them they came to visit it. Part of them came because they had some particular problem and thought they could solve it there. Some interviewees pointed out that they are familiar with the information that was delivered by their ancestors, and one interviewee has written: „my grandmother talked to me so much and so often about the icon that I think that I know about the icon ever since I know about myself“. One female interviewed by phone, underlined that she has heard about the icon while she was in the hospital (she was treated for sterility), and another female said she was told by her neighbors who originated from this part of the country. In a face to face interview, one respondent said that although he was coming from non religious family, when he was faced with his problem, by his own initiative (having, almost no information) he came and asked the icon for help. One of the interviewed women said that she was hearing a voice while sleeping for a longer period of time, which voice was telling her to come and pray to the icon: “I didn’t know anything about the icon; it appeared in my dream for the first time”.

„I expected that the social media will report much more on the icon, but I couldn’t find much information there. I think that something like a forum, discussion should be organized... There are lots of people that should know about the icon and maybe somebody will find a solution of his or her problem as well”, explained one of the interviewees. At the same time he said that today all of us spend much time in front of our computers and we share various experiences. Those could be framed and make a possibility for an increased number of people to get acquainted with Bigorski and especially with the miraculous icon, the interviewee explained his opinion. “It is important to inform the people, and everybody will act by his own will”, said one of the natives. Another interviewee shared similar opinion and he wrote down: „I think that the most important is much more and openly to talk about the icon and its healing power. I was informed on the icon unintentionally by a colleague and I often pass by the monastery. “The leadership of the monastery is of opinion that it would be good apart from its artistic value and old age, to emphasize its miraculous feature.

Research Question No. 2: How often the monastery is being visited because of the healing power of the miraculous icon of Saint Jovan?

In the answers to this questions we tried to get indicators how important was the experience with the healing power of the icon to become famous or this mo-

nastery to revive more intensively as a cult place. Regarding this indicator more interviewees emphasize the power of the icon and exactly the shared experience related with the icon contributed to the intensification of the cult life in the monastery Bigorski.

„Since the miraculous icon gifted me a child my life is completely changed”, explained to us one female interviewee. “When I stood in front of the icon, I felt warmth embracing me”, another interviewee described her experience. The third interviewee said that since they began to pray for their relative, at the same moment without being aware of it, the relative’s health condition began to improve“. „I have often talked that the very icon, the very place, the very monastery emanates tranquility and love”, said one native who was interviewed.

The interviewees mainly answered that they themselves or those they knew came in front of the icon whenever they had a problem and after they have tried to solve it in other ways without any success. “I have told myself, I’ll come here and if I do not have children, that will be God’s will”, said one of the interviewees in the sample. “Although I do not have children, however I say that maybe I could have been more persistent and come earlier. But, I got knowledge about the icon much later. That is why I think it should be talked more about the icon, in the family, on TV and elsewhere”, explained another female respondent.

One of the interviewees made some interesting point, that he as a Christian (Adventist) visited the monastery several times and he was accompanied by his fellows of his faith. “I cannot say whether the miraculous power of the icon was crucial or another factor, because we were looking for medical solution to our problem long time, and we visited many places, among which was the Bigorski monastery. Maybe it is a coincidence, maybe not, but soon after the feast of the monastery and after the prayer to the icon, we got the good news”, one interviewee explained to us. My mother used to say that the olive oil on our foreheads was not even dried when we told her the long expected news.

In a telephone interview with a woman (about 50 years old) who lived in the vicinity of the monastery, she told us that very often people asked her where the icon was, not where the monastery was located. “I know many people who had some benefit from the icon, but I think that the monastery is often visited for the relics and other goods the monastery possesses“, one interviewee has written in his answer through e-mail. Another interviewee explained to us that the icon, the iconostasis and the relics are the three “fetishes” of the monastery and that it is hard for him to say what is the most important. Other interviewee said: „definitely, I advise almost everybody I know and who is childless, to come and attend the prayer to the icon. Although it is a personal matter, I know that some of those who have visited the monastery ... they told me that the icon helped them ... but, those who have still a problem, I encourage them to continue persistently to pray“, explained another interviewee. „My family was always talking about my aunt who was childless and that she was coming to pray to the icon even from Switzerland. And she was treated for her sterility in many well known Swiss clinics. My parents say that only the icon helped her. When she gave a birth to a baby, my mother left a golden chain on the icon“, one of the (Muslim) (interviewees answered).

According to the interviewees, as well as according to the leadership of the monastery, the very life in the monastery, the religious services, the monkhood, “all of that is a fruit of the blessing of St. John the Baptist“ who obviously helps in miraculous manner or he simply makes “miracles” happen.

CONCLUSION

The monastery of Saint John Bigorski according to its rich history becomes a cult place from its very beginning. The long century history witnesses the varying intensity of the cult life of the monastery. The cult life in Bigorski is especially revived with the restoration of the monastic life in the monastery. An extraordinary important pillar of the cult life in the Bigorski monastery represents the miraculous icon of Saint Jovan the Baptist. The icon's history is described in numerous traditions and enriched with the "miracles" from the present days providing its own "extraordinary important specifics" of the cult life in the monastery.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig. 1. St. John Baptist Bigorski Monastery (<http://kicevo.mk/p1139/>)



Fig. 2. Interior of the St. John Baptist Bigorski Monastery
(http://www.bigorski.org.mk/index.php?content_type=manastir&name=crkva)



Fig. 3. Interior of the St. John Baptist Bigorski Monastery
(http://www.bigorski.org.mk/index.php?content_type=manastir&name=crkva)



Fig. 4. Interior of the St. John Baptist Bigorski Monastery
(http://www.bigorski.org.mk/index.php?content_type=manastir&name=crkva)



Fig. 5. The miraculous icon of Saint John the Baptist



Fig. 6. The miraculous icon of Saint John the Baptist

(<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1070039395111&set=o.47760166080&type=3&theater>)

Ivan Blaževski
Ružica Cacanaska

THE MIRACULOUS ICON OF THE VIRGIN MARY FROM THE MONASTERY KALISTA

INTRODUCTION

The monastery “Nativity of the Virgin Mary” is located on the west coast of the Ohrid Lake, in the immediate vicinity of the village Kalista, five kilometers from the city of Struga. Eight kilometers from the monastery is the borderline, water and land with the Republic of Albania.

The monastery complex, as almost all Macedonian monasteries is absolutely incorporated in the natural environment. The line of the historical movements follows the line of the virginal ecological environment and does not opposes at all to the lines of the nature and the space. Through its spiritual architecture, it relates organically in one harmonic whole, the nature and the art, the organic and the non organic matter, the brain which builds and the reason for building. The monastery complex consist in the church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, built highly in the rocks that raise above the monastery, under this church is located the renovated church “Nativity of the Virgin Mary”, the restored monastery shelters and the church “SS. Peter and Paul” (see picture attached). In the immediate vicinity of the monastery, on the south, coalesce with the surrounding rocks is located the Cave Church, dedicated to “St. Athanasius”. The monastery complex Kalista is a summer residence of the Archdiocese and it is under its manage.

HISTORICAL FRAME

The Cave Church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, located highly in the rocks at the beginning of the Monastery Kalista is the base of the monastery complex. It is assumed that this church has been raised in the XIV century, fact that inevitably relates with the hesychasm, religious-spiritual and theological-philosophical movement appeared on the Orthodox East in the XIV century, mostly in the Holy Mount Athos and in the Balkans, that means, in Macedonia.¹ With the term hesychasm, indicates Sandzakoski (2013), should be covered larger number of elements characteristic for the early East-Christian tradition. With hesychasm is determined the ascetic style of Christian life, which is life lived in prayerful silence, in loneliness and peace, not always associated with anchorite style of monastic life in desert. Usually, the hesychasm is identified with the athonite movement from the XIV century. Although this is not true, it should be recognized that is not comprehensive. However, points Sandjakoski, undeniable is the truth that hesychasm as a way of life and a view of the world was born and developed in the eastern regions of the early Christian world. The concrete beginning of the hesychasm *modus vivendi* and thought is found in the early monasticism from Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Sinai. Its expressed tendency to spread makes it present all around the Orthodox East. From here, across Asia Minor and Constantinople, the hesychasm enters in the Holy Mount Athos and the Balkans. The hesychasm reached its ze-

¹ The word “hesychia”, (Slavonic translation “molčanie”) means silence, serenity, peace, but in the Orthodox, especially monastic life that primarily refers to the inner “prayerful silence”, to the “wise acting” of the inner man of the heart (Jevtić 1990, 112).

nith in the XIV century and as a spiritual movement did not stop on the Balkans. Through its expressed influence on all layers of life of the Orthodox people and their culture, the hesychasm from Macedonia and Serbia spread to North-East in Wallachia and Moldavia.

The development of the monastic life by the shores of the Ohrid Lake, allowed to sprout, despite the old, new monastic cells, cave churches and bigger monastery brotherhoods. On the space near the Monastery Kalista, south to the village Radozhda, there were monastery cells and little churches, that date back from the same period as the Cave Church of the Virgin Mary. Between them is the Cave Church dedicated to St. Athanasius,² in the immediate vicinity of the Monastery Kalista and the Cave Church dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel by the village Radozhda. Monasticism in the Balkans, more precisely in Macedonia, came from the Orthodox churches on the east: Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria. The first Slavic monasticism was coenobitic and from the coenobitic monasticism originates the idiorrhythmic (eremitic, anchorite) monasticism. Actually, the coenobitic monasticism, implicitly consist the eremitic (Sandzakoski 2003). The monastic anachoresis in Macedonia developed, taking as its prototype athonite anchorite monasticism. The monastic life formed in the monastery Kalista became a peaceful shelter of the monks where they continued the tradition of rewriting of church Slavonic books and spread of education and culture. Here, besides the monks from Macedonian nationality, there were also Orthodox monks from Albanian nationality. The Cave Church dedicated to the Virgin Mary was representing chapel of confessions of the monks. In its composition are also three monastic cells made in the rocks in which one enters through quite small and narrow opening. (see picture attached) Two of the cells are on the first floor, and another, a little bigger is on the second floor. On the first floor one cell is concaved down in the rock and the other is on the same level as the floor. The upper or the second monastic cell is made in the rocks with wood floor. Through narrow stairs one gets in the third floor where the church is located (see picture attached). The church is adapted according to the space of the cave and the cave is closed with wall made of crushed stone from the east side and in that part are located the altar apse and the entrance of the church. All the inner part of the church is painted with frescoes representing saints and compositions. On the altar apse is painted Virgin Mary with Jesus, on the left and on the right there is one angel dressed in white and red amphora. On the ark of the altar niche are represented two deacons and one of them is fragmentally preserved. On the east wall is painted the composition "Adoration of Christ" and on the north side of the entrance is set up St. Michael the Archangel in human size with sword in the hands and church cloak.(see picture attached). On the lunette, on the north wall is painted the composition in which are represented Saint Cyril and his student Saint Clement of Ohrid. This kind of representation of the Slavic teachers Saint Cyril the Philosopher and Saint Clement of Ohrid represents a new interpretation of painting of the prototype of Saint Sophia, the teacher and the student, one next to another at the same time also the biographer of the teacher. They are painted in liturgical vestments: lean on one to another, as they actively participate in the act of the Saint Liturgy. Iconographically, this composition is unique,

² This Cave Church is located around 500 meters south of the Monastery Kalista, in one rock in the Lake with the entrance on its south part and the road is made with stone stairs, constructed nowadays. Inside is kept the biggest ensemble of the medieval painting in the region of Struga. Despite the fact that are not saved written sources, also the sign from the entrance is destroyed, however the stylistic marks of the frescoes indicates to their originating from the sixties of the XIV century. The choice of the compositions and saints inside the church, in a relatively little space is made with knowledge, which indicates that they are made by the hand of an educated and skilled icon painter.

not only from the post-Byzantine but also from the past periods. This representation of Saint Cyril and Saint Clemens how they act facing each other is rarity and it is the first example of this type not only in Macedonia, but also broader.

In the monastery, under the rocks where is built the church dedicated to the Virgin Mary is situated also one bigger church "Nativity of the Virgin Mary". Its bases date back from the XVIII century. The raise of the church "Nativity of the Virgin Mary" is related with the rebirth of the monasteries and the monastic brotherhoods in these areas in Macedonia. The reconstruction of the church started in 1977 with the blessing of the archbishop mister mister Dositey and finished in 2003 thanks to the commitment of the current archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia mister mister Stefan (see picture attached).

DRAFT RESEARCH AND RESEARCH METHODS USED FOR THE THESIS

This thesis is based on historical analyses, made according to the available historical and archeological material for the topic. The sociological analyses use cross-sectional research design. For the analysis are collected data with the following qualitative methods: observation without participation and unstructured interviews. The observation was performed on several occasions, and the last one was on June 29th 2014. For the observation are used information from two key informants, which identity is protected. Most of the interviews were performed with the present believers during the last observation and after the liturgy. In two occasions, for the same questions is discussed with local population.

In this text are also used the contexts from the published articles in the media, but it is not made a special analysis of the contexts of the media. They are used only as an illustration of certain segments of the analysis and the review of the cult life of the monastery.

The collection, the analysis and the review of the cult life of Kalista, after the introduction of the icon proceed according to the next research questions:

1. How much is known for the healing power of the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary, respectively how are the interested informed?
2. How often the monastery is visited because of the healing power of the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary?
3. By which ethnical/religious community the monastery is mostly visited?
4. In which way the miraculous icon is bestowed?

THE MIRACULOUS ICON OF THE VIRGIN MARY

The Monastery Kalista is in the immediate vicinity to the village Kalista where according to the data from the latest census in the Republic of Macedonia from 2002 there are 1178 inhabitants of which the majority (92%) are Albanians, respectively Muslims. The rest of the population are Macedonians which are Orthodox Christians. The mixed ethnic composition, or the affiliation to different religions is also present in the other populated areas in the vicinity of the monastery. In the past, but also today, the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary brings together the Christians and the Muslims who came in the monastery because of its healing power. The word icon comes from Greek term which in our form should have the same meaning as the modern word portrait. According to Sandzakoski (1999, 149-154), the icon should express exactly the facial features of the holy figures. Inevitably, it must show, with precision of true portrait, the visual character of the Figure imprinted in it. The style of the sacred-mysterious icon painting has experienced miraculous metamorphosis, depending on the epoch and place. This fact, indicates Sandjakoski, means that the canonical criterion of the Orthodox iconography does not tighten the spaces of the crea-

tive freedom and the individual genius. For example, in Russia was created the original liturgical art, without betray the Byzantine art tradition nurtured in our region. This comes from the fact that the style metamorphosis are also possible and beloved, but the iconographical type remains unchanged. St. Vasilij the Great wrote in the letter to Saint Amphilochius "The honor shown on icons, turns on the First figure", respectively on the figure imprinted on the icon (Sandzakoski 1999, 149-154). From this point, Sandjakoski lists that the power of the sacred and miraculous icons is reflected on the equivalence of the figure imprinted on the board with the proto-image. Actually, every canonically imprinted icon makes miracles because it works the power of the presence of God. Thereby, points out that the power of making miracles of the Sacred icons it is not always sensory manifested, respectively the empirical obviousness of the miracle making it is not the absolute criterion according to which the icon represents itself as miraculous. For the cult life of Kalista the miraculous icon has invaluable importance. Often, believers list that praying in front of this miraculous icon is the reason why they come in this church.

The icon of the Virgin Mary has special place in the middle of the icons of the Inhabitants of Heaven. Miraculously appeared icons of the Virgin Mary are incomparably more numerous in relation to the other icons, not excluding the icon of the Savior. Thereby, Sandjakoski mentions that the miracle is fruit of the God's will. It is unavailable and inexplicable for the human mind. But, because of that, we should not bypass the phenomenon of miracle. According to him, because of the special sensual detection of the proximity of God, the icon is called miraculous. Because the thaumaturgy of the icon is its external and nonpermanent appearance of divine powers and energies. To the question why does exist so many miraculous icons of the Virgin Mary and what their thaumaturgy means, Sandjakoski indicates that the thaumaturgy expresses the special presence and proximity of the Mother of God, her specific became being in the icon. Thereby, indicates that in the abundance of miraculous icons of the Virgin Mary is contained the sign of her proximity to the world.

The limit between the miraculous and non miraculous icon, according to Sandzakoski it is not unconditionally existing, but totally relative. It is not principled, but factual. Therefore, mentions that every enlightened and sanctified icon by the Church is already an icon so it is miraculous. The thaumaturgy of the icon consists in the graceful presence of the first figure of the icon, regardless it is miraculous or not. Clarifying the case of the thaumaturgy of the temple icon, Sandjakoski indicates that if the same feeling makes the local church a temple through the centuries and that is confirmed with the miraculous characteristics of that icon, than it will be celebrated as miraculous. Exactly the same is the example of the icon of the Virgin Mary in the Monastery Kalista.

According to the traditions, the icon of the Virgin Mary was found in the Cave Church in the monastery. Today, the icon is placed in the bigger, renovated church "Nativity of the Virgin Mary". There are two versions of its creation. The first one is that the icon was painted by some Russian monk who lived in the Monastery Kalista. Virgin Mary appeared in his dream with dark face and clothes and with dark Jesus, like he painted them later. The second version is that the icon originates from Russia, but there are no data for the way she was brought to the monastery. The art historians³ which specialty is the icon painting, consider that because of the damages of the icon there is no possibility to confirm precisely from which period it originates. The fact that they confirmed precisely is that the icon originates long before the

³ Blazhevski, I., for the needs of this issue talked with art historians: PhD professor Viktorija Popovska-Korobar, PhD Professor Sasho Cvetkovski and Goce Angelicin-Zhura.

XIX century, in a period that varies until the XIV century. Anyway, according to the technique of painting, it is sure that the icon is not work of a Macedonian icon painter, respectively it represent a work of an icon painter who derives from a place with specific liturgical art, created in Russia.

The specific characteristic of this icon is that the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus are painted with dark clothes and dark faces.⁴ This is a rare icon in Macedonia where Mother of God and child Jesus are painted in this way. The icons on which Virgin Mary and Jesus are painted with dark color are very rare in the world. It is assumed that in Europe there are around 450 icons of this type. The icon, once was seriously damaged. This is due to the believes of the barren woman who were coming in front of the icon, and were breaking a small piece from the wood where the icon is painted, so in certain places the icon was seriously damaged. The icon is protected by the Republican Conservation Center, as much as possible cleared and covered with glass.

As the historians list, with time, based on the experience of the people from the church and broader was quickly expended a belief that this icon has unbelievable healing power. It healed sick people from different physical and mental illnesses, and its healing power was felt from both Muslims and Christians. It is said that a lot of women who had no children felt the maternal happiness after the prayer in front of this icon of the Virgin Mary. In one interview with older people from the village Kalista, they indicate that the occupier of this region in the Second World War, threw the icon three times in the lake, but it always returned in the same place, at the shore near the monastery. Some of the interviewed inhabitants indicate also a version where the occupier threw the icon tied with iron chains in order to sink, but besides that its power appeared and the icon returned at the church. Because of this, the icon got even bigger significance among the population in this region.

Regarding the current liturgical life of the monastery, in a longer period, father Stefan Sandjakoski⁵ serves liturgy in Sunday and in the festive days at the monastery church. He tells the liturgy in front of the miraculous icon together with the person who required that. While the abbess was alive, she also participated in the cult life related with the miraculous icon.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSES OF THE CULT LIFE IN THE MONASTERY KALISTA FOCUSED ON THE MIRACULOUS ICON OF THE VIRGIN MARY

For the sociological analyses of the cult life or specifically of the relation between the believers and the guests to the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary are collected many data, but in this paper are taken out only the data directly related to questions made for the research. The unfinished empirical material abounds with details and symbolism for every act, icon and story related to this monastery respectively the miraculous icon.

The review of the sociological analyses is going by the questions set for the research, according to them is composed the protocol for observation as the list with the questions for the interview.

⁴ Because of the dark color used to paint Virgin Mary and Jesus, usually in the media and in the tourist promotional materials and portals is used the term "Dark Virgin Mary". But, with this name the church does not agreed at all and in the conversations and interviews with the population in the surrounding of the monastery this term was not used by them.

⁵ Professor father Stefan Sandjakoski is full-time professor at the Orthodox Theological Faculty "St. Clement of Ohrid" in Skopje in the departments of Patrology, Christian ethics with Christian ascetics, Philosophy and Psychology.

1. How much is known for the healing power of the miraculous icon of Virgin Mary, respectively how are the interested informed?

The Monastery Kalista is known and already a long time is visited by the population of these areas and beyond Macedonia (beyond the Balkans). The inhabitants of the more distant parts of Macedonia, usually were hearing about the monastery and the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary from the stories from their relatives and friends who derive or still live in the nearest populated places.

But through the new marketing strategy of the domestic tourist agencies, also, through the more intensive collaboration with the tour operators from the region, for promotion of the tourism, the Monastery Kalista is inevitably present in the programs and promotional materials related to the Ohrid Lake. Of course, in step with the times, the tourist offers and promotions are actively placed through the media, but more often through the internet and the social networks, so on the internet pages of large number of agencies in Macedonia one can find pictures and short information about the Monastery Kalista as the pictures and information on the social media for visiting the monastery.

In the list of the short information about the monastery, often is mentioned the icon. But, most of all, people talk about the icon, especially those who had direct experience or their relatives or friends had it.

2. How often the monastery is visited because of the healing power of the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary?

The response of this question can be elaborated through analyses and indication of the recorded testimony of the healing power of the miraculous icon of the Black Virgin Mary, as the interviews with individuals who directly felt the healing power of the icon or they heard about the healing power of the icon from their close relatives or friends. But, is a fact that many of them came in the monastery to look out for help or solution for their problems. The greatest number of the interviewees and inhabitants indicate that in the monastery came they or their close people or unknown (for whom they have information) because they did not have children and they hoped that the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary will help them as it helped the other people.

Long time ago, bishop Nicholas wrote for the thaumaturgy of the icon of the Virgin Mary that “with the force and the mercy of the Virgin Mary, a lot of sick people were healed miraculously and the robbers who wanted to plunder and violate were cruelly punished with an invisible force (Episkop Nikolaj 1991)”. He outlines the example of a sick girl, daughter of one poor widow from Ohrid (from 1931). For this, bishop Nicholas says: “The girl of one poor widow was seriously sick. For a month she did not know even for herself and she did not said a word. Every hope was lost. And the sad mother started to collect money for the funeral things. One night the mother sat on the bed of her daughter and cried quietly. Suddenly, the girl without opening her eyes spoke and said: Don't cry mother, take me to Kalista tomorrow and I will recover. That is what my Mother from Heaven, who is here next to me, said.” The surprised mother trembled. The next day she took the girl in the Monastery of the Virgin Mary in Kalista and she returned her at home, healthy (Episkop Nikolaj 2000)”.

Pilgrim Zhivanka Filipovska indicates the example of a coffee lover who lived in Belgrade and was born in Labunista, village in the region of Struga. He was blind and his mother brought him in the monastery in Kalista. After the priest's prayer in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary, the man recovered his sight (Filipovska 2008). Milenko Filipović wrote: “Women from Debar Drimkol which had no children were going in the Monastery Kalista in Ohrid Lake to shake with the finger the silver cradle which was in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary“ (Filipović 1939).

Father Stefan Sandzakoski outlines the example heard from the abbess Irina, abbess in the Monastery Kalista until her death in 2005. In the Monastery Kalista, together with her family came a despaired woman from Albanian nationality who could not have kids. After the prayer in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary, all her family with all due respect, taking care to not turn back of the icon, had left the monastery. After a year the woman came back with a baby in her arms and said to the abbess that that baby belonged to the Virgin Mary and that is why she wanted to give it to the abbess, respectively to leave the baby in the monastery. The abbess Irina dissuaded the woman in the intention, explaining that the Virgin Mary gifted her with a baby and it is the mother who should take care for that baby.⁶

One interviewee of the village Kalista, Albanian, indicates that a woman of close relatives who lives abroad, could not have children. After he told her about the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary in the Monastery Kalista, she came in the monastery and approached the abbess. After the prayer in front of the icon, she went back in her country together with her spouse. After only a few months called them to tell the happy news that she was pregnant.

Identical is the example of another interviewee of Struga. His close friend from Skopje, with whom studied together, many years he and his wife could not have children. He told them about the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary and after that they came in Struga and he took them to the Monastery Kalista. After the prayer in front of the icon, after a short period, the wife got pregnant. From then on, they visit the monastery very often.

3. By which ethnic/religious community the monastery is mostly visited?

The icon of the Virgin Mary for the population of this part of Macedonia has special meaning and they came to pray and to reverence, regardless their religion. Muslims from these areas have high esteem for the icon of the Virgin Mary as well as for the church and the monastery. For the holiday Nativity of the Virgin Mary, on September 21st, they massively come in the monastery.

The information during last year holiday were transmitted almost in all media. Celebrating respectively “praise this big Christian holiday in Kalista started last night with blessing the believers who visited this religious temple. In front of the icon of the Mother of God reverence thousands of visitors, including people from other religions who believe in the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary”.⁷ Mostly, in front of the icon, besides the Orthodox, come Muslims. They do the same cult activities as Orthodox and according to the words of the interviewee, lots of them already experienced the thaumaturgy of the icon of the Virgin Mary.

With the more intensive frequency of foreign tourists in the Ohrid Lake, during the last ten years, the monastery is regularly visited by great number of tourists. Big part of them, usually tourists who visit Ohrid and Struga for several years, often come to pray in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary. The interviewee indicates that part of them experienced and believe in the healing power of the icon. They outline examples of foreign tourists who after the prayer for health in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary, felt improvement of the health. One interviewee outlines the example of a couple from Holland, in older age. After the prayer in front of the icon they felt some kind of relief and consider that it reflected to their further good mood and good vitality.

⁶ The example noted derives from an unstructured interview with father Stefan Sandzakoski.

⁷ The president Ivanov, attended the liturgy in the Monastery Kalista, for the holiday Mala Bogorodica (Birthday of the Virgin Mary) (the author is not listed) September 21, 2013 <http://www.alfa.mk/News.aspx?ID=63485#.U42zZnKSzoQ> accessed in June 1. 2014.

4. In which way the miraculous icon is bestowed?

Big part of the believers and visitors of the monastery, in sign of gratitude light candles, a lot of them leave money or gifts in the monastery. But does not exist a special practice of bestow, it is a matter of individual conviction. The space around the icon is not so much decorated with gifts of the believers and visitors of the church. It is not small the number of those who experienced some kind of boon and after that more intensively started to come and pray and to bestow the icon in their way.

CONCLUSIONS

For the cult life of the monastery in Kalista special significance has the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary. For its thaumaturgy speak both the historical records and the modern testimonies of the believers and the travelers who had prayed in front of it.

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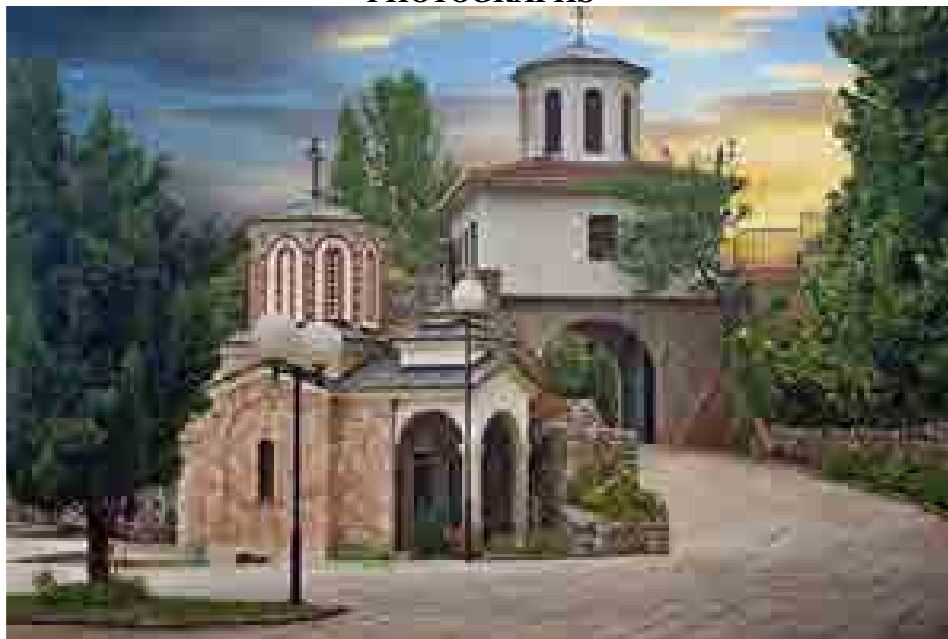


Fig. 1. Church of St. Peter and Paul



Fig. 2. Cave Church of The Holy Mother of God



Fig. 3. The bigger church of The Birth of The Holy Mother of God
(under the cave church of The Holy Mother of God)



Fig. 4. The interior of the church of The Birth of The Holy Mother of God



Fig. 5. The icon of The Holy Mother of God



Fig. 6. The icon of The Holy Mother of God (after it was cleaned and protected with glass by The National Conservation Center)

Raj Rozália
Nagy István

SHRINES, PILGRIMS IN VOJVODINA

It is known that there were shrines – involved in the Middle Ages – where the subject of the atonement was not a relic, but rather a picture or a statue endowed with different abilities. They were mostly depicted the Virgin Mary, for example on the place of the revelation. A number of studies is awaring us that among, in the world known revelations, the Virgin Mary revelations are in the first place; though, according to the literature on this matter, there were cases where even for a longer period of time, the church itself showed unresponsiveness about miracles, visions, revelations.

About the Virgin Mary revelations we can hear in our region as well. For example there is the medieval pilgrimage site of Doroszló (Doroslovo), with a number of such records in the diary of the shrine, as well as the shrine of Töröktopolya (Banatska Topola), where witnesses of the revelations are people still living there. Also, in the time of our visit, many told us, that during of their pilgrimage in Međugorje, Virgin was being „gracious” to them, and manifested itself.

The existence of the five¹ most popular shrines in the area of Vojvodina, is continuous (their origin is from different ages). The visiting rate of the places is varying, yet significant. Their existence even today is of great significance in the religious life of the Catholic Hungarians, especially as their former pilgrimage area during the First World War, and thue to the border-line changes in the post-war of the 1990s, narrowed.²

While sometime the Catholic Hungarians of Bánság (Banat) attended to Radna with a particular respect, till then the Catholic Hungarians of Bácska (Bačka) gladly visited Máriagyúd, Szeged, Almás and Mária-Bisztrica. So pilgrimage has a long tradition in this area. Till the 1950s, probably there was no Catholic Hungarian, who had not been at a place of pilgrimage during his life, at least once. Although in the post-World War II period, at the time of the Church's persecution, marching with a crucifix or flags in our region has been prohibited, the pilgrimage habit still not stopped, it just changed. Later, when the rigour eased up, especially in the 1960-1980s, the pilgrimage revived again.

Our script is a reviewer of the several years' collection on the popular piety subject, sarterd in 1990. The rural pilgrimage sites, such as Tekia (Tekija) Szerémség (Srem), Tötöktopolya, Versec (Vršac) Bánát (Banat), Doroszló, Szabadka (Subotica) Bácska has been continually visited by us. These places, due to surrounding areas were beloved and significant once to the Hungarians living here. We are mentioning their origins and their history, but rather we are attempting to present the changes of the pilgrimage habits, to find out how popular and visited these places are today by the Hungarians and to show where and in what masses are the Catholic Hungarians still present.

¹ In our region, especially in the former marhy bed of Mosztonga river (today the D.T.D chanel), we know about several pilgrimages with local character. These places are visited mostly by local believers and by the believeres of the neighbouring villages. That is the reasen we won't touch this subject this time.

² These are such geographical terrytories, which for today belong to the neighbouring countries, they are outside of our borderline.

The origins date back to the middle ages of the pilgrimage site placed in Srem, near Újvidék (Novi Sad), next to Pétervárad (Petrovaradin). These days it is called TEKIA and belongs to the diocese of Gyakovó (Đakovo). The holy place has actually two Patron saint's days. People call it Little Tekia" (the 26th of June), the other "Big Tekia " (the 5th of August). Main Patron saint's days is the latter, the Monthly Annunciation.

At the entrance of the shrine's temple, built in 1881, in New Gothic style, there is a subtitle (in Hungarian language as well) where we can read the following about the history of the shrine:

"At this point in the Middle Ages was a stone chapel, built without a tower. After the Turkish occupation of Pétervárad, in 1526, the chapel was demolished. In the time of the Turkish occupation, between 1526-1687, an Islamic mosque was built, with a narrow spire, minaret and monastery for two dervishes, which was named Arad Tekija resting-place. Because of the cold spring water of the fountain, Petrovaradin branches and beys came with pleasure to pray here. In 1687, when the Turks were expelled from this region, the parsons of the castle's parsonage, the Jesuits, transformed the mosque into a Christian chapel in honor of Virgin Mary and placed a statue, which is still preserved in the shrine ..."

Here we would like to mention that the records show that the icons of Our Lady, the devotional image of the pilgrimage church, is the copy of the Roman Madonna, whose original is kept in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, and is held as the icon of St. Luke, the Evangelist.

On the origin of the shrine, there are known to many legends. All the variants are connected to Virgin Mary. Among the people we asked, the most vividly lives the legendary tradition of the battle between Prince Eugene of Savoy and the Turks, in 1716, which for the Hungarian Christians ended in victory with the help of the Virgin's intercession.

Here is one version of the legend:

"The Turks had a great battle with the Hungarians at this place. The Hungarians were far fewer and have looked all that perish. Then their leader knelt and began to pray to the Virgin, the other soldiers repeated the prayer. Suddenly they saw that the snow started to fall in big flakes, but only on Turkish. The snow covered them, the weather turned to cold and they all froze to death. Thus, the Hungarian refugees. It happened on the 5th of August to dawn. They say the snow covered the Turkish army. Then the Sultan has signed a contract in Karlóczy, which states that Hungarians they will not battle anymore. At the shrine there is a Holy Well too, which was also „opened” by Virgin Mary at the time of the battle. This is why the water is still healing.”

There is a legend of the shrine from the later times:

"After the Second World War, the pilgrimage was forbidden in our region. Secretly, people still went to take care of the shrines and commemorated on the Patron saint's days. Close to the Tekian shrine at that time lived an elderly Croatian woman. Once Tito was in Novi Sad and his journey led through Pétervárad, next to Tekia. She then welcomed Tito, who recognized her as a former trusted warrior. Talked, discussed about the shrine as well. Then the woman asked Tito to eliminate the religious prohibition. Tito went to the church with the woman, understood what the shrine means to the believers and allowed the pilgrimage. From that time the area of the Tekian temple is populous again.”

The pilgrimage church with impressive size and three entrances stands in the immediate vicinity of the Novi Sad-Belgrade route. In a plane with the church, next to the corridor, on the free, grassy hill is the camp altar. On the left side, a stone cross. Although the church appears to be rather large from the outside, with the two beautiful steeple, the atmosphere of the inside emits intimacy, peace and warmth. In particular, on Patron saint's day, when they place the Mary's statue on a walk around altar. The pilgrims carry that on their shoulder during an evening candlelight procession. On Patron saint's days they hung a picture of Mary on the wall of the church. In front of it is placed a metal candle holder for pilgrims' candle benediction. The interior of the pilgrimage church was renovated several times.³ Then were removed from the walls of the church the crutches of believers healed at this place, and the pages of the booklet where pilgrims wrote their expression of thanks for the intercession of the Virgin. However, on the left and the right side of the entrance there are marble tables with the pilgrim's expressing gratitudes in multiple languages. Instead of the three old altars, they placed in the sanctuary a walk around altar. On the slope behind the pilgrimage church, a little, winding road leads to the legendary source, where the water, supposed to be healing, constantly trickles along the hillside.

A place located to the west of the pilgrimage is the "golden cross". Many say, in this place the Virgin appeared to a little boy. During the old Patron saint's days the pilgrims visited not just the Calvary, but they came here as well, sit around it, prayed and sang. On the Patron saint's days in 1994, it was ordered, freshly painted, but on the altar with a damaged crucifix, only one candle has been seen. That time pilgrims were not present and no ceremony was held there.

In the past and even today the shrine is characterized by multinational pilgrims: Hungarian, Croatian, German, Serbian, Slovak, Roma. In the time we were there, the bishop of the diocese of Gyakovó, Msgr. Cirilo Kos came already in the afternoon, with several church people from Novi Sad. It is typical that each ceremony is attended by almost all the pilgrims national affiliation, regardless to the language of ceremonies. During the evening candlelight procession they started from the clearing behind the church, in the direction of the pilgrimage church. Sounded singing in Croatian. Arriving to the pilgrimage church they sung the songs of Maria in front of the altar and said their prayers. In 1994 only here lived the habit of the overnight. Many people during the night went to the shrine temple. Mary was gifted then, too. The grants they put into the wicker basket on the altar, the precious textil in several meters put on the statue itself or carried to the altar. In the meanwhile, they crossed themselves, touched the statue, or a rosary hanging from their hands and kissed them. Circled the altar three times after donation. It turns out that this type of donation, lives only in the Serbian Orthodox habits of the believers. They were the only ones who walked around the altar (three times) on their knee. They said, they put up their effort in Virgo. The earlier, we are told, the Hungarian pilgrims also did penance on their knee. The pilgrims said themselves Muslims, backing away from the altar, always looking towards the statue face, fall away. There were pilgrims who kissed the front door of the church three times or touched with their foreheads the door jamb. There was a surprisingly large number of Romas. No religiosity in their manifestations could be found. In the late hours of the night the shrine was quiet. Many blanket down under the stars on the lawn and rested, others on the benches in the church, few in their cars, possibly in the homes of the residents living close.

³ About the exact time of these, we can read on several marbel tablets.

Where once there were several thousands of Hungarian pilgrims during the Patron saint's days, lately all present only in a small part of it. Most significant is the presence of the Croatian supporters in the area, although organized, arrived only from Slankamenci two busses with pilgrims. As they said, from those Hungarian villages, only few of them came recently, before hundreds of them. The Way of the Cross wanderings was indicated by a group of ten singers arrived on the holiday eve from Szenttamás. Only they bought living bouquet of flowers and placed it on the Christ's tomb, on the cross-bound, on the pilgrimage church wall mounted crucifix, on the image of Mary and to the main entrance of the pilgrimage, which they touched, or kissed, or walked around.

The old Hungarian pilgrims of Tizsakálmánfalva (Budisava) revived the old habits of Patron saint's day. An elderly Mosorin-born Hungarian pilgrim said when she was a little girl, she walked to the shrine. They have slept in Kovilj and then continued on their way through Karloca towards Tekia. They also passed through Šajkaš. Here people from Kovilj, Višnjevac and Budiszava all waited for each other. From here, with the leadership of Petity Verka, they continued their journey. Before World War II the Germans were also present in large numbers at this Patron saint's day. The Hungarians were admiring how the people from Karlóca (Sremski Karlovci) and Ruma were accompanied by a brass band as they approached shrine. According to the memoirs, a lot of sick people came here during Patron saint's day in the hope of healing. Elderly Hungarian pilgrims said the legendary elm tree's every little arista and leaf has got apotropaic and protective powers. It is believed when you carry it everywhere with yourself you can constantly feel the Virgin Mary watching over you. If the twig is kept inside the house, it protects the house and its inhabitants as well. On Palm Sunday it is also carried to the church, hence it is taken from the shrine into the homes of people.

Almost all of our respondent pilgrims hold that the spring's water near the shrine has healing powers. Therefore, they washed themselves there, with their wet hands they caressed their faces, drank from it, and they were almost constantly standing in line. They waited for the slowly trickling water to fill their bowls in order to carry the water into their homes. There were people who lit candles at the spring.

On the day of the holiday, the sound of the morning bell, signalled the beginning of the five o'clock Mass. Subsequently, arranged in columns, singing, praying (mostly in Croatian and Hungarian) we marched from the pilgrimage church to Petrovaradin to the Calvary and back. At nine o'clock, the Hungarian Holy Mass started. In 1994, the Holy Mass was celebrated by the bishop of the diocese of Subotica, Msgr. János Péntzes celebrated with the participation of ten other priests. On both days, there was an almost permanent opportunity of confession-making that was carried out on 6-8 places in different languages. The shrine's Holy Mass in Croatian started at 10 pm. This was the most crowded one, many nations were together. There were probably 3-4000 people. When the Mass finished, many people bought various items that were sold in the church yard. Till 2pm the number of the pilgrims depleted, however the shrine was not entirely depopulated. In the afternoon, families were continuously arriving and leaving. They came into the church for a short time, several people broke a piece from the legendary elm wood and brought water from the spring. With the coming of twilight the shrine was left without people.

It may seem that the former golden age of the Shrine is over, but the existence of it is continuous, which fact and the geographical location of the place are extremely important for Hungarian people.

Leaving Basahíd (Bašaid) in the direction of Kikinda, the sign directs us to the left towards Bánát Topolya that is Töröktopolya which was founded in 1790, and

about 5 kilometers away the town itself can be found. According to the 1991 census, the number of inhabitants reaches the 1176, of which 493 are Hungarians.

This year we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the shrine church that was built in 1899. It is set in typical rural setting, but it's in the village's main street so it does not suggest a shrine's sacred intimacy. The Hungarian Catholics from Central Banat (Beodra, Torda, Magyarcsérnye /Nova Crnja/, Tóba /Toba/, Kisorosz /Rusko Selo/, Kikinda, Begaszentgyörgy /Žitište/ Udvarnok /Banatski Dvor/, Basahíd, Szentmihály /Mihajlovo/) are the ones that show up here during the Assumption.

According to the legend of the origin of the shrine there was no wonderful well or spring. In the early 1850s a small chapel was built, which served as a school too, and on several occasions the Virgin Mother appeared here. A form was issued by the authority of the Church which stated that on 14th and 20th December 1854, the first miraculous apparitions happened. Later, between 1855-1859, 117 miraculous events were recorded, the last one was by Nyári György on 15th – 16th August 1886. From that time on the village has become a pilgrimage venue. The sick came here in the hope of miraculous healing. From the description of a healing from the year 1885, we learn that a mother of a little girl dabbled her daughter's eye with the moisture that was dripping from the wall where the apparition had taken place. While she was praying for the Virgin, her daughter healed. The shrine with some interruptions, is still visited today. According to the 1934 records, the village had three Patron saint's days. Whit Monday, Virgin Mary (8th September) and Assumption (15th August). The latter used to be called the big Patron saint's day by the faithful. This day is still the day for the shrine's Patron saint's day. It belongs to the Zrenjanin diocese and it is the only Mary shrine in Banat. The liturgical language is Hungarian, Croatian is used during Patron saint's day. Since it has been built, it was renovated several times. Thus, the exterior and the interior was painted again in 1962. In 1979 a new tower structure and the camp altar pedestal were made. In 1988, the church's ceiling was renovated. The latter is modelled after churches with cassette-type-ceilings, which differs greatly from the ceilings of the churches in our region. The old altar was replaced with an altar that enabled the priest to face its audience. Two built-in wooden pews were placed in the church. Between the benches, fastened to rods, greater or lesser sized flags are lined up. The latest apparitions are bound to one of them. According to living eyewitnesses, around 1991, during the Bosnian fighting flare-up, the Virgin appeared on it. The caretaker of the church says so, and as he says, his vision is continuous. The relief depicting the head of Christ received a place above the tomb of Christ at the end of the pew. There is a legend to it, too. According to this, there were pilgrims who thought that they heard him talking and saw its lips moving, but could not understand his whispering. In a small cabin, on the left side from the main entrance, the wall-related apparitions of Mary can be seen. Opposite her there is a narrow little window. In the middle of the cabin, a Mary statue is standing. The faithful believe that Mary's intercession and protection, can be won through prayer and through the touching of the place of the apparition.

Catholic Hungarians from the area are very massive and pilgrims of other nationalities are very scarce on Patron saint's day. Unlike former ways of celebrating, Patron saint's day has a new custom of celebration. In the organisation of the church, from each village pilgrims arrive by rented buses. If individually organised, they arrive in tractor trailers, vans, or cars, not on foot like in earlier times. However, as they once did, at nine o'clock, when they have all arrived, they are arranged in the shape of a cross and they are singing in front of a crucifix decorated with garlands and banners while they march to the church. Their arrival was indicated by the bells' ringing. There were those who said a prayer at the cross that was placed in

front of the church, the others at the main altar. Before they left the church, they prayed at the small chapel that marks the place of the apparition. During Patron saint's day they put their candle and money donations here. Elderly people say that there used to be a two-day Patron saint's day at Topolya (Bačka Topola). The surrounding communities of Hungarian and German population have arrived before the start of the religious celebration. On the walkway at a nearby village they rested at the foot of a small bell. Upon their arrival, they confessed, and then marched to the cemetery and prayed for the dead. Being up late was also typical of the old Patron saint's days. As they say, there were many children and the youngsters at that time. Now, most of the pilgrims are old and middle-aged. There was a programme that contained a timetable which was strictly followed by everyone. They joined in common devotion and then gathered around the camp altar behind the church for an afternoon penitential liturgy. At twilight the main pastoral solemn was held in Hungarian, celebrated by Bishop Msgr Laszlo Huzsvár and with the participation of many fellow priests. This was followed by a candlelight procession with around 800-1000 pilgrims in attendance. With deep religious beliefs, they sang the Mary carols almost as one. Among them was one which we did not hear at any another shrine. However, when the Mass finished, this devotion was replaced by bustle and all of a sudden the shrine was almost totally deserted. The custom of staying up late was not present anymore. Plants are not carried to people's homes. However, knick-knacks and candies are. On the August 15th Assumption Day, on the day of the anticipated Holy Mass in 1994-1995 we were far more fewer, and the previous day's massive, devout pilgrim army was nowhere to be seen.

In our region, the only Mary shrine with an ecumenical character is BUNARIĆ or SZENTKÚT or VODICE which belongs to the diocese of Subotica. Although, its origins cannot be traced back hundreds of years, still, it is highly important, especially for the town and its multi-ethnic population. It's located near the bottom extension of the Palić Lake (Palić) area. According to the stories and some records of the last century, it is a venue of special events. It is said that a trickling spring has long been present here, where the weary wanderer could quench his thirst. After a while, the healing properties of the spring water spread into the news. After these events, the first who started to respect it as a sanctuary were the inhabitants nearby; the Catholic Bunjevacs - Croats and Hungarians, as the Serbian Orthodox believers. The churches declared two different views regarding the source of the water's great power water, but it did not bother the faithful. Among them several legends are alive as regards to the shrine's origin. Most of them connects the origin with Mary's appearance and miracle-working power, that blurted a spring in this place. According to the legend, the healing power of the water, first made a little girl regain her sight, and a thirsty shepherd and his flock were rescued from death.

The cult of the location of the legendary healings has been increasing, and in the 1980s the attendance was considerable. Although, adherents of both religions requested the church authorities to place a formal declaration of grace on the spring and the location simultaneously, the Orthodox application found sooner understanding. Thus, the shrine chapel was built in 1883 from donations, which is devoted to the Virgin Mary and the Patron saint's day was put on August 28, on the Assumption Day. After 16 years this has been replaced with a new building, as can be read in Subotica on a 1911 *Subotička Danica* Bunjevac-Sokác calendar. In 1914, a large stone crucifix was also hast set up from the faithful donations of Orthodox people and in 1939 and authorization has been given for the building of a new (today's) chapel, which was consecrated in 1940 by Father Stanis Mihajlovic. The Catholics' plan for the construction of the chapel did not go so favourably. In 1893, only a large stone

crucifix was asserted, which can still be seen in front of the chapel. The construction of the chapel, however, only took place in 1896, which was devoted to the honour of Our Lady Comforter and since then, masses have been held here. The celebration of the Catholics, the shrine's day of Patron saint's day is still being held on the last Sunday in August. Due to the Palics lake bailout of the 1970s, the chapel was demolished, but after filling the soil, it was rebuilt in its original form and on its original location. Since the late 1990s, continuous and big investments happened here. In front of the chapel, a covered part, at the back a basin has been built, a new camp altar and more buildings were made that provided a pleasant environment for the pilgrims and a smooth stay.

The shrine used to be visited throughout the year. Most of all women were the ones who came here, sometimes even in winter, mostly alone. Almost all of them prayed for their children. The most powerful prayers were considered those before sunrise. Besides Patron saint's day, the biggest crowds came at new moon on Saturday. People mainly came from the surrounding farms, but people from nearby villages also arrived in the area. Their priest did not come with them and they did not bring flags or crucifixes. They spent their journey with prayer, the rosary was said. Till the 1920s, on such occasions there was no mass. Since 1953, from St. George's day to St. Michael's, and also on the Assumption and on the Virgin Mary Feast Day ceremonies had been held at the shrine.

The heyday of the shrine was between 1930-1940. According to earlier narratives, there was a bigger circle of people who came to this shrine. Apart from the town people, faithful ones also came from Tornyos (Tornjoš), Zenta (Senta), Topolya, Tavankút (Tavankut), Bajmok, Gábrity (Gabrić), Nagyfény (Žednik), Mérgeš (Mirgeš), Orom, Ludas (Ludoš), Tóthfalu (Totovo Selo), Felsőhegy (Gornji Breg), Palics (Palić), Hajdújárás (Hajdukovo), Kisbosznia (Mala Bosna), Verusity (Verušić). They have appeared in the early morning hours and were praying and waiting for sunrise. During the day, they had consumed the food they had brought and they had quenched their thirst with the Holy Well's water, in which they washed their faces and also took home from it. Those who were home also wetted their eyes, their faces, their legs and left some for cases of disease. At home they poured some into the well, just like they did in the animals' troughs. The house was also sprinkled with it to protect it from lightning strikes and its residents from harm. When a child was born in the house, first it was sown by the Holy Well's water to be healthy, and that garbling would not reach it. These people also took some water to the cemetery and sprinkled it onto the graves of their dead ones. From marshy places reeds were also collected which, according to the beliefs, held apotropaic power.

It seems, respect for the sanctuary and the cult of Mary did not fade away. Not even today. From 1st May to 8th September 1970s, Holy Masses were held not only on Patron saint's day but on the first Saturday of every month. Although, today, apart from the urban population, only people who live nearby visit this place, on Patron saint's day huge crowds appear and old customs are still being kept alive. Since 1971 few people even spend the night in the shrine. Since then, a mass is held the night before Patron saint's day where the Holy Well's water is blessed. During the evening candlelight procession, the faithful march from the chapel to the altar camp. A newer habit is for pilgrims to bring bouquets of flowers to the shrine which are placed on and around the crucifix in front of the chapel. When setting off home, a few flower petals are torn out, brought home, and are kept in their prayer book. People still donate to the shrine. Money, textiles, gold jewelry, or marble inscription plate, which is placed on the wall of the chapel. Some are making a pledge to repaint the chapel and the crucifix for the feast. Burning candles are placed in front of the crucifix.

The icon of the Holy Well is the relief of the Syracuse Virgin Mary, which is actually a copy of the Syracuse Weeping Madonna image. The copy is the same size as the original. Earlier, during the year, the relief was kept safe in the Parish Church in Sándor, today it is in the chapel, however on Patron saint's day, during the Masses at the shrine, it is placed on the camp altar.

According to the memoirs, there was a time when the Orthodox believers also went out to the spring on new moon Saturday. They drank from its miraculous water, they washed their ill body parts and took some of it home as well. When the Patron saint's day of the two churches falls on the same day, the liturgies are held separately. The pilgrims were so many that they had to pray in their own chapels and in its surroundings according to their denominational divisions. According to the clergy, in the 1990s, 3000-8000 pilgrims visited the shrine during Patron saint's day.

Written records relating to the pilgrimage places are not many. From father Andrija Kopilović we have learnt that in the archives of the Roman Catholic parish in Sándor (Aleksandrovo) some documents can be found that only mention the shrine, while in the bishopric relevant material is not kept. In the 1930s Stoffner Martin chaplain (1899-1956), edited a singer book in which "probably" Bunarić is briefly mentioned as well. As we learned from Father Rade Šovljanski, the Orthodox parish in Sándor archives contain authentic documents only on the construction of the current chapel. Since the late 1990s, on this shrine renovations and expansions took place. Both caretakers of the shrine live in residential buildings on the shrine's realty.

Today, the most popular and the most visited place for Patron saint's day in Vojvodina is the Holy Well of Doroszló. The origin of the shrine can be traced back well before the Turkish times, all the way to the Middle Ages and its existence continues even today. Located in the southwest of Bácska, once the shrine which belonged to a settlement named Bajkút, today belongs to the Subotica diocese. The first document of Bajkút as a settlement appeared in 1382. During the Turkish devastation this region was abandoned, although there are records related to the existence of a shrine in the Ottoman periods. The Holy Well today is part of Doroszló and the main Patron saint's day is September 7th to 8th which is Virgin Mary's celebration which the Catholic Church holds as the Virgin Mary's birthday.

Oral tradition keeps many legends alive as regards to the origin of the shrine. According of a variant of the oral tradition, the territory of the former Doroszló was a covered area of marsh. The people living here were strong, healthy, as they were drinking the miraculoos water of the source. Later, patients were also led to the source, who recovered there. A little house stood near the fountain, but it was on fire and it burned, with a lot of crutches left by the cured there. The swamp dried up later, but the source of healing water remained. According to several variations of the legend, the miraculous healing power of water of the Holy Well is related to the revelation and mediation of Blessed Virgin. According to the oral tradition of Doroszló and the notes of the first miraculous healing from the adjacent Gombos, in 1792, Zablóczky János, whom the Virgin inspired to wash the eyes in the well water, cured from blindness, happily looked down into the well, where he saw the Virgin Mary in the guise of a beautiful woman. Hearing about the healing the place has been more and more visited and in 1796 even a small wooden chapel was built. The records show that it faded very quickly and replaced by a new one, built around 1808, which unfortunately burned down in 1859. Int hat place, near the fountain, stands the statue of Virgin Mary, erected in 1861. The third chapel, as a relatively small church was built between 1823-1825, away from the Holly Well. This chapel was actually a part of the present church. In fact, this present day church was created by the augmentation of the third chapel in 1874-75.

On the columned main altar – former placed in the sanctuary – is visible today a devotional picture depicting Our Lady. The image is Lukas Cranach's work, of which there are a number of copies to find. This one was made by Johann Georg Baader, in 1794. Also in the sanctuary on both sides there is a Hungarian saint, St. Elizabeth and St. Imre statue, which was placed there in 1914, as a donation. In the chapel set around 1960, the portable statue of Mary, which was on the Patron saint's day placed on the altar. Built in 1908, the shrine's decorated well structure, existing even today, the washing-bowl and the open confessor-corridor, where thousands of pilgrims have been carried confession and carrying today. In 1974, was consecrated the new altar and the new calvary, located in the space behind the chapel. In 1980, the congregation built up by voluntary work and out of donations, the accommodation for the guest-priests and the fresco-series, visible in the open corridor.

In the right-hand wall of the church were enshrined the silver offers, as the sign of gratitude of the wealthier pilgrims, once healed here. In 2006 Verebélyi Árpád, the young father came to Doroszló, on the place of György János parish priest, who wants to make the shrine with continued repair and building operation even more attractive. Thus built up almost from the old site, a very attractive building, serving as a gate-house, as a location for guest-priests, for feeding during the pilgrimage and as a venue for meetings. To the church, the same as the previous style, a new wing was added. The statue of Mary, established in 1861, is also on another location, the surrounding the sacred path is rebuilt, too. Other major construction plans were made as well.

In 1835 Pope Gregory XVI allowed at this place the Miss Day and Pentecost Patron saint' day ageless, but to official diocesan pilgrimage place, the Holy Well in Doroszló was declared only in 1967, by Zvekanović Mátyás, diocesan Bishop in Subotica. Besides several Patron saint's days, up to the II. World War, the main one of the shrine was the day of Pentecost (three days). In 1930, in the Hungarian village of about 2,000 inhabitants, were counted thousands of pilgrims that came at Pentecost. According to the memoirs, there was a year when 16-18000 was the number of participants on that three days: Saturday and Sunday was a farewell for Hungarians, Whit Monday - although small numbers of Hungarians appeared – was a szondi Sokác farewell. The people of Doroszló carried back Tuesday the most. It was the Patron saint' day for the German nationality. The residents of the wealthy Swabian villages on magnificent horses, accompanied by a brass band marched to the shrine. Most pilgrims still, at the beginning of the 1950s, walked on foot through the villages, singing and praying, carrying flags and crucifix. As this kind of exodus was banned after the Second World War, the number of pilgrims was very diminished, but this was influenced by the German population, too, who depleted our region. In 1961, on the 100th anniversary of the set up of the Virgin statue, next to the fountain, the church organized a grand ceremony on 7th to 8th of September on Virgin Mary's day. This time on, it is the main Patron saint' day of this pilgrimage shrine. Since then, on these days are coming, from almost the entire territory of Vojvodina, the mainly Catholic Hungarians, in small numbers are present from the surrounding areas the szond (Sonta) Sokác nationality, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Germans, Gypsies, etc. Mohol (Mol) and the surrounding deceased parishioners led by the former Father László Danyi, such as a crown on foot was also a multi-year pilgrimage to Doroszló, the 1990s onwards. Changes, like everything, so the pilgrimage habits can also be experienced, but the majority of Hungarian pilgrims, just from the internal religious beliefs undertake the wearing journey as they once did, and they also consider this shrine as an ancient Hungarian place for celebrating a Patron saint's day. Due to travel by bus, for example, disappeared the habit of cantonment into the nearby hou-

ses. Now, the pilgrims are spending the night outside around the church, or in the buses. Masses as before, will be given in the language of the present nationalities. On the National Vigil, however, the opening Mass is in Hungarian and on the Patron saint's day a Hungarian Episcopal Holy Mass ends the farewell.

The groups of pilgrims arrive to the Miss vigil in the afternoon. Their arrival as it used to, chime indicates. Welcome prayers perform walking around the shrine's area and visiting the statue of the Virgin nearby the fountain. Later, in groups or individually the most of them pious here. As a sign of respect in front of and around the sculptures lit candles, many of them carries out Confession. The believers donate as well, so that the grace statue on Patron saint's day occasionally is dressed in new clothes. Holy Mass is listening to the evening procession with candlelights, that offers encouraging to a mystical devotion and prayer and a spectacle festive atmosphere. Before and after performing the traditional crossroads morning devotion, the pilgrims go to the Holy Well to caress their faces and to fill their bowls in order to carry the water into their homes. Many, stay in front of the statue and wait for the sunrise praying. The holy bishop's gala closing Mass is held at 10 am. In all pilgrims and local attempts to attend. Lately, there is an example of the indulgences which, in addition to senior clerics such as screws. dr. László Paskai Cardinal Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest (HU) was visited by the Hungary 's ambassador in Belgrade, Hungarian mayors of Vojvodina and representatives of politics and public life. At the end of Mass, they bless the items bought in the farewell and pilgrim's vehicles of transport. Then in groups, the pilgrims "say goodbye" to the Virgin Mother. Upon completion of the indulgence mass, they place the garlands brought from home beside the statue. Before the departure, the buses hoot for goodbye and in the chapel the bells toll then.

The time has come when they thank the healing power of the miraculous water, the apotropaic power of plans collected on the shrine's area, hoping of the Virgin's intercession, they leave with calmed soul, as to – after one year on the day of Miss – wait here for the sunrise again.

During their journey they pray, sing like an age, while arriving the church of their village. From the 1990s the Patron saint's days of Doroszló are visited by 4000 to 8000 pilgrims.

According to the tradition, Christ's cross was found at around 350 by Empress St. Helen. Many pieces as a gift avoided Europe. Their guarding sites are the Holy Cross pilgrimage sites. Such in Vojvodina nearby VERSEC, in the MOUNTAIN'S HOLY CROSS Chapel, which is an ancient place of pilgrimage throughout the Catholic Banat population, primarily for the South Banat Hungarians, Hungarian diaspora and for the lower Danube Szekels. In the pre-World War I period the bishopric of Timisoara, today belongs to the bisophric of the Becskerek (Zrenjanin)'s diocese. In the pre-World War II period in the shrine was a very large number of the Germans living in the country, the Czech nationality and the Bulgarian Catholics living in the modern Romanian areas.

The cross relic of Christ is preserved in the church, built between 1860-1863 with two towers, dedicated to bishop and martyr St. Gerard.

The church even today is the witness of presence of the former rural, large, wealthy Germans. In its size, interior and decoration, reflects the age of the building. Among the pews still remain the large, embroidered flags, made out of precious fabrics, subtitled in German. In the sanctuary, on the left sided glass window there is the Hungarian coat of arms. Also in the sanctuary, on a large wooden cross placed to the right, was set up the relic of the Holy Cross. Not far from the church, on Vršac hill, between vineyards, lurks a very small, coffered ceiling edifice, built in the 1720s

and dedicated to the Holy Cross Chapel. The day of fiesta is the 14th of September, the Patron saint's day of the Mountain's Holy Cross Chapel. In the bishop's archives there are no written documents that the church had sometime this mountain chapel to a pilgrimage place declared. Would certainly be explained by the presence of the relic that on the Patron saint's day of the chapel a much larger number of believers appeared here than usual.

According to the decision of the church the Patron saint's day is just one-day. Under the records and oral tradition, the Patron saint's days were two-days before, on the eve of the farewell have held religious ceremonies and the vigil was typical in this shrine as well. Previously the pilgrims arrived here praying and singing, on foot. Along the way, at a wayside cross they rested as well. Then in Vršac, at the first stage of the Way of the Cross they they assembling. Among the pilgrims there were many young people that time. According to some, well had to be, but nowadays there is not and only a very few people know about it. In this shrine healings, miraculous records are not known. The significance of the shrine can be attribute to the presence of the relic of the Holy Cross. They break galleons from the tree 's branches around the chapel and say: "It is from the tree of Jesus." At their homes they believe in the same apotropaic power of the galleons as about plants collected in some other pilgrimage.

In the time of our visit (1994-1995), there were mostly middle ages and elderly pilgrims present, young people only rarely turned up. The pilgrims were gathering in the city church, where the ceremonies started at 08:00 hours with a mass in German. In fact, Catholic Hungarians were present en masse, it was only a few elderly German -speaking believers, in addition to a large number of Roma. 2-3 in an organized group of pilgrims arrived, more and more people came by car. At the end of the mass, before the departure to the chapel, they kiss the relic of the Holy Cross. The pilgrims went to the mountain chapel in two directions. A part of them on the old stage road, another approached the chapel by bus. From the bus to the chapel they went singing, there, on the hill, they walked around the Stations. At 11.00 hours they gathered in and around the chapel to participate in the Eucharist. The ceremony took place in Hungarian, with a presence of maybe 400-500 people. As the mass has finished the pilgrims left the shrine very quickly. There were some who were praying in front of the crucifix, walked around and kissed it. Some people also lit candles in front of it, or inside of the chapel. Remarkably large candles, the Roma donated. Despite of being depopulated, the little chapel on the hillside emits the "true" intimacy of a shrine.

In the urban church the main pastoral and festive closing mass in Hungarian was held at 17.00 pm. Then the Hungarian of the city withdrew with their guests, according to ancient custom. The approx. 500 -seat church was completely filled. This closing mass meant the end of the pilgrimage of the chapel of Mountain's Holy Cross. It was getting dark outside.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig. 1. Doroszló, 1999.



Fig. 2. Doroszló, 2014.



Fig. 3. Doroszló, 2012.



Fig. 4. Doroszló, 2013.



Fig. 5. Tekia, 1996.



Fig. 6. Bánátopolya, 1996.



Fig. 7. Versec, 1996.



Fig. 8. Szentkút, Szabadka, 2013.



Fig. 9. Szentkút – Szabadka, 2013.



Fig. 10. Vodice, Szabadka, 2013.

SERBIAN CROSS MONUMENTS IN SENTA

Senta is a town and municipal seat in the north of the Republic of Serbia, located in the north-eastern part of Bačka region and on the banks of the river Tisa. It has a long history and significant archaeological traces of past cultures. The historic development of the settlement can be sorted into several periods (Јаблан 2010, 10) of which all are characterized by the intensive interaction and blending between changing cultures and religions. Apart from the fact that medieval Serbian rulers held estates near Senta in the XV century (Јаблан 2010, 13), the presence of the Serbs in Senta and its surroundings can be first traced by records of Serbian names in the first quarter of the XVI century (Рамадански 2012, 245-247). Parallel with the full scale development of the Serbian Orthodox church in Senta during the XVIII-XIX centuries, other holy places, apart from churches and cemeteries, were established and worshiped.

Cross monuments are considered very important for imposing sacral significance in certain areas and the environment also being mediums of a permanent sacral setup (Valkay 2007, 78). The reasons for building these monuments can be for example pious, votive, memorial or out of gratitude. Cross monuments can be located on public squares, churchyards and cemeteries or next to roads. On this occasion a complete technical description of all four Serbian cross monuments in Senta along with a thorough analysis and presentation of historic data and available records on customs as well as the spiritual and social significance the monuments have, is provided. Through the perspective of a study on customs and rites, the Serbian cross monuments in Senta are very interesting due to the multiple purposes and properties they have. From a historical point of view the Serbian cross monuments in Senta are very significant as imperative cultural and historic monuments, primarily due to their old age and clear reference to the largely unexplored culture of Serbian "Frontiermen" (Граничари).

NICHOLAS CROSS

South of the town of Senta, in fields next to what is the modern industrial zone, there is a location called "Nicholas Cross" (Николин Крст), alternatively known as "Vlajko's Grave" (Влајков Гроб). There are written references to the existence of a cross monument at that place before the year 1848 and again in 1883 (Dudás 1883) and later also in 1934 (Јаблан 1934). There are several maps and surveys with the "Nicholas Cross" monument marked, one of which is for example the first archeological hand drawn survey by Dudás from the 1870's (ИАСЕ Ф.381 - Колекција Јоце Вујића, Кутија бр. 2 (1419)). On this map "Nicholas Cross" is marked with a small image of an Orthodox cross and the Hungarian words *Nikola Kereszt* which translates into Nicholas Cross. Earlier than that and on the same location there is a noticeable cross monument marked on the chart of the first military survey carried out in this part of the Empire in the year 1783 (Valkay 2007, 21 – 3. ábra). The original cross monument was almost certainly entirely made of wood with perhaps a small mound or earthen structure as a pedestal.

The key to understanding the sanctity of that location lies in several recorded versions of local tales about why and when the first monument was made. These stories share certain similarities and are placed in the same chronological and historic setting. The earlier version of the story tells us of an old Serb called Nicholas (Никола) who, along with his daughter, tragically perished during an Ottoman advance on Senta while the villagers, out of respect, built a small shrine, in the view of a cross monument, at the place of the two graves (Dudás 1883). It is widely understood that this version is set sometime in the late XVII century. The second version of the tale speaks also of a grave but of a Serbian shepherd called Vlačko (Влајко), who was murdered by his master because he and his friends ate a lamb without permission (Јаблан 1934). The figure of the third version of the story is also called Vlačko, a Serb scout in Austrian service that was killed in an Ottoman ambush in 1687 while his horse returned bearing his headless body which was buried where it fell in front of his comrades (Јаблан 1934). The same version tells that the head of Vlačko found and joined the decapitated body on its own which is very similar to the stories about the head of medieval Serbian Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović (Кнез Лазар Хребељановић) who was decapitated by the Turks at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and was afterwards venerated as a Serbian saint. Obviously, all versions of the tale about “Nicholas Cross” and “Vlačko’s Grave” are set in approximately the same epoch, just prior to the historic Battle at Senta in 1697, and all speak of an unjust outcome and unusual or tragic death of the protagonists. Now, if we were to consider that these tales were in fact based on some potential historic evidence it is first necessary to perform a complete chronological analysis of the events that surround the stories. Apparently, there are certain, important moments in each version that could have historic parallels. Namely, the first version of the tale also states that the Ottomans of Bečej (Бечej) attacked Senta because they were provoked by the frequent taunting from the younger Serb soldiers (Dudás 1883). This we can associate with the historic capturing of an Ottoman Pasha at Bečej on the hands of Serb scouts in 1697, just prior to the decisive battle. Other than that, in the same version there is also reference to a full scale Ottoman attack on Senta. Namely, between the skirmish of Serbian and Turkish forces near Senta on 15 October 1686 (Јаблан 2010, 15) and the Battle at Senta on 11 September 1697, which was fought in the fields and on the river banks at least 2 km southwards, there is only one event which can be associated with the Ottoman attack on the very settlement. Senta was burned by the Turks on the night between the 8 and 9 of September 1697 (I.R Military Archive – Krieg mit der Pforte 1697-1698 II B. No. 1), probably out of revenge for capturing the Pasha. We may assume that the Ottoman army wouldn’t set fire to Senta if it still had its mosque and judging by the descriptions of the event, the entire settlement was caught in flames. The mosque, made of an earlier medieval monastery, is mentioned in Evlija Chelebi-ja’s description of Senta in 1667 (Елезовић 1932, 84-85). During the archaeological excavations at the site of the present Roda Market in 2009 a coin of Sultan Suleyman II (1687-1691) was discovered deep within a rubble and debris pit containing broken bricks, traces of mortar, glass and other items. We know that most structures of earlier periods in the area were earthen (Рамадански 2012, 245) and it is expected only for buildings of special significance, namely churches or mosques, to be built of stronger materials, such as bricks and mortar, with windows of glass. This pit we can associate with the demolishing of the mosque in the early 1690s hence an alleged Ottoman attack at Senta prior to this date most likely did not occur. After the battle in 1697 there are also no references to the existence of a mosque. A Serbian “Frontiermen” Orthodox school in Senta was founded in 1703 according to the content on its seal (Tóth 1979, 5) while the earliest known description of a Serbian Or-

thodox church building in Senta is from 1730 although it was likely built in 1710s (Valkay 2007, 38). Based on a compromise of all the versions of the tale about “Nicholas Cross”, augmented with available historical data, the true story may have turned out as follows. A local and notable Serb called Nicholas, or maybe Vljako, was involved in the events around the Ottoman attack on Senta, which at that time had neither Turkish inhabitants nor a mosque, three days before the decisive battle in 1697. He was killed in combat or was murdered by the Turks during their raid and the surviving local Serbs buried him for some reason at the place where he perished while certain customs developed later.

Regarding the customs that were once associated with this cross monument we know of several such practices. Namely “Nicholas Cross” was a place of pilgrimage, primarily due to alleged healing properties and was frequently visited by pilgrims and those in pursue of miracles (Dudás 1883). Priests, in the presence of up to several hundred gathered worshipers, would perform consecration rites at the place where Vljako, considered a martyr, was allegedly buried, the last recorded such session taking place in June 1934 (Јаблан 1934). This seems to have occurred previously every time the cross monument was repaired or rebuilt. Also, the plowing of the fields next the cross monument was strictly forbidden since the entire area was considered sacred (Dudás 1883). However, records of one particular custom grant us insight into a different and very interesting tradition. The “Nicholas Cross” monument is located en route to Batka (Батка), an area south of Senta that meets the river Tisa where a ferry has been operating for centuries. Apparently, the entire area has its associations with river crossing. For example, the name of the nearby area of Peser (Пецеп), next to Batka and also in proximity of the river, first mentioned in the year 1440 (Szekeres 1983, 44), is highly indicative and can be linked to latin – *pes*, *pedis m.* for foot or hoof and alternatively for walking on the edge of land and next to water (Divković 1980, 789). Namely, next to the very cross structure of the “Nicholas Cross” monument there was always a dish that was used to collect money offerings from passing individuals or companies and there is a saying recorded: *Ко не жали крајцаре ставити у Николин тас – неће се удавити у води* (Валкаи и Терзић 2000, 502; Valkay 2007, 84) which translates from Serbian into “Who doesn’t miss putting kreutzers (Austrian coins, money) into Nicholas’ dish - that one won’t drown in the water”. Considering the location of the cross we can clearly associate the offering custom and the sayings with the activity of river crossing and the maintaining of the ferry and it’s passengers in good favour. However, due to the fact that in the past local Serbs visited and performed ceremonies at the “Nicholas Cross” monument at the day of St. Nicholas (Св. Никола) (Валкаи и Терзић 2000, 502; Valkay 2007, 84), there is a possibility that the customs and the sanctity of the place are much earlier and that “Nicholas Cross” is in fact originally devoted to St. Nicholas, patron of sailors and sea farers, making it possibly late medieval or even older. In that case the name of the Serb soldier was indeed Vljako and the version of the tale calling him Nicholas or Nicholas Vljako falsely combined the names of the location and the personal name of the martyr. After the 1930s the customs faded away since the local Serbian peasants who inhabited the area, in pursue of better work and higher standard, gradually migrated into downtown Senta, selling their farm holds or leaving them desolate. With no nearby worshipers the neglected cross monument soon disappeared and remained all but completely forgotten throughout the rest of the century. Today, there are efforts of rebuilding the monument on behalf of the community in Senta.

THE CEMETARY CROSS

Very little is known about the “Cemetery Cross” (Гробљански Крст), placed in front of the chapel of St. Gabriel (Св. Гаврило) at the Serbian Orthodox cemetery located in the southern part of Senta. Cross monuments, apart from gravestones, are not uncommon in cemeteries. The eastern side of the “Cemetery Cross” monument is adjacent to two graves: Eve the Virgin (Девица Ева), daughter of local priest Timotije Branković (Тимотије Бранковић), from the year 1864 and that of Prokopije Nikolić (Прокопије Николић) from the 1840s. The “Cemetery Cross” monument consists out of a stone cross, with a metal application, on a brick built column covered in lime mortar and a stone pedestal. The western side of the column, facing the western entrance into the cemetery, has a cavity designed to bear an icon. Above this and on the edge of the brick column there is a small and old but intricate hammered iron cross. It is obvious that the “Cemetery Cross” is not part of the mentioned grave structures because of its apparent differences in style and material. Also, the cross and grave structures are not integrated with one another but are merely adjacent.

On the charts of the first military survey carried out in this part of the Empire in the year 1783 the Serbian Orthodox cemetery is marked at its present location (Valkay 2007, 76) making it possibly as old as the 1750s since by the time the Military Frontier was disbanded in 1751 most settlements were ordered to shift funerals from churchyards to new cemeteries on the outskirts of the settlement. Such regulations and reforms took time. For example, in neighboring Banat, this lasted well into late XVIII century (Пејин 2003, 219). The cemetery in Senta was expanded southwards in 1838 (Valkay 2007, 76), the mortuary was built in 1863 and the cemetery was surrounded by a moat while the chapel of St. Gabriel was built in the year 1868 (Берић 2010, 63). The paths in the cemetery were paved by the year 1879 (Valkay 2007, 76). We may assume that the brick walls and the ornate iron fences that surround the cemetery today were built around the same time when the church of St. Archangel Michael (Св. Арханђел Михаило) in the centre of town had the churchyard fenced in the year 1890 as is inscribed in metal above the eastern gate of churchyard.

On the same, previously mentioned, chart from 1783 across the western side of the where the cemetery is marked and next to the main road there is a cross monument marked in the same manner as “Nicholas Cross” (Valkay 2007, 21 – 3. ábra). Previous authors admitted knowing nothing further about this cross monument other than that it existed in the reign of Emperor Joseph II (1765-1790) and that it appears also on an 1865/66 town map (Valkay 2007, 84). On the other hand, there is no cross monument marked within the drawn area of the Orthodox cemetery hence one may assume that the “Cemetery Cross” didn’t exist at the time when the charts were made. However, there is a cross monument marked on the Catholic cemetery, located on the other side of town, so we may conclude that the makers of the chart would not miss making an accurate marker for a cross monument on the Orthodox cemetery if there was any. Considering these previous statements it is only logical to conclude that the “mysterious” XVIII century cross monument and today’s “Cemetery Cross” are in fact the same structure. It was very likely moved into the cemetery just prior to when the town started spreading southwards. The southern outskirts of town were still largely vacant in 1880 (Valkay 2007, 69 – 28. ábra) while the area immediately west of the Orthodox cemetery and across the main road still remained unoccupied by any buildings in 1911 (Valkay 2007, 129 – 60. ábra). It was only until the construction of the barracks and military headquarters complex in the early 1930s (Valkay 2007, 400) that the area was set with buildings of permanent material.

In its current position, the “Cemetery Cross” monument has sacral spatial significance within the cemetery (Valkay 2007, 76). Other than that, we have not been

able to find any references or data on customs related to the “Cemetery Cross”, whether before or after its transfer into the cemetery, although there clearly must have been certain customs in the past, especially since the cross monument was once originally next to the main road. We can only assume that it could have been devoted to St. Christopher (Св. Христофор), protector of travelers, and that the column of this cross monument originally had his icon placed or painted in the cavity mentioned earlier. This could be possible because the original location of the “Cemetery Cross” was at a vital crossroads near the entrance into the town or, on the other hand, it’s exit. In that case, the unusual small iron cross, mentioned earlier, could be part of what was once a support for a dish or small bag used for collecting money offerings while its height was simply a way to keep children from interfering. The small metal cross is placed too high on the monument in order for it to be associated with kissing as an expression of faith and respect. Also, if this cross monument indeed was devoted to St. Christopher, it is only logical that his icon would be removed when the monument was transferred into the cemetery because St. Christopher in Eastern Orthodoxy is depicted with the head of a canine while the introduction of animals, or animal imagery for that matter, is forbidden in cemeteries. The cult of St. Christopher was widely developed among the Serbs, as a patron of travelers, probably due to many migrations. In the light of these new discoveries, the “Cemetery Cross” is the second oldest work of architecture in Senta after the Serbian Orthodox church of St. Michael built in 1751 and one of only two remaining XVIII century structures in Senta.

CROSS OF THE ORTHODOX

In front of the Serbian Orthodox church of St. Archangel Michael in Senta, built in 1751 (Ђукановић 2009, 271), and in the centre of the churchyard there stands a high and very imposing cross monument. The “Cross of the Orthodox” (Крст Православних), as it was always called, was built in 1809 and was originally located some 50 m westward and across the road from the churchyard in what was then the Grain Market (Житна пијаца) and today’s main square and the town park (Терзић 2001, 237; Vida 2005, 21). At the beginning of the Hungarian fascist occupation (1941-1944) the cross was moved from its original location into the nearby churchyard. The traces of the transfer are visible today on the monument’s pedestal which has multiple steel joints fixed into the very stone that suggests that the entire monument was cut and segmented for a hasty transfer, under those dangerous and repressive circumstances, and was completely reassembled in the middle of the churchyard. Fortunately, the monument was not damaged any further. The entire structure of the “Cross of the Orthodox” monument is well over 4 m high and almost entirely made of fine red marble, most likely quarried in Transylvania. Below the very stone cross is a high and complex, segmented column with sculptured wreath ornaments and other carved decorations. The column structure has a two stepped pedestal and stone foundation surrounded by a metal fence with four stone pillars in each corner decorated with alcoves. The plate on the eastern side of the column has a carved inscription in Church-Slavonic, the transcription into modern Serbian reads: *Камен егоже зждушчи не в ред сотвориша, Сенћане во главу угла положиша. Сербљи иже иногда в Сенте пожиа, Сеј во славу Спаса Крест водрузиша 1809.* Translated into English this means: “The stone with which was built is not aligned, the people of Senta have placed it as a corner stone. The Serbs of old that once lived in Senta, in glory of our Savior built this cross in 1809”. The opposite plate, on the western side of the column, has another carved inscription in Church-Slavonic, the transcription into modern Serbian reads: *Роду и Обшчеству.* Translated

into English this means: “For Kin and Community”. Above the eastern side of the column bearing the inscription there is an old and decorative metal flag post.

There are few references on customs particularly for this cross monument and what data we have is more related to how the Serbian community in Senta regarded the monument as also a sign of national pride. The prestigious location, in the middle of the town, suggested the success and well standing of the Serbs in Senta (Берић 2010, 51). It is also quite obvious that the flag post, mentioned earlier, was used to carry the flag of the Serbian Orthodox Church or the Serbian state on some special occasions such as national holidays. That is unlike any other cross monument in Senta. The fact that the monument was originally located at the place where the first early XVIII century Serbian “Frontiermen” church was once, also augments the significance the “Cross of the Orthodox” monument has for the local Serbs and the respect of ancestors. Also, during the transfer of the cross monument, from the square into the churchyard, in the old foundations of the structure a group find of XVII-XVIII century silver and copper coins within a stone cist was discovered (Терзић 2001, 137). This find can be interpreted without doubt as an offering, placed in the foundations of the cross monument. There are no special customs practised at the “Cross of the Orthodox” monument in Senta today, other than that the builders of the monument are mentioned during an annual memorial service (параост) and on All Souls Day (задушнице) especially during the *proskomidiја* ceremony (проскомидије).

THE SERBIAN CROSS

In the south-eastern corner of the churchyard of St. Michael the Archangel Serbian Orthodox church in Senta there is a cross monument referred to by worshippers and in literature as “The Serbian Cross” (Српски Крст). However, this cross monument was built in 1840 and originally stood for more than a century on the Fowl Market (Живинска пијаца) in the broad centre of the town (Терзић 2001, 238; Vida 2005, 22; Valkay 2007, 80). The entire monument was transferred intact into the area of the churchyard in 1960 (Терзић 2001, 238; Vida 2005, 22). The cross, its column and the two stepped pedestal are made of fine red marble with other decorative elements of grey colored stone, possibly a type of granite or basalt. Around the pedestal is a square, two foot wide brick pavement with four stone pillars in each corner and an iron fence with a small gate facing the east. On the surface of the eastern side of the main column there is a carved inscription in Church-Slavonic with the letters inlaid in black color. The text in transcription into modern Serbian is as follows: *Во славу триипостаснаго божества, в чест за спасение рода человека пригвожденаго на њом Господа, воздигесја сие все освештајушеје знамение Кресное ревностиу и у сердцем благочестиваго обичества сенћанскаго. Лета господња 1840-го.* Translated into English it reads: “In glory of the Trihypostatic deity, in the honour of our Lord crucified on the cross for the salvation of mankind, we rise this consecrated cross monument pious and devout on behalf of the faithful people of Senta. Year of our Lord – 1840”. According to the inscription we may conclude that this cross monument was built in honor of the Holy Trinity (Свето Тројство). On the opposite, eastern, side of the column there are faint signs of a painted image, some authors consider being an icon of a saint (Терзић 2001, 239; Vida 2005, 22).

Cross monuments placed on market squares and crossroads are often aligned with protective patron saints or divine forces, for example St. Blaise (Св. Власије) in the case of protecting cattle from harm or the Holy Trinity for the prevention of epidemics (Valkay 2007, 78). Considering the fact that the original location of “The Serbian Cross” was the Fowl Market it turns out quite logical that the monu-

ment is devoted to the Holy Trinity in order to prevent outbursts of disease at a place where fowl and other domestic animals are managed in larger numbers. In the past, once a week, men and women used to gather and perform Serbian folk dances such as *kolo* (коло) around this cross monument (Берић 2010, 53). There are no available records of any other old customs related to this cross monument at its original location so we can only suggest that the community gave offerings at that place as is customary with the worship of protectors and protective forces. Praying at such cross monuments was also common. For example, in the case of cross monument built by Sima Pavlović (Сима Павловић) the Nenadića Salaši (Ненадића салаши) area near Sombor (Сомбор) where worshippers prayed for a better harvest (Продановић 2000). Regarding Serbian customs associated with the harvest, processions (литије) were regularly held in Senta by the Serbian craftsmen community at which occasion they ceremonially passed through wheat fields (Берић 2010, 53). Today, no special customs are associated with “The Serbian Cross” monument, as it is the case with the “Cross of the Orthodox”, besides that the builders of the monument are mentioned during an annual memorial service (парастрот) and on All Souls Day (задушнице) especially during the *proskomidija* ceremony (проскомидије).

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PHOTOGRAPHY

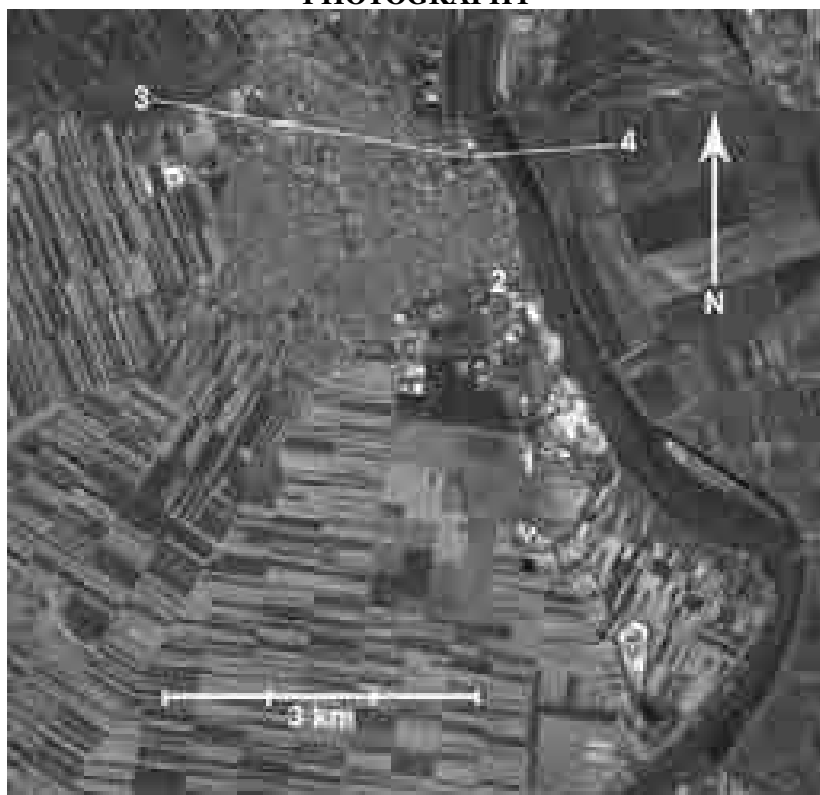


Fig. 1. The locations of the Serbian cross monuments in Senta: (1) Nicholas Cross - (2) The Cemetery Cross - (3) Cross of the Orthodox - (4) The Serbian Cross (Google Earth - image modified by the author).

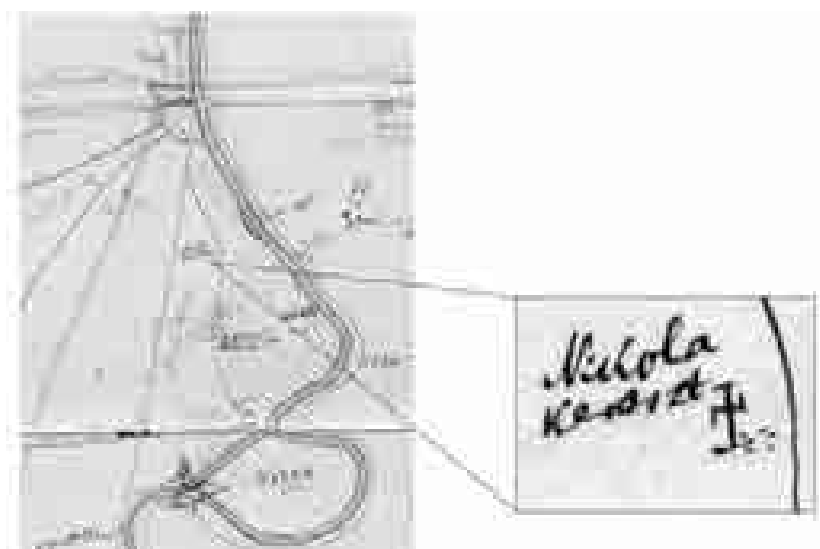


Fig. 2. A segment of the 1870's hand drawn archaeological survey by Dudás with "Nicholas Cross" marked and written in Hungarian as *Nikola Kereszt*.



Fig. 3. The chronology of the events around the time in which the tales of “Nicholas Cross” and “Vlajko’s Grave” are set.



Fig. 4. A segment of an early XIX century reproduction of the 1783 military survey with the “Nicholas Cross” and “Cemetery Cross” monuments marked.



Fig. 5. Images of the “Cemetery Cross” in front of the chapel of St. Gabriel at the Serbian Orthodox cemetery in Senta, viewed from the west (right) and north (left) with the adjacent graves visible (photographed by the author)

Fig. 6. The “Cross of the Orthodox” monument in the churchyard of St. Archangel Michael Serbian Orthodox church in Senta (photographed by the author)



Fig. 7. The “Cross of the Orthodox” in front of the Serbian Orthodox church of St. Archangel Michael in Senta (photographed by the author)



Fig. 8. The Church-Slavonic inscriptions on the eastern (right) and western (left) side of the “Cross of the Orthodox” column. (photographed by the author)



Fig. 9. The “Serbian Cross” monument in the churchyard of St. Archangel Michael Serbian Orthodox church in Senta (photographed by the author)



Fig. 10. The Church-Slavonic inscription on the side of the “Serbian Cross” column. (photographed by the author)

Dragana Radisavljevic Ćiparizović

SANCTUARY OF MOTHER OF GOD OF TEKIJE AS A CULT (PILGRIMAGE) PLACE*

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Cult and pilgrimage places are predominantly related to folk religion and religiousnesses. In these places people communicate with the beyond (Krstić, 2008). One of few authors dealing with typology of cult places in the Balkans, Dejan Krstić (2010), sacral temples (church, mosques and sim.) also include in cult places. In this paper we present Sanctuary of Mother of God of Tekije near Petrovaradin in Vojvodina belonging to roman-catholic confession. In addition to its appearance, it is known for a fact that it is visited by people regardless of their religion and confession. It is best proved by the Romani, Muslims, who visit this church in masses on Central feast of the sanctuary, on August 5th, Our Lady of the Snows Day (4/5th August).

Pilgrimage is a form of going to a Holy place that the believers are accepting as Holy or to places for which is believed to include miraculous healings: Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje (Cvitković 2009, 450-451). In addition to ritual, ceremony and myth, pilgrimage is closely related to Holy, i.e. cult place. *Center* pilgrimage can belong to one of at least three types: prototype, syncretic (Turner), and ecographic.

1. Prototype center is the one maintaining determining historical or mythical dimensions of tradition. It can be place where, it is believed, that a founder or some famous person did something relevant in their lives (for example, Jerusalem, Mecca...). It refers to a cult center of religious tradition...
2. On the other hand, syncretic center is the one where holy place has merged traditions transcending a religion.
3. Third type – ecographic. It a center that gained importance more due to geographic position than its theological or mythical origin (although myths describing undertaking of Holy person on that place could be elaborated during its use (Clothey 1990, 254).

Tekije are a mix of prototype and ecographic types. In each pilgrimage center, in addition to main sanctuary, there are sub-sanctuaries most often portraying local or national traditions or are precedent to main tradition or are relate to it *ex post facto*. In addition to them, religious aura of pilgrimage center is reinforced with so-called Holy geography, the river, the lake, the spring.... Tekije have the spring whose water is considered medicinal.

In search for the Holy, believers of different religions and confessions, in our case Christians and Muslims, regardless of their ethnical origin and confessional and religious affiliation visit the same Holy places. In this paper, we mostly refer to research by Duijzings, a Dutch anthropologist who in 1991 did a research of ethnical and religious mix of pilgrimage on Kosovo (Orthodox Serbian monasteries Gracanica and Zochiste and Roman-Catholic sanctuary in Letnica). This author observed pilgrimage as laboratory entity. One of his conclusions is that religion and ritual

* In 2013, author had doctoral defense at Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade: *Religion and Pilgrim tourism: Case studies Three Sanctuaries in Serbia (St. Petka chapel of Kalemegdan, Holy Mother of Đunis and Holy Mother of Tekije)*.

assist in on one hand establishing forms of the community transcending ethno-national boundaries, and, on the other hand, in separating, distinguishing and portraying ethnical identities (Dejzings 2005). Before Duijzings some other authors note that transcending ethno-religious boundaries in the Balkans was widely spread (Hasluck 1929). Muslims and Christians of different ethnical origin visited sanctuaries of other side, bowed in front of their saints and ignored obvious theological objections of religious rules. Hence, pilgrimage in the Balkans (on Kosovo, in Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro) was often characterized by smudging official religious boundaries. Different groups of pilgrims were together in the Holy area of the sanctuary and shared fears and respect for supernatural powers of some saints, regardless of their religious marking. Motifs of these people were probably the same, most likely universal: health, welfare and happiness for their family members and themselves. But if sanctuaries can help in transcending ethnical and religious differences and to an extent create sort of joint identity, they can easily become competition and conflict areas between local communities and within them. General politics and their relevant changes have tremendous significance: they are background of these conflicts and determine their final outcome. Example of a small church in the vicinity of Sutomore who had both, Orthodox and Catholic alter, but the latter was destroyed and relocated from church in 1996. Similarly, somewhat more discreet, happened during renovation of church in Tekije (1976) when lateral alters have been removed, that should have had at least symbolically represent Orthodox and protestant. In addition to Turner's concept of *communitas*, this is the reason why in case of Tekije, we relied on concepts of competitive sharing and antagonistic tolerance of R. Hayden (2002). It is tolerance in minimalist sense, in sense of plain submitting presence of Other to own traditional territory.

TEKIJE AS A CULT (PILGRIMAGE) PLACE

Church of Our Lady of the Snows, whose official name is Sanctuary of the Mother of God of Tekije is located on the side of Fruska Gora in north-east Srem. It is located near Petrovaradin, about 4 km from the capital of Vojvodina, along international highway Novi Sad-Belgrade. Central holidays are July 25th and 26th *Small Tekije*, and August 4th and 5th – *Big Tekije*.

Vojvodina is the most multinational and the most confessional part of Serbia with majority of Orthodox population. According to the latest 2011 census, in entire Autonomous Province live somewhat more than 70% Orthodox, more than 17% Roman-catholic, about 3,31 protestants and less than 1% Muslims. According to the same source in Novi Sad live about 80% Orthodox, somewhat more than 6% Roman-catholic, 2,5% protestants, and less than 1,5% Muslims.

HISTORY/MYTH AND DESCRIPTION OF SANCTUARY

Tekije mean resting place because Turkish Aghas came to rest there. Central feast of the sanctuary is on August 5th on Our Lady of the Snows Day, because on that date in 1716 a battle between Christian and Turks took place, and victory of several times weaker Christians is attributed to Mother of God of Tekije. This once southern part of Hungarian Empire was conquered by the Turks in 1526. Old church which included Cistercits, and Roman-catholic orders was destroyed, and on its places was erected a mosque. After the Great War of Vienna in 1699 (peace treaty in Sremski Karlovci), the Turks leave northern part of Srem. Mosque on Tekije became empty, and the Jesus followers undertook it, Roman-catholic order, turning it into a chapel of Virgin Mary conception. Unfortunately, another war began in 1715 when Grand Vizier in the Ottoman Empire Damad Ali-pasha and big army went toward

Austria. Austrian army leader Eugen von Savoyen intercepted him and defeated on August 5th 1716 on the hills around Petrovaradin. Losses of the Turks were huge (over 25.000 dead). As the battle took place on Our Lady of the Snows Day, Eugen von Savoyen gave Petrovaradin beautiful copy of painting of Our Lady of the Snows from basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. This painting is in convent St. Jurja in Petrovaradin. After the Battle on Petrovaradin, chapel on Tekije became huge sanctuary. Same as today there came pilgrims of all religions. Although with different needs they all needed to pray. Chapel, former Turkish mosque, was built and rebuilt several times throughout centuries. Followers of the Jesus took care of the chapel. After termination of Jesus order in 1773, care of the chapel assumed priest serving on the fortress; then by a Decree of Bishop of Djakovo, a priest from church St. Roka in Petrovaradin. In late XIX century, Ilija Okruglić Sremac, priest from church of St. Jurja in Petrovaradin and well-known poet, restored a chapel. Assisted by Bishop of Djakovo, according to design of an architect Hermana Bolic, construction began in 1881 and was completed in 1885 when new bells were put onto belfry.

In the beginning this Church was envisaged for services of believers of Orthodox and Protestant religion, with separate alters for each, but nowadays, only Roman-catholic service is performed (Dudvarski 2005, 268).

Organs were put in 1893. Church dome is coated with a tin sheet, with cross being gold-plated in 1924. Later were put stained glasses and dedicated new alter in 1977. New parish house was erected instead of the old one in 1997. Church has characteristic and unique appearance. On front side are two belfries in neo-gothic style, height of 27,6 meters. Back part of church has a dome in Byzantine style, reminder of old mosque and victory over the Turks in 1716. Below the cross on the dome is crescent, symbol of victory of Christianity over Islam.¹ In church is the main alter with a statue of Virgin Mary conception. There is also alter of Maria of Snows onto which is placed *miraculous painting of Mother of God of Snows*. In church is marble commemorative plate placed as gratitude to Mother of God for victory over the Turks. There are statues of St. Apostles Peter and Pavle, as well as St. Cyril and Methodius, the first Slavic missionaries (Dudvarski 2005, 270). For centuries on Kalvarija existed Way of the Cross that went from church St. Roka to Kalvarija. During the 90s due to rapid urbanization of this part of Petrovaradin was launched an initiative to erect new Way of the Cross on the land of Tekije. During 2002/2003 was cleared bushy land near the church. Path 300 m in length and wide 2,2m was made and erected a cave of Our Lady of Lourdes (Dudvarski 2005, 268).

HIERARCHY STRUCTURE OF SANCTUARY

During our field research in 2007, mons. Marin Svrakic was a bishop of Djakovo Diocese, and mons. Djuro Gasparovic was suffragan for Srem. Already in 2008 was established Sremska Diocese with head cathedral church of St. Dimitrije in Sremska Mitrovica.² Reaction to these huge changes was only expressed in book

¹ On church walls are numerous commemorative plates to: Ilija Okruglić Sremac, erected to the citizens of Petrovaradin killed in World War One, celebration of crowning miraculous painting of Mother of God of Snows in 1957 an marking of 1000 years from baptism of Croatian people.

² Djakovo, June 18th 2008, Mons. Mario Roberto Cassari, apostle nuncio in Croatia in Bishop house in Djakovo in presence of cardinal Joseph Bozanic, bishop of Croat-Slavonian church autonomy, cannons, deans, members of Advisory Council, priests-professors, monks and theologians announced that Holy father Benedict XVI.:

„1. Reestablished Srem Diocese – until that moment merged „in persona Episcopi“ to Djakovo Diocese – and that His Excellency mons. Djuro Gasparovic was appointed bishop until then head bishop of Mattiane and

entitled *Jurisdiction of Catholic Church in Srem*, by historians Djordje Bubalo, Radmila Radic and Katarina Mitrovic (2010). Said authors in introductory state basic purpose of the book: to prove non-justification of Srem Diocese belonging to Djakovo-Osijek metropolis, i.e. present arguments for justification of its merging to Belgrade archbishop. Fundamental reason for such change is need for all Catholics within Serbian borders to subordinated to Belgrade archbishop as the highest catholic dignitary in the country. We cannot discuss detail in here and consequences of this church-political decision, but we outline that Zemun, Novi Beograd and Surcin, don't belong to Belgrade archbishop but Srem Diocese that is subordinate also to newly established Djakovo-Osijek Diocese as metropolitan head office.

FROM INTERVIEWS WITH PRIESTS

Father Marko Los, who in 2007 was a.d. head of Tekije, referred me to father Marko Kljajic pastor in Surcin, recommending me his book. Scheduled phone discussion with this priest who used to be pastor of Petrovaradin and pastor St. Roka and St. Juraja and co-head of Srem Marian sanctuary of Mother of God of Tekije was somewhat hesitant on his part, kind of beating around the bush. Sudden turn was unintentionally caused by my sentence that in Sanctuary of Tekije, in addition to Catholics also come Romani Muslims and Orthodox (with mentioning three former alters, whereof two lateral were planned for Orthodox and protestants).³ Reaction of Father Marko was hasty and nervous stating that „alter story isn't true“, and that is „usurpation“ of sanctuary and that „it is pity that the Romani are not evangelized“. When we connect these affective statements of Father Marko with the official decisions of the Vatican that are never made hasty, but are deeply thought through, then in case of Tekije there are elements of subtle conflict, here displayed as a fear from „usurpation“ of sanctuary, or fight for a territory corresponding to a concept of competitive sharing and antagonistic theory of R. Hayden (2002) as discussed in introductory notes.

suffragan of Djakovo and general vicar with special authority for Srem. His Excellency mons. Gasparovic will be a member of International bishop conference of Saint Cyril and Methodius and will no longer belonging to Croatian bishop conference.

2. Established Church Djakovo-Osijek Autonomy and raised Djakovo-Osijek Diocese to metropolitan level, deleting title Bosnia and addition Osijek, because Osijek is the biggest center of Slavonija; adding to it suffragan Diocese Srem and Pozega Dioceses that used to belong to church autonomy Croat-Slavonian; His Excellency mons. Marin Srakic, bishop of Djakovo-Srem appointed as the first archbishop of metropolitan Djakovo-Osijek.

3. Changed name of church autonomy Croat-Slavonian into Zagreb church autonomy with metropolitan head office in Zagreb and suffragan Dioceses are Krizevci and Varazdin“ <http://www.srijembiskupija.rs>.

³ We found information about joint alters in relevant literature (Dudvarski 2005), as well as in official presentation of Novi Sad where the following is written for Tekije: “Well-known sanctuary, ecumenical, where in head of August 5th in processions come orthodox, Protestants and Catholics, as a memory of joint victory over the Turks in 1716, Our Lady of the Snows Day... After ouster of the Turks in 1687, fraters of Petrovaradin turned the mosque into catholic church. In mid-XVIII century was increased for: wooden tower in head, three alters inside. In 188 was erected current church with two towers in gothic style after invested efforts of abbot Ilija Okrugic Sremac, and permission of bishop Strosmajer, according to project of an architect from Zagreb, Herman Bole. Everything was new; alters were in style of three Christian versions: catholic, orthodox and protestant. At the back of dome is placed a cross and crescent as a sign that this church alternatively belonged to two religions: Christian and Muslim. In church foundation was buried its ideal founder Ilija Okrugic Sremac, born in Karlovac, and school peer and friend of Serbian poet Branko Radicevic, holder of Serbian and Montenegrin decoration, with title of abbot Saint Dimitrije the Mortar of Srem assigned by bishop of Djakovo...” (<http://www.novisad.rs/tsrkva-na-tekiam>).

RITUALS ON CENTRAL HOLIDAY

Church poster included schedule of feast rituals for Small and Big Tekije.

Big Tekije

July 4th

3 p.m. – Confession opportunity

5 p.m. – Holy Mass in Hungarian language

6 p.m. – Holy Mass in Old Slavic language

7 p.m. - Holy Pontifical Mass in Croatian followed by a candle procession.

9 p.m. to midnight program in church - prayer and bowing in front of the Holy.

July 5th

5 a.m. Holy Mass in Croatian language

6 a.m. Holy Mass in Croatian language followed by a trip to Way of the Cross

7 a.m. Holy Mass in Old Slavic language

9 a.m. Holy Pontifical Mass in Hungarian language

11 a.m. Holy Pontifical Mass in Croatian language

6 p.m. final ceremony.

On August 4th we dedicated ourselves to camera shooting of our discussion with the Romani, and on August 5th we arrived to Tekije with a group of Roman-catholic pilgrims from Belgrade, led by father Ivan Cindorij, Jesus follower from parish of St. Peter. We traveled with a group by way of the Cross and attended Mass at 11 a.m. which was recorded. I later had in-depth interview with several pilgrims in Belgrade, and they referred me to other believers traveling on pilgrimage.⁴

THE ROMANI ON PILGRIMAGE IN TEKIJE

Tekije is traditional mass pilgrimage of the Romani Muslims performing their rituals. They are staying nearby the sanctuary and for them is important to spend the night before the holiday and holiday on Holy place. They come for health, happiness, progress, gratitude. They are all Muslims and express deep respect for the Mother of God, in this case of Tekija. When possible, they bring live lamb. After entering the church they go to alter with statue of the Mother of God, leaving the church in reverse not to turn the back to the statue. In most cases they use towels for going over statue, and leave the money on. Children crawl under alter three times for health. They go to water near the sanctuary, lit candles, but don't attend numerous masses alternating in Hungarian, Slovakian and Croat language. We talked to several Romani, pilgrims of this sanctuary. Some of them, like Djevrija and her family are aboriginals from Zrenjanin, living in Novi Sad, in Veliki Rit. Others are from Podujevo and Pristina, Kumanovo, colonists, refugees. They said they sold everything there and that they are coming here now.

“We are refugees. We celebrate this holiday every year. We used to go to Letnica, and now her. It was amazing but this one (*Mother of God*) – they are equal. We carry a lamb, she helps us.”

⁴ Sample included 50 pilgrims (25 Orthodox and 25 Roman-catholic) subject of in-depth semi-structured interviews.

TOURIST POTENTIAL OF SANCTUARY

Tourist potential of this Holy place is big but insufficiently used. Sanctuary is located at the very road, in the vicinity of Petrovaradin and Novi Sad, not far from Sremski Karlovci. In time of our research (2007) sanctuary has seasonal character, and church was opened only on holidays. Visitors stopping by on other days, as happened to author of this paper, would find the locked church, which is such a waste. Transformation of this sanctuary on holidays is even greater, particularly on Small and Big, Tekije.

Fair is constituent part of Tekije. Diversity of offer, candy, gingerbread hearts and all sorts of items, crowns and Orthodox chaplets of all sizes and colors, candles, statues of Mother of God... Everyone can find something. Almost all pilgrims buy something as a reminder until the next Tekije.

Our interviewed catholic pilgrims from Belgrade (hereinafter referred to as: HK) mostly visited the closets pilgrimage place Tekije, and the best known Medjugorje. Here are some of pilgrim answers when asked about Tekije.

I was at pilgrimage at Mother of God of Tekije... I first heard about it from my pastor in Gradiste, some time in August. Josip Matanovic, half Bulgarian, half Croat descend says "I prayed for my job in Tekije". Mother, although Bulgarian instilled a love for Tekije. He said he would stop by any time possible to thank. Many people healed, walked, numerous crutches were in church. They moved them away. I thought – Why don't I pray for my job, to be a bread-maker? I think of my elf as Vojvodjanin, and I transferred here. Mother of God of Tekije helped me, and that is a miracle. I met a man in Tekije who helped me with administration [HK2, m, 28, student].

Tekije is interesting how many people are ready to make smaller or larger sacrifices, to go to Tekije on foot, to stay outside, to sleep in inadequate conditions. Great love for Mother of God everyone respects in their own way. People have so many great needs. There are sick people, immovable, who lost their closets ones. They ask for a prayer, taking over their soul. There are people coming each year from pledge. They've promised they would come for something, and it is a big deal for them. They had a great experience. Not only prayer as seeking, as need, there are many gratitude prayers present in Tekije. I didn't go as a child there, because when I was little people from my place (Golubinci) walked on foot for 35 km. While singing church songs, and prayer, many walked bare footed. It is an old form of pilgrimage-you walk and celebrate God, humble in prayer and song [HK5,m, 45, confectiary].

I always go to Tekije. I was a little girl when I came with my Mom and Grandma at the age of 10. It is a tradition. Our Lady of the Snows was named because of battle between the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian army lead by Eugen von Savoyen. The Turks desecrated holy places, taking horses into the church. Then the snow fell in August and the Turks got frozen. Song „dear Mother of god of Tekije, please hear our voice, don't let the invader conquer, take care of us". Mom and Grandma walked on foot from Slankamen, and sand along. It is a sort of penance. It was hard, but beautiful. Then came the time of cars, and it almost vanished. Now we go the day before when the procession is. Way of Cross was at the church of St. Roka in Petrovaradin. Now it is at church on Tekije [HK17, f, 55, professor of physics].

I only go to Tekije and St. Petka. I had almost no sensation for 3-4 year in my left leg. I took all sorts of exams. I was about 80 kg, and lost weight to 58 kg. I threw up everything that I eat. A doctor, family friend, suspected a

cancer. All analyses were great. I don't know what it is. After 3-4 days my husband woke me because I was crying in my sleep. I dreamt of my childhood, mom in a blue dress. She told me she was going to a dentist „I have a toothache, I am afraid it will spread to my bones, I better extract them”... dream stopped. I went to a doctor the next day – „We didn't think of that”. I had 4 troubled teeth. I couldn't walk I barely managed to go to Tekije; a prayer and a gratitude for even being able to go. In August in Tekije I had a relief, I brought along 1l of oil and carry crown as a wedding ring. I don't know any prayer. I just bought and put it. There is no one to take it off. Relief and gratitude that I am waling, August 5th I was in Tekije. I had the same dream in October a dentist extracted the fourth tooth – inflamed – it completely paralyzed the left side until leg. Now pain is dull. Doctor says it takes the same length of time as the illness lasted [HK 24, f, 70, retiree].

Answers of these pilgrims confirm that primary motif of their arrival to this cult place, in addition to respecting a tradition is to pray, to get help for work, moving, healing, as well as thanking for received help and pledging.

After our research was established very informative Web site of Diocese of Srem⁵, where it says that Tekije are starting to be activated outside their central holidays. Rev. Stjepan Barisic is current head of sanctuary, assisted by Petar Pifat. They occasionally organize spiritual rebirths, exhibition... Is there a religious tourism? In our opinion, there is not, although it is exceptional pilgrimage and cult place. As of 2013, sanctuary has own Web site informing that the church is open every day in period 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. and when needed. Seasonal service starts on April 27th 2014.⁶

CONCLUSION

Mix cult pilgrimage places are stronger than confessional affiliation. In addition to tradition, it is maintained by pilgrims' belief in God, miraculous saints and healing places. Crucial confirmation that pilgrimage sanctuary of Tekije is belonging to a mix pilgrimage place was given by the Romani, Muslims, who come with their families in large number on holiday. They perform their ceremonies separate from Christian groups. *Communitas* is not established, but also there are no conflicts. Motifs of pilgrim Romani is no different from other pilgrims. These are: health, happiness, family progress, plea, pledge and gratitude to Mother of God. Inter-religious and ecumenical character of pilgrimage unquestionably depends on social situation. Deterioration of ethno-religious relations by all means affects ecumenical mix character of pilgrimage, and sanctuaries become a place of ethno-political and religious competition. It turned out that antagonistic tolerance (Hayden, 2002) latently appear in Tekije. No only while renovating church lateral alters have been removed, that then head of sanctuary I. Okruglic symbolically intended to Orthodox and protestants, but the Romani were „elegantly“ suppressed to the field where the fair takes places, with remark of the recent head of sanctuary M. Kljajic that they are „supposed to be evangelized“. This sort of zero tolerance is unfortunately linked to places with competitive share of sanctuary. When social conditions are stable, and there are individuals, predominantly referring to priests, who are open and prone to fellowship, as it was Ilija Okruglić Sremac, then strengthens joint visiting of the same sanctuaries. Tourist potential of Tekije is unquestionable, but still insufficiently used. The largest obstacle is seasonal character of sanctuary. But things are turning for the better: whilst in 2007, in period of our research, church was only open during the

⁵ <http://www.srijembiskupija.rs/hr/hodocasnicko-slavlje-na-velike-tekije-u-petrovaradinu>.

⁶ <http://www.tekije.com/>

holidays it is now open every day in period between 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. and seasonal services begin late April.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig.1. Tekije: between the sacred and the secular



Fig. 2. Confession



Fig.3. Lighting candles in front of the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes



Fig.4. The miraculous picture of Our Lady



Fig. 5. Spring



Ph. 6. Pilgrims from Belgrade on the Way of the Cross



Ph.7. The Archbishop blesses the people



Ph. 8. Romani people on the fairground



Ph. 9. Queue to kiss the cross



Ph.10. The statue of Our Lady covered with a towel



Ph.11. Romani people walking backwards from the church

Žikica Simić

THE CULT SOURCE OF “HOLY WATER” DEDICATED TO LIFE-GIVING CROSS AT THE MONASTERY BUKOVO IN NEGOTIN

THE CULT AND CULTURE – THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CULT

Culture carries a cult in its name. In the overall history of culture, which integrates traditional values and contemporary culture – specific culture of any people, groups, and individuals - has never been fundamentally against religion and religious cult. Culture for and against the cult is the a false dilemma. Religion or culture is a fictional dilemma of European rationalistic mind. “There is no culture without religion”, rightly emphasizes in the Tolstoyan spirit of tolerance and peace academician Nikita Ilyich Tolstoy, grandson of Leo Tolstoy. Religion is internal and inalienable value of the cultural identity of peoples, groups and individuals. Religion as part of culture express the binding norms of the religious way of life and religion as a way of life/culture. With such teleology a cult and a religion are involved in the creation of ethical, religious and religious values, without which there is no wholeness and unity of cultural self-consciousness of a nation, group and individual (Ilic 1995, 235-240).

Each culture has been associated with the cult. The ancient culture has cultic origin, religious and pagan, ritual. This pagan-religious content of the culture was present in Catholicism. The symbolism of Catholic culture is deeply connected with the symbolism of the pagan culture. But the symbolism of culture always has, or religious-pagan or religious-christian sources. In its sources, foundations, European culture is religious and Christian or pagan-christian. The rich and beautiful culture is inseparable linked with Christian mysticism and symbolism, with the same spirit that created the icon, lit a lamp in front of it and lit incense. The rationalistic fight against the spirit of the icons, icon lamp and incense to the fatal way turns into the battle against the culture and mystical sources of culture. And against iconoclastic spirit should be fought not only in the name of religion, but also in the name of culture. Outside of the Universal Church has no culture. Liturgical beauty of the church, Catholic and Orthodox, would have to convince people that there is no antagonism and contradiction between the Christian religion and culture but a deep connection and a causal relationship. No one dares to argue that modern railway is culture, and that the old temple is not. Culture in its blooming, rise is always symbolic, full of signs of other, otherworldly, it was born in the temple and entered into the world (Berdyaev 2002, 196-198).

Otherwise, the Slavs had their own cults of water deities – lakes, rivers, springs; respect to certain trees and rocks. Especially respected mulberry, oak and linden. National saying “no good when wooden God judges you” obvious proof that the Serbs had their wooden idols. Back to the eighteenth century, we have a report from pozeska area in which it is said the people respect linden and the gather around every first week of the ninth month, Christian and Muslim people, bringing a variety of gifts. Venerating the tree as it is as the holly body and claim it make miracles and healings. Lippen at the monastery Denic in Drenica (Kosovo) is known to people as “insane lippen” for its healing insane. The South Slavs until our time kept the belief that belonged to a cult of the dead – the one who cut down shady tree or die immedi-

ately and inevitably get sick. Idolatry among Serbs, in their social consciousness, was always been deeply rooted. Sensuous and psychological veneration of the idol, the primordial fear of idols, on occasion appears in its atavistic forms in the modern cult forms of Serbs (Ilic 1995, 207-209).

THE DIVERSITY AND DISPARITY CULTS (CULT OF PERSONALITY) IN ORTHODOXY

Eastern Orthodoxy has not standardized cults. To the persona of orthodox saints, which are the subject of religious respect, is attributed and ascribed the different properties and abilities. To saints are attributed properties and powers that are related to their former earthly life, occupations, properties and name. Thus the Holy Cosmas and Damian, and Panteleimon, are recognized as healers of various diseases (which are dealt with and during the their earthly life). Holy Myrrh-exuding Simeon (and its grapevine in Hilandar) helps barren women. Saint Nicholas the Miracleworkers is the patron of sailors and travelers in general, Sveta Petka is the patroness of women, those saints who lived immoral lives before repenting now help those affected by the lustful passion and relieve them from possession (Saint Mary of Egypt...). St. Cyprian who formerly was practicing magic and now help those who are possessed by it. St. Vitus heals sight problems and disease. Although, admittedly, many saints with prayers extol all kinds of temptations and troubles. On this basis, we can say that „fragmentation”, “specialization” and “concretization” which originates from pagan polytheism and has the function of the substitution of pagan deities still exists in orthodoxy religion. However, to many orthodox saints are not attributable such functions and believers do not expect from them such effects (eg, St. Basil, and others).

By this diversity cult places could be comparable with present a health resort spas to treat a variety diseases (renal, rheumatic, heart ...). Another similarity is that the cult places (and spas) must be personally attend, visit. Prayer for help can not be send from own home or even the parish, but on precise and concrete location of religious respect. “Religions carry the paradoxes, one of which is a pilgrimage. If God is present everywhere around us, why do we have to go right to a specific place that we've experienced in a special way” (Radulovic 2011, 59). For believers, however, is characteristic a direct and concrete – sensuous communication, or pilgrimage. However, it should be clearly distinguished pilgrimage as taking mass (or, at least, group), planned and organized to visit cultic places and objects from the individual, sporadic and spontaneous visits for occasional need that may have the same nature and motivation as the previous one. Cultic place should not be understood only in figurative meaning. Shrines are not only those that are most popular; that attract the most attention, that are subject of the greatest interest. Every sacred object that is directed toward the beyond, transcendent (conventional or alternative nature) is potentially and real place or an object of religious worship or honour. Believers often goes to the cult¹ persons, not only to the objects (of classical, institutional religion), only after unsuccessfully attempts and without possibilities of official medicine and non-institutional religion (magic) in the seeking latest solace and hope in the super-

¹It is important to note that the main or even sole motive visiting some temples (mostly belonging to the monastery) who enjoys an excellent reputation in the nation, mostly elder of the monastery (usually abbot). Such is the case of the famous ex archimandrite Thaddeus from monastery in Vitovnica near Petrovac on Mlava. People all over Serbia went to this old man for life advice, instruction and comfort. In addition to this most famous case there are similar priests (usually monks) who are of local importance.

natural and mystical. Our famous ethnologist Sima Trojanović claims that the Serbian peasant in greatest need and troubles visits old women dealing with magical practices (Trojanović 1983, 10). Today the situation has not changed significantly, although the peasantry is no longer the dominant social class and profession. Research shows that the main motive for visiting monasteries, apart from the spiritual: it is the need for healing. At the level of popular religiosity, the most common motive is healing, to be cured (Radulović 2011b, 47). Believers are usually pray to God for their own health and the health of their loved ones (Vranic Mitrić i Jankovic 2010, 418).

In some temples, the people and orthodox clergy, saying that some temples are “great sanctity” which may mean the ancient cultural and historical value and statehood, but also possess a “great(er) grace”, that they have higher sacramental value (although it is not common and popular to talk about small shrines as their opposites). Based on this, we can conclude that the cult value of different personalities, places and objects is not equal, that grace is not equally distributed, allocated and that there is shrines which possess more grace than the other holy places. Usually, monastic churches are valued more highly than the parish churches. The sacred objects of monasteries are more valued for its antiquity because usually dating back to the Middle Ages and are they are in connection with ancestors, tradition. Our famous ethnologist Sreten Petrovic claims that ethnologists from the early twentieth century warned that the Serbian people have more faith in the old church, churchyards and monastery places; that is why they go to God to help them in times of trouble. Cult places have preserved, in peoples collective consciousness, the character of saintliness as contributed a lot by many legends about their positive and magic effects produced by such places and which left their imprint on the memory of people of older generations. Many tales are told about individuals experiencing visions, enlightenment, epiphany of deity or some other token of some supernatural force at these places (Petrović 2010, 123). In addition, the worship in them is much richer and regular; daily prayers ascending to God for the faithful. But there are gradations, according to popular people's perception and behavior, between the parish church to the status and the degree of possession of grace. However, some churches (and shrines) are more appreciated, more respectable because they are luxurious for its beauty as sometimes is the reason for their frequent visits. Such motivation is more typical of secular people, but for the people of the church (churchgoers), which is managed by an external physical beauty (the architecture of the temple and the beauty of its natural environment). So some believers tend to prefer a performance of some common rituals or sacraments, related to common life cycle (baptism and marriage) that are available to them at the temple in their own parish. So, in this case, the motivation is not the usual visiting from healing reasons. The churchgoers are prone to such “jumping” (from one holy place to another) for the mentioned reasons – beliefs about higher grace or sanctity of temples. All in all, these reasons lead to such illogical behavior that avoids, neglects and underestimates the space parish sacred object (temple) that is administratively responsible for them. “Many of them bring their children and baptize them in front of the relics, get married, confess and take Communion and ask for prayers to be read (...). This is based on the belief that prayer is effective in certain places that have some kind of relationship with God (Stamenkovic, Džigurski Ivkov i Vujičić 2010, 84).“ It is believed that spoken a prayer to the “holy place” is specially effective (Cvitković 2010, 28)

In addition, sociologists, and theologians, on the other hand, criticized this phenomenon among believer. Among them is leading Orthodox theologian and priest of the twentieth century - Alexander Schmemmann. He claims that in early Christianity Christians to be not interested in holy, sacred geography (ie, places where the

Christ was during his earthly ministry), or temples, or cults. They are not engaged in pilgrimages. In the “old” religions have existed thousands of temples, thousands of “holy places”, while the Christians said that all was past. They had no need for “temples”: the Church itself, the Body of Christ, gathered people of God in the minds of believers were themselves the temple. Destroy this temple, said Christ in the Jerusalem temple and in three days I will raise it up. In the evangelical story of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well Christ says about it: Lord, said wife, I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped God on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said unto her: Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem ... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks that these are people who worship him. Samaritan woman asked Him about the ritual. Jesus, answering her, in a radical way changed the question. Nowhere in the New Testament Christianity is not revealed as a cult (Schmemmann 2004, 21).

However, many believers canceled practice of visitation “holy places” due to lack of time, money, and other reasons. They could not afford themselves that luxurious trip and they are forced to contact their own parish priest and the temple of their parish expecting the same effects. There is another place in the Gospel that indicate insistence on direct contact with the source of healing. The captain of the Old Roman army is asking Christ to heal his servant. At that moment, Christ shows a willingness to go to the scene and heal the servant. The captain said it was not necessary for Christ says that 's enough to just say that his servant will be healed from a distance. Christ responds that captain's faith is very firm.

Some representatives of the church argue that the multitude of superstitions and prejudices entered the religious life of the parish. For early, firstly Christians there was no custom of visiting various temple, especially on holidays. They all held their parish (Sujeverje – klanjanje đavolu, 2001, 95). “The Reformation rejected the pilgrimage. Among those who were critics of the pilgrimage were Gregory of Nyssa, St. Augustine, St. Geronimo, Erasmus, and others (Cvitković 2010, 24). A similar situation exists in relation to the pagan cults, deities. Such belief and behavior is typical of Orthodox people, what is less typical of Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism which by preaching and Enlightenment fought against such occurrences among its believers. The Roman Catholic Church, unlike the Orthodox, has not treated with sympathetically old folk beliefs, including the phenomena of a pilgrimage to strange, cult places, that is, some holly tree, the forest and the source of water. The priest Franciszek de Clugia in 1331 led a genuine crusade against people “who were praying in front of a tree or water sourcea”. In region Škofija Loka, just at the foot of the Pohorje Mountains, the people showed their respect to the divinity Vid. Around 1300, in the vicinity of Vesternica people showed respect for the tree so that the bishop Slomšek, as early as mid 19th century, was forced to oppose a new peoples pilgrimage. The authorities stopped this to miracle-making region by force (Petrović 2010, 127).

SOURCE OF „HOLY WATER” IN THE MONASTERY BUKOVO IN NEGOTIN

In municipality of Negotin, according to the last census in 2011. has 46.679 inhabitants. The vast majority are Serbs (90%), and the Vlachs as the largest minority makes up about ten percent. Bukovo Monastery (Fig. 1), dedicated to St. Nicholas the Miracle-Worker, is located 3-4 km west of Negotin, on the road Zajecar-Negotin, on a gentle slope Bratujevac Mountain, rich in water and lush vegetation. The monastery is positioned on a hill so from his yard see the whole Negotin valley and the surrounding villages. The monastery is situated at an altitude of 137 m, at 44 degrees

north latitude and 22 degrees eastern geografic length. Valley, which is located at the foot of the monastery Bukovo, is open to the east and south sides, which further contributes to the specific climate of the region. This is an most continental area of Serbia with warm summers and cold winters. During the winter the temperature drops to -30°C, and in summer it goes up to 40°C in the shade. The monastery has a good and well-equipped infrastructure (water, electricity, lighting, access roads). Because of the quality of infrastructure road to the monastery serves as a promenade to residents of Negotin. Near the monastery there is a school of agriculture "Rajko Bosnic". And the monastery is known for its agricultural activities – mainly the production of quality wines from the domestic grape varieties "muscadine" and its sale to visitors of the monastery. About the origin of the name of the monastery we can only speculate today. The name of monastery Bukovo, according the tradition, comes from the surrounding "Beech Forest" or the birds „buk" ('noise'), who lived here in former marshes. Otherwise, dedicated to St. Nicholas the Miracle-Worker. Written information about the founder of the monastery Bukovo do not exist, but there are several traditions that speak about it. According to tradition, the monastery Bukovo was founded by Serbian King Milutin at the end of the 13th century, was built after the victory over the Bulgarian king Sisman. According to another legend, the founder of the Monastery of the Holy Bukovo Nicodemus Tismanski who lived in the Timok region and built many churches in the 15th century. According to a third legend, the founder of the monastery Bukovo was one of the gentry of eastern Serbia and dates from the 15th century. Throughout its history the monastery Bukovo repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt. Knez Miloš after renovation in 1837. was donated to the monastery bells and 1839. were built two palaces. On the eve of the Second World War, in 1940, on the north side over the entrance bell tower was erected in the square base and an integral part of the entrance to the monastery complex. Within the courtyard of the monastery Bukovo, there is a dedicated life-giving source – the Blessed Virgin Mary. Numerous healings occurred from the Fountain (source). In addition to this source, (formerly) to the Mother of God and its Cover is dedicated the chapel in the southern dormitory.

The monastery church Bukovo is a one-nave structure with a base in the shape of a cross. 18.80 m long, 8.55 m wide and 6.90 m high. It was built of hewn stone and no dome of the apse and the choir later added in the narthex. The styles in the church of the monastery Bukovo includes a special version of the Morava school. During its existence, did not significantly change its appearance. The monastery belongs to the living, active. Since 1994., the monastery Bukovo, whose church is dedicated to St. Nicholas, has the structure of the male coenobitic monastery. Develops under the spiritual supervision and tutelage of Bishop Timočkog Justin. Until twenty years ago the monastery was counted only two monks. Today there are a dozen monks and novices. Otherwise, there is a former monastery Koroglaš, in the village Miloševo located 6 kilometers from Negotin. And in the city Negotin are two churches – the Church of the Holy Trinity (in the center) and the Church of Virgin Mary. The monastery until the 2006th year had a healing spring in its yard which was dedicated to the Mother of God. He had previously been under the old and the huge linden tree (Fig. 2) which was next to the source to which is attributed medicinal properties. That people have used „holly water" for drinking clearly testified relics and in his immediate environment. At about 2 meters above the spring there were hanging icon lamp, and just below the icon of the Holy Mother of God (who was the protectress of the holly well). It seems that these relics are not related to linden tree but to holly source because are located directly above the holly source. Under relics is the inventory that is used for the taking water from that source. There are two

metal bowls (cup and pot) and a wooden bowl (in ethnic style). Also, there is a plastic funnel for the water pouring, for fulfilling bottle. There is also something like the cover (canopy) of the boards, probably, for the protection of sources. This phenomenon may be easier to understand with the explanation of art historians Zoran Jovanovic. He argues that the earlier sources were marked by placing a cross and icons hanging on a tree near the source, which is also considered sacred (“record”). They were eventually turned into the fountain and were covered with a canopy or a chapel with accommodation for the pilgrims was built just above the source or next to it. Holy water could be encountered in different places: near the monastery, in the churchyard, settlements, near rivers and even cemeteries (Jovanovic 2012, 149).

Cult springs always got an ethno - medicinal purposes. They can be seen in the various ways: as common, simple springs, as spouts, and separately or with other religious objects. They can be seen in many parts of the Balkans: the eastern, south-eastern Serbia, Central Serbia, Vojvodina, Macedonia eastern and southern Bulgaria, Greece. It is common that a cult sources are near monastery (since the monastery was built where established where fresh water was available) (Krstić 2010, 131).

Water sources in the monastery lands, due to the fact that they are on them, by default, acquire the status of sacred” and “healing” springs. After the construction of dormitory dedicated to the Cover of Holly Mother of God (2006) water from the well in the courtyard of the monastery “Bukovo” was conducted, by the newly-built fountain, outside the monastery. The source and fountain are now being devoted to the Life-Giving Cross (Fig. 3). Thus, the recent renovation of the monastery dormitory, which began in the middle of last decade, linden tree that stood just above sources, for quite a surprise, is cut down. Surprisingly, because a such a trees above the source of the religious tradition of the Serbian people is usually considered a “record”. Because the linden was located on the property of the monastery abbot has the right to cut down a tree. Believers who visited the monastery and the very source of “holy water” themselves testify that the lippen is not perceived as having significant religious value and respect, far higher expectations of healing are related to the very source of “holy water” of Life-Giving Cross. Otherwise, among the respondents, we met there, there is no a certain dominant legend of the potential effects of healing (with specific names, identified healed from the illness as is the common case with some of the better known sources of holy water and sacred objects). Instead, they spoke about some of the lesser-known cases of healing, but they believe in its healing effect. Believers – visitors often take water from the spring and carry their homes with the hope of its healing effect. Visitors said they have witnessed cases that some people taking of large amounts of water (in a huge bottle) and carry to their homes. Before building a fountain for the healing respect and thanksgiving were expressed in a classic way for this kind of cult – throwing coins at it.²

Otherwise, the subject of religious respect are not the fountains by themselves, which are man-made but sources of holy water which are God-given, created independently of any human activity. However, the fountain represent and bring more cultural (hygienic, practical) relationship to the source of holy water. In fact, as previously taking water from the source (in somewhat impractical way) and throwing in it coins on the unhygienic way, now the money has a better purpose – a material contribution to the brotherhood of the monastery. The newly built fountain is walled with stone blocks that together make up a huge stone slab (height about 2

² Sources of the information in this study, as was done in the period of Lent when the monastic brotherhood and abbot werenot available and willing to talk, were the respondents who visited the visited source.

meters and a width of about 1.5). Behind the front of the fountain there is an even greater background in mind walls of those same stone blocks with left slots (and little white cross) in order to insert coins and paper money (banknotes). Immediately above the pipe at the bottom of the fountain is the inscription "a contribution to the monastery" with a dark background. Immediately above it is a much larger inscription (with white background) with information who built this fountain, and in the whose honor (Fig. 5). These two inscriptions are carved in a semi-circle that occupies the center of the fountain. And on top of the fountain is a huge white cross ("Life-Giving Cross", height about a half meter) which is dedicated to the newly built fountain. Near the fountain there is bench (Fig. 4) for relaxation of the visitors. This healing source visit believers who come to the monastery. It is generally a small number of the regular old faithful and more young people who come alone and with their children. The most massive are visits during the holidays and Sundays, especially during Lent when the other days not allowed to enter the monastery. Number of visitors is significantly higher when the monastery celebrates its patron – Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker (19. december). However, on that date the water source is usually frozen so it can not be the main or only motive for coming to the monastery. In addition, the monastery celebrates "summer" Sv. Nicholas on 22 May. Visitors are massive during the celebration of the glory of the chapel of the Cover of Holy Virgin on October 21. As the holly source, thanks to the conduction, is outside the monastery courtyard it can be visited on a daily basis and independent of the arrival to the monastery. "Holy well" is, to some extent, apart from the monastery as an isolated, independent cult object, both spatially and substantively. Otherwise, visits to the monastery (and the holly source) is significantly increased during the summer months (July and August) when in the Negotin returns a huge number of people working abroa. Among them, the majority are Orthodox Serbs and Vlachs (as the largest ethnic minority), such is the case among the regular visitors to the monastery. To better attendance to monastery and "sacred spring" contribute the good access roads and surroundings of the monastery, which is rich in natural beauty. Although the parish clergy SPC, as usual, sanctifies water on Epiphany, before the St. patrons day, and in some places, before Easter, which can be used throughout the year for cleansing and healing, believers have higher expectation from miraculous spring water.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. Monastery Bukovo near Negotin (dedicated to St. Nikolas-Miracleworker)



Fig. 2. Cult source of „holly water“ before cutting down the tree of lippen (until 2006) dedicated to Holly Mother of God



Fig. 3. Fountain and „holly water“ dedicated to Life-Giving Cross



Fig. 4. Monastery Bukovo with fountain and bench for relaxation of visitors



Fig. 5. Inscription on fountain

Milovan Vuković
Andon Kostadinović

THE THAUMATURGIC SPRING OF SAINT PARASCHEVA OF TIRNOVO IN BISKUPLJE (VELIKO GRADIŠTE)*

INTRODUCTION

In sociological literature, religion is, mainly, observed as a complex form of consciousness, which, apart from the normative elements – that is to say, certain rules of behaviour and particular practice (similar to morality) – includes a set of specific notions of nature and society (similar to science and philosophy), that are, in turn, expressed through certain characters (as in art). The majority of authors agree that every religion contains two important constituent parts: (1) an invisible (subjective) side (specific notions of nature and society, of invisible powerful beings who rule society and nature) and (2) the other, external side (particular practical relationship toward those beings, a religious cult with the aim of appeasing those beings).

From the standpoint of this paper, it should be mentioned in the introduction that the mere notions without a cult do not constitute a religion, just as a cult cannot exist without religious-mythological notions but is based on them. These two specific characteristics make the religious form of social awareness different from all the other forms of social awareness which, at the same time, does not imply the inferior position of religion. Namely, religion is, as a specific form of the practical relationship toward the world (nature, society, and man), “fully equal with other forms of human spirit: philosophy, science, ideology...” (Đorđević 2000, 162).

Communication, in the first place intrapersonal communication, represents the essential property of every religious practice. Intrapersonal communication is manifested as the exchange of messages with an imagined interlocutor (a real or metaphysical being) by direct or indirect means. The practice of intrapersonal communication includes the act of message encoding by verbal or nonverbal symbols. Such a message is further directed to the absent receiver – a real or metaphysical being. God appears in intrapersonal communication most often as a metaphysical being in the role of a fictive recipient. Since there are both verbal and nonverbal modes of intrapersonal communication, it is obvious that this form of communication can be observed and examined empirically. Offering a sacrifice and lighting a candle, for example, illustrate intrapersonal communication by nonverbal symbols.

Despite the fact that there is only one person who takes part in intrapersonal communication, it too occurs in two directions, similar to other forms of communication. This bidirectionality is also present in the performance of religious rites when speaking to various beings of equal sacred quality (for example, in Christianity these are: God, Jesus, Mary, the Holy Spirit, angels, and saints):

“The two-way human communication does not need a genuine interlocutor. That person can be imagined, not existing anymore or absent. The fact that

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people understand and accept messages from imagined or absent partners allows one to observe bidirectionality even in those forms of epistemological, religious and artistic communication in which an interlocutor is not present (Radojković i Crnobrnja 1995, 8).”

Serbia is characterized by a diverse and rich historical and cultural heritage – it is extremely varied in the ethnic and religious sense. The border regions of Serbia represent even more pronounced multiethnic and multireligious areas. The specificity of this territory – along with the rootedness of the dominant world religions (Christianity and Islam) and their confessional branches (Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, i.e. Sunni Islam) – lies in the still strong influence of pre-Christian beliefs. Many of these folk beliefs later managed to find their way, upon Christianization, into the church practice.

In folk religion there are various localities which only occasionally serve the purpose of communicating with the other side, while the relationship toward them outside of these moments is profane. Among such places the most prominent are crossroads, watermills, river flows, stone shapes, trees, springs, houses, and so on. However, there are also spaces which have continuously been marked as the places where one can communicate with the other side. The relationship toward them differs depending on whether the times are profane or sacred, yet the cult of the places always remains. These places are called cult or sacred places.

This paper describes the cult of the spring of Saint Parascheva of Tirnovo in the vicinity of the village of Biskuplje, not far from Veliko Gradište. This cult place is one of the many locations on the territory of Serbia where underground water which springs from the earth, according to a folk belief, has a thaumaturgic, healing, i.e. magical power. The belief in such power is also founded on the teachings of the church.

The paper first draws attention to the relationship between the folk and church religion. After a short description of the settlement (Biskuplje) in whose vicinity the cult place is located, all aspects of the thaumaturgic spring of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo are scrutinized – above all, its appearance, i.e. structure (basic objects, auxiliary objects, small inventory, etc.). This is followed by the description of the rituals which are performed at this cult place, and certain taboos which are related to this spring are pointed out. Finally, the concluding part of the paper determines the dominant character of the cult of the thaumaturgic spring of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo in Biskuplje in the light of the profane/sacred dichotomy.

RESEARCHING THE FOLK RELIGION

Since 1970s within the research into religion the attention has increasingly been drawn not only toward the church beliefs and tradition but also toward the folk ones, i.e. folk religion. The notion of folk religion, despite its still inaccurate determination in sociology and other social sciences, in the operational sense boils down to “the research into that which people truly believe in and the ways of their religious behaviour which differ from the beliefs, rites, symbols offered and presented by the official church” (Radulović 2007, 103). Dušan Bandić is considered in this region as the first researcher who observed both the folk religion and folk Orthodoxy as dynamic categories, in the changing historical and socio-cultural conditions (Bandić 1980).

From the standpoint of this paper, what is particularly significant is Bandić’s concept of folk Orthodoxy. It, namely, stems from the complex communication act of reception and interpretation of Orthodoxy by the widest layers of population.

“Dušan Bandić treats the reception of church messages, which are normally perceived as an unchangeable category, as a kind of religion itself, influenced by social and cultural changes, that is often founded on an ideology different from the Christian one (Radulović 2007, 117).”

Folk Orthodoxy is, according to Bandić's research, characterized by profanization and nationalization of the saints.

Cult places as an ethnological phenomenon are made cult by: (1) specific material objects and (2) certain customs and beliefs. In accordance with this, the typologies related to cult places may represent the typologies of objects found at those places and customs and beliefs connected with them. A cult place can be marked by only one cult object; nevertheless, those with a complex character are more numerous, i.e. the places that have two or more objects. Some objects may independently stand for the cult of a place, or they may be a part of a larger cult object. On the territory of eastern Serbia there are many types of cult objects which can be categorized into the following groups: (1) natural objects, (2) monuments with religious markers, (3) graves and places of death, (4) auxiliary objects for performing parts of the rituals, (5) houses, (6) sacred buildings, (7) archaeological remains, and (8) small inventory. Natural objects in cult places can be divided into: cult trees, cult stones, cult springs, and cult caves.

This paper considers cult springs which appear in different ways: as common simple springs, as fountains, independently or with other religious objects. In folk tradition of the Balkans, including the various parts of Serbia, the tradition of the protectors (patrons) of thaumaturgic springs which heal people of all sorts of diseases has been passed on for centuries. Often, precisely because of these reasons, churches and monasteries have been built in the vicinity of such springs. The nearby Nimnik monastery, separated from Biskuplje by a hill, has been constructed in the vicinity of such a spring. A specific spring is assigned the miraculous power only after it has appeared before the chosen mortals, and the ways in which such miracles are announced are diverse – visions in dreams or daydreaming, inner voices or the fact that their relics spent a night in the vicinity of a specific spring which caused it to gain healing powers (Đekić 2000, 270). In the Serbian folk tradition, Virgin Mary, Saint Parascheva and Saint Sava are the ones who are most often mentioned in that sense.

For Orthodox believers, thaumaturgic springs represent the holy places of almost the same rank as monasteries and churches (Milošević i Jerkov 2004, 87). Sometimes the name *svetinja* (sacred place or object) is also used, even though this term has a much wider meaning since it also encompasses other cult objects such as trees, stones, old cemeteries, as well as monastery and church ruins (Đokić 1996, 117-133). Finally, the springs which are believed to have healing powers, thus considered to be blessed, are known as *vidarice* (Petrović 1948, 598), while certain researchers also call them *cult waters* (Filipović 1972, 213).

BASIC INFORMATION ON BISKUPLJE

The little village of Biskuplje, renowned for its spring of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo, is located some 2.5 km from the Požarevac – Veliko Gradište state road. According to the 2002 census the village had 430 inhabitants, which is a significant drop in comparison to 1991 when there were 605 inhabitants. There are 359 adult people living in the village, while the average age of the population is 43.6 years (42.1 in men and 45.1 in women). The village has 111 households, and the average number of members per household is 3.87. The village is mostly populated by Serbs (99.76%).

In the last several years, fortunately, the departure of young people to foreign countries, which is a prominent characteristic of the villages in this region, has slowed down. The young people, with the help coming from their parents and other relatives employed abroad, are willing to improve the conditions for agriculture and other activities. Thus, for example, the conditions for students in the village branch school have been improved significantly in Biskuplje. A more substantial renovation work on the school began in 1998 when the facade of the school was plastered and the roof structure was fixed. Furthermore, in 2002, the adaptation of the building interior was carried out and the sewage and floor problems were resolved in the school and the school apartment.

The young inhabitants of the village, it seems, are the ones who have contributed the most to the tidying up of the sacred place not far from the village – the spring of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo. For example, the access path leading to the sacred place – a flat but narrow space – has been forested with poplars so as to preserve the authentic look of the immediate surroundings. Road signs have been installed in the village itself to clearly direct travellers to the sacred place. Finally, as of 2014 this spring has its own presentation at the website of the Tourist Organization of Veliko Gradište.

THE SPRING OF ST. PARASCHEVA OF TIRNOVO

West of the village of Biskuplje, in the area known as Manastirište (located some 1.7 km from the village), which can be reached by a very narrow rural road, there is the holy and healing spring *Daščara*, but it is interesting that the villagers use the shorter name – *Dačara* (Fig. 1). However, they do not have an explanation for the origin of this name.

The beautiful landscape of this area is further embellished by the wooded sides of the hill (in some places even covered with conifers) and a narrow flat space. The sides are overgrown in thick forest (particularly the western one), while there is a very strong spring at the very foot of the hill. Behind this plateau, the Great Hill dominates with its height (311 metres); on its other side the village of Kurjače is located, known mostly by the Nimnik monastery – built next to a strong spring as well. By the by, around 84 ha of forests cover the territory of the village of Biskuplje.

The spring of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo in Biskuplje is one of the most visited sacred waters in entire Braničevo (Fig. 2). The nicely arranged space around *Daščara* reminds one of the landscapes near many monasteries and sacred waters in Braničevo. From the small chapel (Fig. 3) there is a stairway to the newly-built resting point on the opposite side (Fig. 4). This building, which looks like a parish house, has a large space, open on one side, with many benches and a huge table where guests who visit this sanctuary every day can have a rest (Fig. 5).

According to the tradition, there was a monastery in this region but it was demolished a long time ago, thus it had disappeared from the collective memory. Despite the fact that the sacred spring *Daščara* is very old, around 7000 years according to some archaeological assessments, little is known about it. The lack of traditional stories about this spring can be explained by frequent migrations of the population in this region and breaks in the continuity of life. Thus, with the migration of the previous inhabitants of this region due to the Turkish conquests, the tradition also disappeared, leaving the new inhabitants only with the sacred springs, monasteries, and churches themselves, without the opportunity to find out something more about them.

However, the legend says that a long time ago there was a monastery at the locality *Daščara* in which a bishop lived. With the advance of the Turks into this region, in order to stop them from coming to this sacred place, a miracle occurred. Al-

legedly, a huge earthquake rocked the hill, covering both the monastery and the bishop, for whom the nearby village was named.

It is assumed, on the basis of the statements of the elderly, that on the territory of the village of Biskuplje, in the vicinity of the sacred spring, there was a chapel made of wooden boards, built by a certain Stoka, the ancestor of the family of Stokićs from Biskuplje. The chapel was renovated a quarter of a century ago (in 1989) – the new house of prayer, built from solid material, is of modest dimensions (6x4 metres). What has not changed over time at this locality is the spring itself – it has always been dedicated to Saint Parascheva (of Tirnovo), and on her day on every August 8 according to the new calendar, this place becomes the gathering point of a great number of people from many places in the Braničevo region.

Since 1991 the number of visits to this sacred spring has been on a constant rise. Among the visitors of this cult place the most dominant are Serbs, Vlachs, and Roma. The sacred spring has been visited, apart from a huge number of believers (mostly Orthodox), by numerous famous personalities, including even His Holiness Patriarch Pavle. The Serbian Orthodox Church and the local community also take care of this sacred place. The popularity of this place has to a great extent been increased with the application of modern communication technologies – in the first place, the Internet – as well as the articles on this spring which appeared in the renowned German magazine *Hamburg Today*. The spring of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo in Biskuplje was once visited by 240 cycling enthusiasts from the region – Croatia and the Republika Srpska.

The motives for gathering around this cult place, obviously, are not only religious in character. For example, every year for the religious holiday *Palm Sunday* the voluntary blood donation is organized at the spring of St. Parascheva in Biskuplje. This year on April 13, this action, in which all of the inhabitants of the village and the surrounding area take part, was held for the tenth time.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE RITUAL AT THE CULT PLACE

Previously, the visitors from distant villages used to come in the evening to spend a night in a building specially constructed for that purpose and they would go out to the sacred water in the morning to wash up. Nowadays, they come early in the morning, before sunrise, by cars and tractors, wash up, pray to God and drink the water. Numerous examples of eye diseases and eczema being cured corroborate its healing properties. According to the visitors, it also helps with psoriasis.

Every day this cult place is visited by both the local population and the inhabitants of the neighbouring and distant places. It is mostly the case of Orthodox visitors. Among them, men and women, old and young, etc. are equally represented. Family visits to this cult spring are also often practiced.

The respect for this sacred place is shown in a manner similar to how it is done in a church. Visitors give various objects (they will leave, for example, a litre of oil or the like); put some money on the icon of Saint Parascheva (these are most often donations of 100 to 200 dinars, sometimes even larger) which is placed on the altar right next to the fountain (Fig. 6); bring flowers depending on the season (lilac, daffodil, etc.). Naturally, believers take the opportunity to light a candle in the spot provided for that – it is in the vicinity of the altar right at the entrance to the chapel. Candles of various sizes (usually small ones) are always placed in the special spot next to the entrance to this chapel.

The altar in the atrium (Fig. 7) of the chapel of Saint Parascheva of Tirnovo in Biskuplje is larger and better equipped than the one next to the spring (Fig. 6). The wall surfaces of the chapel are decorated with icons of numerous saints. The ar-

ranged space around this sacred place is further enriched by the newly-built chapel (Fig. 8) whose walls depict the scenes from the church life (Fig. 9).

THE TABOOS RELATED TO THE SPRINGS OF ST. PARASCHEVA

The area around the sacred place, which dates back to pre-Christian times, is tabooed. Thus, for example, it is considered a great sin to cut the surrounding forest and take anything away from this place. The memory is still vivid of a man from Biskuplje who took some wood from the sacred place and brought to his house some twenty years ago. The witnesses say that the man went blind that same day, and that he was able to see again only after he had returned the wood there and washed his face with the sacred water.

A similar plot – people losing their sight because of the offences done against Saint Parascheva – is also related in Serbian tradition to other springs dedicated to this saint. Namely, St. Parascheva is often described as an unknown woman dressed in black upon whom a person chances by accident, usually far away from the village, and who is willing to have pity on the people.

“Having offended her, she showed him that she was not a common woman and that he would go blind as soon as he reached his home. After a certain period of time, the saint had pity on him and advised him to wash up with the water from the thaumaturgic spring which already existed near the village (Jokić 2012, 133).”

Having their eyesight cured, the people usually build chapels dedicated to St. Parascheva over these thaumaturgic springs, and later other people gather at certain holidays to cure their eye problems (Đekić 2001, 70). The celebration of *St. Parascheva the Waterbearer* (August 8) and the ban on working on that day so that the springs would not run dry confirms the frequently present narrative in the Serbian folk tradition according to which this saint has been considered the keeper of springs from the ancient times (Nedeljković 1990, 181).

The punishment for disrespecting cult places of this type can, according to the folk tradition, manifest itself in the drying out of springs.

“If these cult places are not respected duly, by rule the punishment in the form of a disease will be sent by the saint in question or the springs will run dry, which suggests the (temporary) cessation of life, represented symbolically by this form of water. Therefore, the same motif is present in the traditional tales which foretell tragic events of greater scope – most often the coming of a war and the general suffering of the people (Jokić 2012, 134).”

Thus, for example, when the spring of *St. Parascheva* by the church Ružica on Kalemegdan (Belgrade) went dry in 1915, the people saw it as the foreshadowing of the adverse historical events. A similar narrative explains the disappearance of water in the well of *St. Parascheva* in the vicinity of the Fenek monastery in Srem. Another interesting event from 1991 is also related to this monastery, and it further confirms the strength of certain taboos in the folk tradition. That was the year in which during the renovation of the monastery the water from the well of *St. Parascheva* ran dry, which was ascribed to the godless behaviour of the workers who performed the renovation tasks at that time – they did not, in fact, stick to fasting on Wednesday and Friday (Marjanović 1993, 108-109).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is without a doubt that the cult described in this paper – the thaumaturgic spring of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo in Biskuplje – represents a good example of the practical carrying out of the segregation of social space through the lens of the profane/sacred dichotomy (Bojanin 2008, 333). Vladislav Gramatik, for example, speaks explicitly of the creation of a sacred place in the profane environment which is not represented by a church building.

Namely, the seat of the parish to which Biskuplje belongs is in Ram, where there is a church similar to the one in Zatonje. On the other hand, the spring of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo in Biskuplje was not consecrated until the 1980s, with the construction of religious objects only taking place later on. However, according to the tradition, this place has been visited from the ancient times, and, according to the tellers, the remnants of a former wall bear witness of this.

The canonical law, by the by, recognizes the practice of celebrating Christian holidays not only “with the church” or at home, but also at other, so-called “special places”. The 60th Carthaginian rule, for example, published by the Saint Sava Nomocanon, describes the practice from the late Middle Ages well:

“From ancient men they received the custom of gathering around special places, or in churches, in the memory of the saints...” (Petrović i Štavljanin-Dorđević 2005, 362-363).”

Church-normative models can be accepted and interpreted in different ways depending on the actual social, cultural, and political circumstances. The described ritual practice at the cult place of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo in Biskuplje corroborates the often present phenomenon of the amalgamation of church and folk religiosity, i.e. the subjective side of religiosity. In that sense, in the communication of doctrinal church teachings one should observe three possible ways of decoding, which can be positioned differently in relation to the applied codes of Orthodoxy, and these are: (1) church-hegemonic reading, (2) mixed reading, and (3) oppositional reading (Radulović 2007, 121). The first way relates to the decoding of messages within the dominant code (for example, the teachings of the Serbian Orthodox Church), which is, after all, liable to subjectivism due to a difference in the achieved level of church knowledge or the simplification of the church teachings. In the mixed reading, believers acknowledge the legitimacy of the church teachings at an abstract level, yet apply their own interpretation of the church props (candles, relics of saints) in the practical expression of their faith or apply them in the rites which are not of the church. In the oppositional reading, the messages at the connotative and denotative level are read outside of the frame of Orthodoxy.

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Fig. 1. *Daščara* or *Dačara* – a language dilemma



Fig. 2. The two fountains from which the sacred water flows



Fig. 3. The chapel of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo in Biskuplje, built in 1989



Fig. 4. The stairway between the chapel and the resting point for the guests



Fig. 5. The space where believers can have a rest



Fig. 6. The altar right next to the fountains (in front of the entrance to the chapel)



Fig. 7. The altar within the chapel



Fig. 8. The new chapel



Fig. 9. The interior of the new chapel which depicts the scenes from the church life

Vladan Petrović
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**“THE HERMITAGE OF SAINT ZOSIM SINAJIT”
NEAR THE MONASTERY TUMAN (GOLUBAC)***

TASK

“Milos Obilic accidentally killed Zosim and in order to redeem himself for that sin he built Tuman. According to tradition, in that period, the place was a desert surrounded with great forests, with no roads or human habitats whatsoever. Thinking that it was some beast going through woods, Milos fired a bow and ran to see what he had caught. He found an old man Zosim, mortally wounded. He tried to help him but it was useless. In order to redeem himself after killing the holy man, Milos Obilic decided to build a church in that place. He had the forest cut and started making the church when he received a letter from prince Lazar asking him to immediately come to Krusevac because the Turks were attacking. Milos, who had already built most of the monastery, left the building site and with his army headed to Krusevac to help. After his death, the people finished building the monastery.”

Todor Vlajić, *Srbskij venac*, Beograd, 1850.

After we were engaged in research and were given precise directions for a field work, we headed towards Monastery Tuman, 12 kilometers from Golubac. Earlier we arranged a meeting with a man from the village Dobre who agreed to help us find the most representative sacred place and offer us all the necessary logistic support. However, when we arrived in Golubac, our contact didn't show up at the agreed place and time. When we phoned him he cancelled the arrangement without giving us the reason

Disappointed and fearing whether our research will be completed, we headed towards Monastery Tuman hoping to find someone who will show us the above mentioned sacred place. In the Monastery Tuman we met with the local nun for. When we explained the reason of our coming to monastery, she refused to help us. We realized that our presence there is not wanted and we left Monastery Tuman. That was the second disappointment in half an hour. We moved on. On our way we met an elderly man who was watching after cattle and we asked him to help us realize our goal. With his hand he pointed towards the village Krivaca. He said that the villagers from Krivaca will certainly have an interesting story for us.

And so it was. Only few kilometers from the monastery, between two hills, there was a nice little village populated entirely with Vlachs. When we asked a few villagers for advice, they all said:

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“If you seek someone who will tell you a story about what you are looking for, it is best to go and find an old man called Bora. He is the oldest in the village and nobody knows more about the monastery and the hermitage than him.”

And so it was. Borisav Paunovic, called Bora, was an ideal man to talk to. By the kind look on his face when he saw us, we knew that Bora is a good man, a householder, full of life experience who will have the answers to all our questions. Even though he is over eighty and his mother tongue is Vlach, he spoke Serbian quite well. On all our questions he had interesting answers. Most of things he said we didn't even ask him to. In the interview we also had the help from Bora's daughter Dobrila and his son in law Dobrivoje Plasticcevic, who are also the caretakers of Bora. The old man Bora immediately understood our task so he chose and told us the entire story about the miracle hermitage “Isposnica” not far from the Monastery Tuman.

Before we continued with the old man's story about the sacred place Isposnica, it is necessary for this scientific paper to give and analyze some demographic data about the surroundings. All of this is because of the interaction between the surroundings and the sacred place in a broader sense.

MUNICIPALITY OF GOLUBAC

The sacred place is in the Municipality of Golubac which is situated in the north-east part of the central Serbia. To be precise, it is located in the east part of Braničevo county. The north border of municipality is the river Danube. Danube is also a state border between Serbia and Romania. Even though this municipality has great natural resources and potential to be economically strong, it is consider to be a poor one. The immigration of the population is great. According to the census from 1948, the population was 14.844, and in 2011, it was 8.331. The majority of population are Serbs, then Vlachs and a small percentage are Gypsies and others.

The large percentage of the local population immigrated abroad to seek work. While talking to the locals and priests about the problems they have, we get the impression that the biggest problem is of economical nature. However, they admit that the potential cause of the problems is in themselves. When we asked a man from Golubac to help us find the sacred place, he shortly explained about the potentials:

“What can I say, the nature gave the beauty and the wealth to this part of Serbia and all the others can only envy us. Look at the river Danube, here it's the widest and there it's the narrowest. Look at the fortress of Golubac, it's a tourist treasure, but no one takes care of it and it is abandoned and unapproachable to tourists. It shouldn't be like that. In any other state it would be a tourist attraction and a small town like Golubac could profit from it. You must also see the Monastery Tuman and Isposnica which is in the forest. You don't see that very often. On holydays, the cars and busses full of people of all nationalities come to see it and heal. And when they go there, if it rained the night before, the mud is up to knees, there is no road and the only way to go there is by tractor. You cannot approach Isposnica without getting dirty. Nobody takes care of it so it is almost unapproachable, even though it doesn't need much to build a road, a parking space, a drinking fountain, and make it a profitable tourist attraction so that people from here could benefit from it. When there is no money, people immigrate. It is normal. The houses are sold in bargain, but nobody buys them. They remain empty and people are gone.”

EPARCHY OF BRANICEVO

The center of this eparchy is located in Pozarevac. The eparchy borders with six other eparchies, one of which is in Romania. In the north-west it borders with the

eparchy Banat, in the north-east with the eparchy of Timisoara and with the whole east part with eparchy of Timok. In the south it borders slightly with the eparchy of Nis. In the west it borders with eparchy of Sumadija and the smallest part borders in the north-west with the eparchy Beogradsko-karlovacka. Monastery Tuman with its hermitage is located in the north-east part of the eparchy (Fig. 1).

MAIN RESEARCH GOALS

The main goal of this research was the sacred place, the Hermitage of the Saint Zosim Sinajit (Isposnica Svetog Zosima Sinajta). After consulting with a few local residents of Golubac and the village Krivaca, we decided that the Hermitage of the St. Zosim Sinajit is the best choice of a sacred place to study in the surroundings. This sacred place is equally visited by the Serbs and minorities as well. As we have already said, the nearest village Krivaca is entirely populated by Vlachs. According to the old man Bora, they also come and visit the hermitage whenever there is the need. Besides Serbs and Vlachs, the sacred place is also visited by Romanians, Gypsies, Bulgarians as well as Catholics and Muslims of all nationalities. In one word, the locals remember people of all nationalities and religions visiting the hermitage. The reasons are versatile: from curiosity to the belief that it can heal some illnesses which can be, according to the legend, cured by the water from the nearby miraculous stream.

As it is already mentioned, this sacred place is still very much active and visited by many believers of all religions as well as non-believers. People come mostly on the orthodox holiday Cveti, but also on other not so significant days according to the church calendar. Therefore with the utmost certainty we can say that this sacred place is extremely active. The official name of this sacred place is “Isposnica Svetog Zosima Sinajita” (The Hermitage of Saint Zosim Sinajit). According to many sources it is also mentioned as Isposnica Svetog Zosima Sinajitskog. Our source of information, the old man Bora (Fig. 2) and his family and all the other locals who live near the sacred place, call it simply *Isposnica (The Hermitage)*.

LOCATION OF THE SACRED PLACE

The sacred place is located 12 kilometers south from town Golubac. From the town to the hermitage there is a local road which is in pretty good condition. On our way, we passed through several villages, hamlets to be exact. Thick forest dominates the mountainous surroundings. The small villages with traditional country style houses blend into the natural ambient we went through. When we reached our destination, Monastery Tuman in its splendor appeared before us (Fig. 3).

Monastery Tuman, also known as simply “Tumane”, is tightly connected with the sacred place Isposnica which is the topic of our research, but we will talk more about in the text that follows. The nearest village to the sacred place is Krivaca. The village is located in the hills and entirely populated with Vlachs. It is situated only a few kilometers from the sacred place and the population is mostly orthodox.

When we asked about who takes care of the hermitage, we got different answers. People remember that both Serbs and Vlachs took care of it during its history. Simply, during history, everyone who felt the religious need gave his contribution to maintain the hermitage. Both priests and ordinary people were and nowadays are involved in it. The hermitage has always been under the protection of all people, even though it belongs to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

At the same time the location of the hermitage instills awe. There is no civilization nearby. It is situated in the thick forest with no roads. The only road to it is a muddy one which cannot be reached by car (Fig. 4). The nearest religious structure is Monastery Tuman, two kilometers from it, where the asphalt road towards the hermitage ends.

INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE HERMITAGE

The infrastructure of the hermitage is extremely low, it seems that it does not exist. A muddy climb through a dense forest, which was quite challenging to overcome by car, gives the impression of a desolate place which the human foot has never stepped on before. Wild, unspoiled nature and the tall trees of the dense forest on the way to the hermitage, make a passenger, going through this wilderness for the first time, believe that he has lost his way and that the hermitage is probably elsewhere. Simply, the infrastructure is at the zero level. The hermitage is located deep in the dense inaccessible forest. The sky is obscured by very tall trees and their dense foliage. When, after heavy breaking through the wild forest, the hermitage appears before your eyes, the feeling is amazing. The first impression is a mixture of something ghostly and sacred at the same time.

The appearance of the hermitage is unexpected. A kind of a large sponge like rock, interspersed with tiny dark caves which are in fact catacombs, pops up from a hill. A few striking details contribute to the unexpected appearance. Firstly, there is a surprising presence of certain number of gilded icons of saints on the top of the large rock. The icons with the faces of the saints shine in the twilight of the wild forest. Another detail is that there is a kind of building, on the left side, with a seemingly religious character but actually is the unfinished dormitory (Figure 5).

STREAM NEAR HERMITAGE

The perfect peace and quiet of the hermitage is disturbed only by a gentle roar of the nearby stream. The stream has a very important religious-magical role. It is believed that the stream water is healing and that it can heal even the most difficult diseases. However, according to the belief the stream water is the best for treatment of eye diseases. The largest number of people washing their faces in the stream are the people with some eye disease. Not only the people with eye diseases wash their faces there but also everyone who has some health issues. Washing a face in the stream is a part of the healing ritual.

According to another legend, once upon a time a girl was killed unjustly, she was tortured to death. The girl was dragged by horses and her body parts were falling off. The spring splits into two small parts on the spot where the girl lost her eyes. Due to such a painful death of an innocent girl, it is believed that the water is the best for treatment of eye and head diseases.

TOWER AND CATACOMBS

The catacombs are the visual hallmark of this cult place. There are about ten catacombs, some of them are small and some are large. There is no doubt that according to the legend, St. Zosimus Sinajit spent some time in one of them. They look a little scary since their depth cannot be assessed but only guessed because of the darkness. There are auxiliary facilities which are very useful during the rituals and facilitate the religious service. These are: a table with a bench, previously mentioned censers, a few small accessory rooms and dormitory which has not been completely built. There is a wooden structure rising from the center of this cult place which looks like a tower. Bora said that the facility has no religious role. It was built by hunters for observing and shooting the wild animals.

THE MAIN ROOM

This room is in fact a church in the rock. It is cramped and closed by a door. The interior is the same as in a regular church, there is a small altar with dark maroon plush and icons, which are venerated and endowed (Fig. 6 and 7) On the altar in the

forefront, there is a wooden cross, of about thirty centimeters, with crucified Jesus Christ. Above the altar is a tiny crystal chandelier. It is likely that the light of the chandelier comes from the lighted candles as there is not visible wiring. The ceiling is made up of thousands of stalactites but it is completely dry, as well as the room. It is the real masterpiece of nature. The floor is concreted and flat. Due to the coarse ceilings and walls made of stalactites, it is impossible to paint frescoes on them. Frescoes are exposed as pictures laid against the wall, there are about ten frescoes in the room. The residential premises have not been completely built. The previously mentioned dormitory is not finished because the hunter who started building it, died. There is neither table nor arranged living area. As for the other small church inventory, the church is in this respect very modest. Occasionally, even the small church inventory was the target of petty thieves. On our arrival, the door of the hermitage were wide open so the conclusion is that nobody takes care of the inventory. In a word, such a cult place is not expected to possess plenty of big and small inventory.

CULT GIFTS

During the pilgrimage for Palm Sunday (Cveti) as well as on other visits this famous place is studded with various gifts. The Pagan nature of the Serbian Orthodox Christians, which simply cannot be suppressed nor hidden, is visible in presentation of gifts to the hermitage. People usually bring various types of food: salty, sweet, sour. Red wine is mandatory drink but other drinks such as brandy and soda are common, too. Small amount of drink is poured on the ground because it is believed that it will “refresh” the deceased. Some people light a cigarette and leave it on the ground, believing that in that way their beloved deceased can enjoy the smoke of a cigarette. Sometimes, not often, one of the visitors brings a censer and while reciting the prayers performs the censuring of the hermitage. Besides food and drink, small towels are often left as gifts. Another common gift are bouquets of flowers. Bouquets are made of even number of flowers mostly of natural flowers. Some bouquets are bought, some are made of the flowers grown in one’s own garden and sometimes they are made of cheap artificial flowers. It is very usual that people leave some coins as their gift. This cult place is seen as a kind of a gate opened for the communication with the divine world and the world of the deceased (Figure 10) The money left as a gift symbolises the attempt of the pilgrims to make their wishes heard. Good health or healing from some disease are the common wishes of the pilgrims.

Basically, this cult place is known for the miraculous stream water. The stream flows just below the hermitage. Before the healing ritual of face washing is performed, people leave some money in one of the holes in the rock and usually say a prayer silently or aloud. Another reason for leaving the money as a gift for the hermitage is a belief that the money is sent to the beloved deceased to ease their stay in the “other world”. It is believed that this money can buy everything the deceased need.

INVENTORY DESCRIPTION OF THE SACRED PLACE

The sacred place has its incensory which is in front of the main room, in the open, but properly constructed in order to protect candles from rain (Picture 8). The day the researchers left, no one visited the sacred place. According to our contact, visits are not so often. That was the reason we didn’t do any interviews with the visitors. Unfortunately, neither the contact nor anybody else had the photo depicting the ceremony inside the hermitage. There is no guard in traditional sense of the word, but everyone remembers a man who once built an extra room and stayed in it in order to renovate the hermitage. However, he died before he could finish it. From that day, everything remains in the same condition, half finished. Today, there is no one who could

organize the renovation and preservation of the hermitage. The last known renovation happened in the period between 1553 and 1953 (Fig. 9).

Organized visits occur four times a year: 1. Summer Saint Archangel (26th June), 2. The Dormition (28th August), 3. Cveti (Sunday before Easter) and 4. On monastery Patron Saint's day Saint Zosim Sinajt (21st August)

LEGEND ABOUT MILOS OBILIC AND SAINT ZOSIM SINAJT

Saint Zosim Sinajt was one of the ten most prominent Sinajits. Sinajits came to Serbia during the reign of Prince Lazar from the Holy Mountain, from Bulgarian monastic colony. Approximately one hundred of them fled from the Turks right after the battle at Marica. Saint Zosim Sinajit lived a humble life, hiding like a hermit. According to the legend, he lead a solitary life in caves in the forest what is today a hermitage.

One day Milos Obilic, who is originally from this part of Serbia, decided to go hunting in to the forest and hunt himself something to eat. While hunting, he went deeply into the forest. Suddenly he saw something moving between dense trees and thought it was some kind of a beast. He fired a bow in that direction and heard a scream. Stunned, he jumped off his horse and ran to the bush where he saw an old man Zosim Sinajit, with the arrow in his body, mortally wounded. After seeing what he had done to the holy man, he picked him up and took him outside the forest to a doctor, hoping to save his life. However, there was no help for Zosim. He gathered the strength to ask Milos to leave him to die in that very spot and told him that he had forgiven Milos for accidentally killing him. These were his last words:

“May you be forgiven, this you haven't done on purpose! Leave me here! Leave me here to die!” (Serbian: Tu me mani! Tu... mani!)

Milos, still in disbelief, decided to respect the Holy man's wish, an old man whom he involuntarily had killed. He did not know what to do, and he would do anything to regain the old man's life.

As a sort of redemption, he decided to build an oratory, a monastery, on the same place he had laid the old man pass away. Milos buried the old man under the big flagstone and along with his men, started immediately cutting down trees and clearing off, in order to build the monastery as soon as possible. According to the legend, the monastery was built under Milos's control quite successfully. However, just before the ending of the monastery, the letter came in which the Duke Lazar asked Milos to gather his army and leave for Kosovo. According to the legend, the content of the letter was:

“Tu mani (quit the building) and come to me, because the Turks have covered Kosovo, and want to attack!”

Two times said “tu mani” by the Holy man, the old man dying and the Duke Lazar, could not have been an accident and so, by Milos's departure, the monastery was finished and named Tuman or Tumane.

The relics of Saint Zosim Sinait can still be found in the coffin in the monastery Tuman.

THE REASONS FOR ESTABLISHING OF THE CULT PLACE

Being a part of the cult place Isposnica, the monastery Tuman, as previously mentioned, was built by Milos Obilic, the national hero, in the first half of the 14th century, just before the Battle of Kosovo. The monastery sheltered many freedom fighters fighting against the Turks. Having heard, the Turks burned the monastery relentlessly.

ssly. It was rebuilt during the reign of the Duke Milos Obrenovic. The current appearance dates from 1924, when the monastery was rebuilt on the old monastery's foundation. The interior of the monastery was completely renewed in 1993, and it is closely related to the interior of Oplenac church.

TABOOS

Isposnica was desecrated as many other cult places in Serbia. Grandpa Bora and the members of his household are familiar with several cases. The reasons for desecration are of various kinds, from harmless to quite serious. The theft of flowers, pennies, food and drink leftovers, even gifts. There are cases that include leftovers of food and drink, excrement and urine of homeless. There are also rare cases of the desecration of holy objects. Desecration was an act of wanton vandalism not of religious intolerance.

The residents of Krivaca remember that not so long ago, a young girl moved in Isposnica. It is assumed that she fed on leftovers brought by ascetics, and that she drank the water from the streams. After her having left Isposnica, some used plastic syringes were found. It is believed that she was a drug addict and that she used the rooms of Isposnica as a temporarily residence.

There is a remarkable story related to the locals' beliefs about the consequences suffered by those who had shown disrespect towards this cult place. The story doesn't refer to Isposnica but to the monastery Turman. If we accept the fact that the monastery is closely related to Isposnica, than we can also relate it to this cult place. Namely, around 1910, according to the storytellers, a certain mayor D.R. did something very bad to this cult place. He was very rich and arrogant man. He was also the owner of a tavern in Golubac, and a proud atheist, showing no respect to God and common people. People remember that once in spite of others, on Easter, he roasted an ox on a spit, served it in front of his tavern and urged passersby to eat and drink his fine vine. Along with a certain captain, he made a vicious plan to mine and blow up the monastery Truman on Palm Sunday, when the monastery was crowded with believers celebrating the holiday. So it was, they mined the monastery and put enough explosive on the eastern side where the altar was. However, miraculously the walls managed to resist the huge explosion and cracked only. The believers remained unharmed and run outside. This led to Pozarevac county officials' decision to tear down the monastery. The church was finished and got its current appearance fourteen years later. According to former locals, unnecessary demolishing of the monastery had one goal to destroy the inn and a free bed that the monastery offered to all passersby. The rebuilt of the monastery spoil the plans for the mayor who owned the tavern too, and whose business suffered because of the monastery. However, after the event, the life of the mayor took some unfortunate way. He lost his leg, started drinking, spent all his money and died in misery. His son killed his own wife and was sentenced to 20 years, and his grandson was autistic.

Science will never prove whether this is just a coincidence or God's punishment for mayor's mischiefs. The locals and believers will confirm that everything comes with a reason.

CONCLUSION

From the scientific aspect of the cult place Isposnica of St. Zosim Sinait, we came to quite valuable knowledge and certain conclusions. Next to the monastery Turman lays uncommon sanctity that shines with its history, with the unbelievable strength and appearance. However, the fact is that it doesn't deserve such poor treatment. *Hermitage* is the treasure, but yet not completely explored and the question is why?

Absence of minimal infrastructure that would make it more available to visitors is what worries. The crucial question is what kind of future one nation can hope for, when it does not recognize the true value from the past and completely neglects it. It's human and correct to allow the followers of all religions and nationalities to pray and practice their religion. Is it possible that our neighbours of different religion and nationality by making their visits are showing us the true value of what we have? It's correct and economically justified for this sacral place to be found on the pages of many European magazines of tourism. In our country, religious tourism is below world's average, but we can have multiple benefits.

We can hope for some wiser times, and then we can expect better times.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig. 1. The Diocese of Braničevo



Fig. 2. Informant Borisav Paunović – Uncle Bora



Fig. 3. The Tuman monastery



Fig. 4. The road to the hermitage in horrible condition



Fig. 5. The hermitage of "St. Zosim Sinaite"



Fig. 6. The entrance to the main room of the hermitage



Fig. 7. The main room of the hermitage with the altar



Fig. 8. The arranged place for lighting candles



Fig. 9. The ritual catacombs



Fig. 10. The information of renovation

Ivana Ilić Krstić
Njegoš Dragović

PRERAST – NATURAL PHENOMENON AND THE CULT PLACE (MAJDANPEK)*

INTRODUCTION

From the moment when a man became a conscious being, one needs to realize and understand everything that surrounds him. However, a man can not explain all phenomena, because of that he was reaching for the world beyond. The beyond world gave because of the meaning to man's existence, despite its finitude and mortality. Through that need to communicate with the beyond world, he's looking for a suitable place of particular importance to communicate with the beyond world. The many religious ceremonies are connected with the cult places and the cult activity.

“There are certain places which are, in folk religion, only occasionally used for communication with the beyond and outside of these moments attitude towards them is profane. These are, for example, intersection, mills, river flows, fractured bedrock, trees, springs, home or individual parts thereof (fireplace, threshold angle, loft ...) and so on. But there are areas that are designated as sites of ongoing communication with the beyond. And according to them, the relationship is different depending on whether it is time profane or sacred, but cult still remains. This place can be called a cult or sacred. The Balkan region is characterized by a great diversity of cult places and customs and beliefs that are associated with them, thanks to the complex cultural and ethnic interaction and specific historical past (Krstić 2010, 129).”

According to this author, the ethnological phenomena of the cult place are first the certain material objects and second the certain customs and beliefs. The typology of the cult places related to the typology of objects can be stored on them and the customs and beliefs that are associated with them (Krstić 2010, 130).

The cult places can be marked only by a cult object, but more often are complex, with two or more objects. Some objects can individually mark some cult place, and may be part of a larger cult object. There are more types of cult objects in the Balkans area, so they are divided into groups. Abstract eight groups: 1. natural objects, 2. monuments with religious characteristics, 3. graves and places of death, 4. auxiliary facilities for the execution of parts of the ritual, 5. house, 6. religious buildings, 7. the archaeological remains, 8. the inventory. This typology is conditional, because some objects can be classified into two groups, and some have a transitional character, and some are part of other cult objects.

Majdanpek municipality is characterized by the multiplicity and diversity of the cult places, which differ in how they are created. The many cult places in this region are the result of human action and represent an anthropological phenomenon, while others are formed through the action of natural forces and represent a natural

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phenomenon. Bearing in mind the specific geological and morphological character of this area, we can say that natural cult of rocks, stones, rivers, streams, natural grow dominate in Majdanpek... In this diversity and multiplicity of the cult places, the researchers chose to present a natural cult place in this municipality, called "Preras". However, the socio-religious point of view, it is necessary to study all types of cult places of the region.

The museum's director from Majdanpek gave us important information about specific cult places. According to source, it was necessary to collect the information, investigate and describe that in a manner to preserve the cult visiting, traditions and ritual practices of the cult places in the specific socio-political and religious lines in this region. Most of the information related to the topology, objects and visiting cult places, were obtained on the basis of pre-designed questionnaire.¹

PRERAST – A NATURAL WONDER

Prerast, a natural stone bridge under the protection of the state, is located near Majdanpek, on a small river. Specifically, there is a hamlet in the district Blizna in the village Rudna Glava. Prerast is the natural stone bridge in the arc-shaped limestone (Fig. 1), under which is a short, wide channel in the form of cave tunnels through which the river flows there.

Prerast, a natural stone bridge is under protection of the state as a natural monument of great importance. The protected area includes a beautiful mountain river, which flows there. Together they make a very attractive and significant tourist ambient space. Prerast, a hollow wall is located in the valley of the river Prerast (Fig. 2) at a distance of 15 km from Majdanpek in eastern Serbia. Prerast hollow wall is formed by selective erosion and local rivers plunge outgrown. It is a grandiose natural bridge, which is cut into the limestone massif. Hollow rock is protected as an geological object and natural monument.

The height of Preras is 34 m, the width of the channel bottom is 7 m, and the interior goes up to 9.5 m. The thickness of the limestone layer above the ceiling is 8 m. In addition to natural resources, there are also the archaeological excavations with this natural resource remains of the Roman metallurgical complex, dating from the period III and IV century. Prerast hollow rock has always been, an inspiration for many unusual beliefs and archaic rituals amid the local population. The hollow rock is at risk, given that this is a mining area where dynamite is used, which can destroy this unique natural phenomenon.

Majdanpek municipality is characterized by many cult places: from Rajko's and Pasko's cave, through the Zlatica's memorial fountain to the Miroc mountain famous for Prince Marko and Vila Raviojla. Bearing in mind the rich magical culture of the Vlachs, we have mentioned only a small part of those places in this region of Serbia which have special religious and magical significance for the Vlachs. However, Prerast is the cult place that is associated with cult activities that Vlachs perform in honor of the dead, so we present it in detail. In order to better display and explain this cult place, we contacted Paun Durlic who is ethnologist in Majdanpek's museum. Mr. Durlic has been dealing with the religious and the magical culture of Vlachs in this area for decades and is thoroughly familiar with the characteristics of this cult place. In order to perform a detailed analysis and description of this cult place, on 07 April in 2014. the researcher Njegos Dragovic visited this place and had a discussion with Alexandar Repedzic, director of the Museum in Majdanpek and with Dragan Dragovic a

¹ Procedure DBDJ/DT/DK 2014 for collect informations about the cult places in border municipalities in eastern and southern Serbia.

painter from Majdanpek. Slavoljub Stevanovic from the hamlet of Blizna was also interlocutor to Njegos Dragovic (Fig. 3).

Slaboljub Stevanovic lives near local hamlet Blizna in the village Rudna Glava, says the following about Prerast: this is a famous place visited by the majority people together with other ethnic groups. Serbs visit Prerast because of the beautiful landscape and natural features that provide a unique natural phenomenon of the bridge and spring river, wherever they have time. Vlach's population visit this place and respects it as a cult, because they perform certain rituals and ceremonies. The cult place Prerast is active, because it is visited by residents from near and far. Apart from the official name of this cult of Prerast, Vlach population call it *Piatra en Preurata*, and that means the connected stones. This object is created by natural forces, while the shape of the bridge is very important for the legends that are retold in this area.

According to the interviewees, there are 1781 people in Rudna Glava, who are mainly Serbian nationality. In a further interview with Bora Krcmarevic we learnt that most of people speak the Vlach language, which indicates their nationality. This rural area has one Orthodox church in the center and there are no churches of other religions. Taking care of the cult place was entrusted to visitors themselves, although the area is under the state protection. The nearest house is located some 200 meters away, and the road is covered up approach, with no electricity, plumbing or construction of buildings, which is appropriate since the area has outstanding natural feature. At the entrance to the hamlet Blizna, the table is set with directions for Prerast, wooden table and benches.

The most important information we get from ethnologist Paun Durlic, who tell the story about Prerast in his works as follows:

“The local Vlach population calls this place ‘Prerast’, that word has Serbian origin, and the term is used for places where the domestic population Serbian, appointed these natural objects. The stone gate connecting two of river banks that are high cliffs, raised side walls as narrow riverbed. Because the river during time carved bed of rock in the limestone and made a narrow canyon, stone ‘Prerast’ is also called to ‘Piatra – n preunată’ (‘connected’ or ‘assembled stone’). Cavers have entered it in the map as the ‘hollow rock’, a name that is morphologically correct but that owes more poetic freedom than geologists tradition, because no one in the area does not use it. In some official documents and records one can find ‘Valja Prerast’, which is also wrong, because this is a mark of the valley through which the small river Prerast flows, and not for the natural object that should be highlighted ([http://www.paundurlic.com / bilten.htm](http://www.paundurlic.com/bilten.htm)).”

According to our source Aleksandar Repedzic people find various items, close to “Prerast” and the mouth of the river that flows under the gate of the ancient times. There are prehistoric flint blades and opal can be found near. Most of them were the findings from the Roman period. Their trail was taken in the seventies by the team of Bor's Museum, and on the west side of the gate revealed the remains of metallurgy from III-IV century. The archaeological collection of the Museum of Majdanpek kept as incidental findings, red crock from Prerast, without handles and unusually thin walls with clear traces of prolonged exposure to heat, because of that the archeology is interpreted as a trace of metallurgical activities.

“Prerast” is created in the areas unsuitable for life and they are away from the village, because the village is based where the conditions for life, at the time, where the most favorable. “Prerast” is often difficult to access. Therefore, it is shrouded in mystery and mysticism. People consider it to be dangerous place, which is normally avoided, but at the same time godsend for performing certain religious ceremonies or magical

practices. In time, this place has witnessed the most diverse mystery stories and has been a place of the miraculous events and fantastic characters, says Paun Durlic.

However, the water is one of the key factors for cult of this place. According to Durlic: “the onflow of mountain water over the stone, or through the stone, looks lustration, pure, and whatever the water is being, it is considered a symbolic crossing clean and can be used for ritual purposes (<http://www.paundurlic.com/bilten.htm>).”

In the open air, running water has to pass through “nine stone” to be cleared, but with “Prerast” the gate alone performs a symbolic filtering, whose effect is reinforced by the stone trough which water flows. The gate and its space below have become sacred zones and the boundaries which change the properties of all the way through. The water that is clean in this natural way, thus passing through the sacred place, takes on special properties: by passing through the stone gate it becomes the pure holy water. Because of that, the mage from neighboring villages takes the water from that place when he wants to carry a special magic.

The powerful aquatic creatures live in this water. The powerful Demon Danica (or: Lenkica); masters on these creatures and the entire surrounding mystic area. She dwells in a tree near the mouth of Ravna River to River Saska. The mage to her pay, and water taken without her permission has no effect. Danica can be considered as one of the local varieties of Sojman – ancient female deities that govern magic, but because of its unusual habitat includes the category of forest demons, like Muma Paduri – “Forest Mother”. Danica is a dangerous demon, and often requires human sacrifice in exchange for the strongest power. Devotees of Danica’s secret argue that almost all the tragic traffic accidents in Porec are the consequences of such agreements, until otherwise extend its authority. In order for the mage to have access to her magical powers once a year, a contract was concluded with her to last one year, while the magical power of water can be taken, by her permission, from the Prerast’s gate (<http://www.paundurlic.com/bilten.htm>).

According to Durlic, the stone gate under which water flows is, associated with the place where, in Vlach pastdeath geography, one passes from this world to the other, or more exact: this is the place where almost one directly goes to heaven! The heaven in this ancient culture is imagined as a pastoral image clearing deep in the mountains, in the center of which is a large tree and below which cold and clear water flows, and from there goes on. But heaven is due only after performing numerous and complex burial and funeral rituals of ones funeral are passing from the world that is bleak, dark, cold and arid! While the deceased in such a world, it is necessary to have light, food, heat and water, because the Vlach understanding of death does not separate the soul from the body, as in other nations, but the man continues pastexistence as a complete being, in almost same form, and one still has the same needs as for life. But now, he can no longer realize own desires, his living relatives do with particular devotion and deep respect! The colorful rituals of water libations shall be made, whenever possible, particularly on beautiful places and on clean and clear mountain streams and rivers. Prerast is one of those places, and the Vlachs come here to perform the ritual of spilling of water (Fig. 4), particularly when the deceased is an especially dear and beloved cousin; they try to do this for him at this place at least once in seven years, as the cult of the dead last basic ritual obligations.

Mostly, the older female person is organizing this ritual, but this ritual is carried out by the child who is not going through puberty, male or female, depending on the sex of a deceased person. According to Durlic: “The men have a supporting role in the preparation of this ritual, for example: making and decorating ritual stick, the older women generally lead ritual burning incense and preparing candles, while children as yet pure souls conduct the ritual to spill of water.”

In Prerast, which is considered to be the cult place where this ritual is performed, there is characteristic part of the river bed edited and adorned with flowers in honor of the deceased. The most frequent visitors are Orthodox Vlachs, they also take care of this cult place. This place has nothing to do with the Orthodox Church, but is exclusively associated with the cult of the ancestors of the Vlachs respected since ancient times.

What is evident in the customs and rituals of the Vlachs is a great closeness to nature and her cycles, and a great respect for ancestors. According to popular belief of Vlachs, the death is move on to another level of existence and only with respect to their deceased ancestors the lives can have a happy future. World of the dead and the living by believing in certain times of the year and the days come closer and penetrate, and then there's special need of appeasing ancestors in order for descendants to be followed by luck and prosperity. The cult of the ancestors is therefore very strong, and the obligations of descendants to ancestors, the folklore and customs of the Vlachs are numerous and very complex. This set of Vlach's customs and rituals indicates on importance of awareness of the respect for the ancestors, so the descendants can live happily.

THE RITUAL OF INTENDED FOR THE SOUL OF DECEASED (POMENE)

One of the most famous Vlach ritual is that for a variety of occasions, almost every day, and a must for important religious holidays, family important dates and certain phases of the moon, or the time of year ritual when food and drink are taken, and in particular the important dates and clothes and other item. The ritual with the food may be for living persons and their health, in memory of the dead, saints, the Mother of God and to God for health, for safety and happiness of the family (usually the day of glory family). The rule is that during the ritual intended food, drinks and items are permitted only during daylight, when the sun is above the horizon. The food is dedicated to the dead for the repose of the soul, on certain religious days of the year, every "youth week" (the week of the nearest new moon) and the relevant period from the date of death (the first Saturday, the week, 40 days, 6 months, then the every year – up to 7 years, but sometimes longer).

In many Vlach villages, the food and drink are intended for the soul of deceased almost in every opportunity, that is practically every day. This is the case with households where we have older women, while the majority of young people are not interested in the folk traditions, because of that this traditions are slowly dying out. The Vlach ritual is often performed in Prerast and this cult place has the special significance role in communicating with the dead right here, because the Vlachs believe that Prerast the "gate" is place where the dead cross from "this" world to "the" other world.

Alexandar Repedzic, the museum director from Majdanpek, describes this ritual: intending prepared food and other items for the soul of deceased is done with the words "May "this and that" (specify the name of the food or subject, and shows with hands in that direction), and the fact that (the names of the deceased) for his soul." Another person says, "If God forgives (all sins)." With the food and items at the same time they light the candles, the incense censer to burn. The smoke of incense and the light of candles is also intended for the soul of deceased. After lighting candles and incense, at the beginning of the ritual intended for the soul of deceased, a person who performs this ritual crosses himself with seeking help from God, and then with the censer in his right hand makes a circle around the food, the drink or other goods intended for the soul of deceased. The purpose of this movement is to protect from evil and for those souls who have no one among us who would have something intended for them. After that, those who carry out this ritual cross again

and again make a protection circuit (Fig. 5) with incense about the goods intended for soul and this is repeated three times.

After that the names of ancestors lists like stanzas in a folk song as long the memory and oral transmission allows it. Vlachs do not have their letter, and only in recent times some ethnographers have started to write down some of the rich cultural heritage of the Vlachs (in Serbian and Romanian language). The ritual of intended food and drink to the health of living in the family often takes place after the ritual intended for the dead. Before the ritual the food and drink is always pre-separated for both purposes, because a particular food could be intended only for one, only "for health of the alives" or "for soul of the dead"! After the ritual food and drink is consumed by members of family and the guest, with the explanation that "our deceased ancestors eat with us and through us "...

Here again we see a parallel respect for both phenomena – life and death, where the ancestors still have the advantage in the ritual, because they are respected and mentioned as the basis for a healthy, happy and prosperous living of the descendants. Special rituals with the large quantities of food, drink and other items are organised for important date, it is called in Vlach language *pomane*. Then relatives and neighbors are invited to the house, and part of this complex ritual takes place in the cemetery, and a part is being organised at home. In this case, there is a special part of this ritual in which a smaller portion of the food and drinks is intended for the souls who have been forgotten by all, and they had no one in the world who could give them something for life, or remember them. Vlachs name for such souls is Telar.

In the ritual "pomane", the ritual intended for the souls of "Telar" is performed first and then followed by the main part of the ritual intended for the souls of dead. The clothing and other items that are intended for the souls of dead for are performed on important dates and clothes is usually given as gift to the relatives, the neighbors and those who helped in the preparation this ritual. The clear function of this Vlach ritual is constant mention of ancestors and connections with them and not to neglect and forget ancestors. The Vlach traditions is so diverse that it is really hard to make accurate analysis.

THE CONCLUDING CONSIDERATION

According to the typology given by noted author, Prerast as a cult place wich can be cluster in the naturally cult place combined with caves and springs. Prerast is practically tourist complex, which has multiple functions and purposes. The most frequent visitors are Serbs and Vlachs, Orthodox. The Serbian people visit this place usually during the holidays. But, this place has only cult character for Vlachs and they visit it often in times of great Orthodox holidays. For Vlachs these visits are familiar, and usually done by older women and children. The purpose of the visit is to mention the dead and give honour to him, Vlachs ritual known as "pomane". Vlachs in their beliefs have the close ties with nature and the cycles that take place in it. Because of that this place of special natural beauty and natural wonder is ideal for carrying the cult activities and communication with the beyond. Two elements are crucial in this case: the stone and the water.

Prerast is protected by the state, but only as a natural wonder. Nobody takes care of it as a cult place except for visitors who enjoy its beauty, or use it as a special place where they are in contact with the beyond. The place itself is perfect for relaxation and recreation, but the infrastructure has only a small landscaped area with benches and the tidy access. But, there is no other infrastructure: From other infrastructure: no water, paved road, electricity. This place is often desecrated, but the reasons are not religious or nationalist, the only reason is the legend of buried treasure, that some adventurers are trying to find.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. Researcher in front of Prerast bridge



Fig.2. Prerast the river



Fig. 3. Slavoljub Stevanovic interlocutor from the hamlet Blizna



Fig. 4. The ritual of water spilling



Fig. 5 The ritual of intended for the soul of deceased (pomene) on the Prerast river

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CULT PLACES IN KLADOVO DISTRICT: THE STORY OF MANASTIRICA*

INTRODUCTION

In modern societies, the general value pattern does not give equal legitimacy to religious values and models of behavior based on them, as it was the case in pre-modern societies. Different individuals and collectivities, however, legitimately adopt and implement specific religious norms and values that enable them to find their place in everyday life and participate in the construction of cultural identity. Relationship towards the official religion in local communities can take on specific forms which are the expression of unique religious experience, and can embody a national religious expression which is institutionalized to the extent applicable by separate collectivities. Respect to cult place is the institutionalization of special attitude towards sacred places and objects.

Holy places in a particular area, which include consecrated places, as well as the places of worship and prayers, represent the sacred topography and make sacred (sacral) content within specific geographic and administrative units.

“Sacral topographies have been shaped through history. They are not static, but they are changing in conformity with the religious, social and cultural circumstances, and depend on the customs and traditions, ethnic and national character of the population, as well as on the relationship between church, state and local authorities. They may include various forms of religious culture, but divine worship places of dominant religion occupy central position (Макуљевић 2012, 7).“

The characteristics of religious culture correspond to general social, cultural, and religious trends, as well as to local geographical and cultural specificities. Sacral culture of eastern Serbia depicts the flows of its spiritual and cultural life and is one of the examples of Serbian church culture; on the other hand, the cult places in eastern Serbia are an expression of popular culture / religion. Placing crosses and celebrating village feast (zavetina) have special significance for local social communities:

“places with crosses and other sacred objects have obtained the status of major cult, and in general – religious places in the community. Among other things, these cult places are commonly referred to as 'churches' ... For rural feast 'slava', people go to see the cross which is dedicated to the saint who is celebrated in the village, known as Zavetina (Синани 2007, 138-139).“

In eastern Serbia, as a homogeneous Orthodox area, there is a long tradition of extraordinary respect to “sacred “ (cult) places, primarily crosses and it represents a mixture of church and folk religiosity.

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“In contemporary culture, there is a complex process of different acceptance and interpretations of the official religion, so that the church religiosity may differ from folk religiosity ... In this sense, one can speak about Orthodoxy in terms of interpretation of folk masses, or about folk Orthodoxy that ‘lives’ a different kind of life than the one proclaimed by the Orthodox religion. The basic idea of the concept is that ‘folk Orthodoxy’ occurs in a complex communicative act of reception and interpretation of Orthodoxy by the majority of population (Радловић 2007, 117).“

Institutionalized forms of expressing the honour for cult religious places in the same religious area usually change, due to the discontinuity in *passing on*.

The Orthodox religion revives in the consciousness of the masses from one generation another, but, at the same time, a new religion is being born, a religion that has the token of its time; it is conditioned by the social and cultural changes and shows acceptance of the normative model of the church in different ways (Бандић 1992).

The study of so-called folk religion is inevitably linked with the study of the intangible cultural heritage, i.e. the study of the systems of beliefs, knowledge and values that are important to the cultural identity of the community. Under the cultural identity in this paper we mean:

“symbolic construct through which every individual finds its place in every-day life, but also on the basis of which he/she perceives the world around them, and first of all, to its immediate environment (Kuper and Kuper 2009, 475).“

The ultimate goal of studying the intangible cultural heritage is its protection in order to allow *passing on* between generations. It is, therefore, important to provide:

“a thorough and quality ethnographic material, its interpretation and analysis, or in other words – an attempt to explain – both ideational bases of the phenomenon we investigate and its utilization, i.e. what it served for and how it functioned, which gives us the most complete and the most reliable picture of the individual segments of cultural heritage (Синани 2011b, 53).“

The results of the field research that will be presented in this paper provide the data that will complete the picture of the cult places in eastern Serbia as an integral element of Serbian cultural heritage. People who helped us in collecting data were Višeslav Živanović, an economist from Kladovo, Nevenka Boldorac, the Director of the Tourist Organization of Kladovo, Vasa Pejčić, a retired teacher and Spasoje Đuričić, a Montenegrin from Lompar, an adoptee of the priest Mateja who served in Manastirica, both from Manastirica village.

The interviews were conducted on 6 May, 2014 based on the Procedures drafted by Dragoljub B. Đorđević, Dragan Todorović and Dejan Krstić. About Kladovo and past times, turbulent history of Kladovo, the monastery and St. Nicodemus, we spoke to Mr. Živanović on the balcony of the Hotel “Đerdap “. After that we visited Tourism Organization and Mrs. Nevenka Boldorac, and together went off to the village Manastirica. We came across the teacher Pejčić in the yard of a closed school, and Mr. Đuričić in the apiary, above the house near the monastery (Figs. 1 and 2).

KLADOVO AND VILLAGE MANASTIRICA

Kladovo, and generally, an area that is called Ključ is the “last spot “ in the east towards Bulgaria and Romania. The area of Ključ is a special physical-geographical and functional territorial unit, which certainly has a specific social and cultu-

ral significance. To understand the life of this local community, it is important to point out the presence of sacred topography, i.e. the presence of Orthodox temples of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), which have emerged from the Middle Ages to the present. Near the village of Manastirica there is a monastery of SOC, also called Manastirica.

Kladovo Municipality is located in the Bor district and it is comprised of 23 settlements and 6 small villages, out of which the majority (18 settlements) is located by the Danube river. Kladovo town is a small settlement with 9,729 inhabitants, and the municipality of Kladovo is small as well, having only 20,635 inhabitants. Younger active population pursued employment in large Western European cities (almost one quarter of the total population from this area have migrated to the western world), and the average age of the population of this area is 46.8 years. The municipality has more female members (10,567) compared to males 10,068 (Републички завод за статистику Србије 2011, 2012).

Kladovo municipality, apart from Kladovo, comprises of following settlements: Brza Palanka, Vajuga, Velesnica, Velika Vrbica, Velika Kamenica, Grabovica, Davidovac, Kladušnica, Korbovo, Kastel, Kupusište, Ljubičevac, Mala Vrbica, Manastirica, Milutinovac, Novi Sip, Petrovo Selo, Podvrška, Reka, Rečica, Rtkovo, Tekija (www.kladovo.org.rs).

Although present-day name of Kladovo is first recorded in 1596.¹ in an Austrian military document, it has always been a place of “boundary “ between different worlds. A unique civilization of man of Lepenski Vir left their trace; also, the Roman builders left their traces in the stone, and Celts and Turks visited this place which is confirmed by the numerous remains of material culture (Trajan's bridge, Trajan board, a fortress on the island Adakale, the fortress of Fetislama, etc.). The areas were inhabited by the Illyrians, Thracians, Celts in prehistoric times, then Romans, Slavs, Avars, and it was finally occupied in the 14th century. The desire to occupy this space is not surprising, because water borders of the Danube connect Kladovo with foreign world.

People from Serbia could have gone abroad from Kladov pier, and people from other parts of Serbia could reach Kladovo by various roads. There are three main directions that connect Kladovo to the hinterland of Serbia: (a) from Belgrade (260 km) via Pozarevac and Donji Milanovac, down the Danube to the Đerdap highway; (b) from Paraćin (200 km), the connection with the Belgrade – Niš highway, via a mountain saddle Čestobrodica, Zaječar and Negotin; (c) from Niš (about 200 km) via mountain saddle Tresibaba, Knjaževac, Zaječar and Negotin.

The turbulent history has contributed to the mixture of cultures, which is best described by Mrs. Boldorac:

“Customs were developed throughout history, and since time immemorial, the natives continuously inherited pagan customs, because science has proven that life at these locations of Danube have been present for 9,000 years. Various civilizations have passed through here, and each has left its mark. The people have had to, unconsciously, accept that. Orthodox, Catholics and Muslims lived here, the evidence of that being the famous, flooded during the construction of Hydroelectric Power Station Đerdap, the island Ada Kale! Therefore, many people, many armies have cruised through this area and people would always inherit something from them or take something over, in order

¹ The settlement is referred to by different names. In Roman times it was known as Zanes; when the Slavs erected a village on the grounds of the ruined camp it was known as Novigrad, and when the fortress was constructed during the Turkish occupation it became known as Fetislam. (<http://tookladovo.rs/znamenitosti/istorija/>, accessed: 1. 5. 2014).

to make some improvement. A typical example is a group of Montenegrins who moved to this area and who brought with them their specific habits, customs and other traditions of their old homes, so that they still preserved the custom that when a Montenegrin dies, even people who did not use to know him would come to the funeral. They constantly stick together. They are a compact community, although they accepted everything that this area had been offering over a several decades. For this reason, their generations who were born here, still regard themselves as Montenegrins. On the other hand, Vlachs are recognized, since they, very passionately, still cherish the cult of fear – whether they did it right, or whether they did certain tasks they have been practicing for years; the accompaniment of the deceased to the “other world”, for example. In this context, there are women in every village who are only in charge of giving advice, and therefore they advise people what they should do in certain specific and existential situations, and those customs are passed from ‘generation to generation’. There is a whole spectrum of different customs ... from those when small candles are lit and let go down the Danube, to collective folk dances (kolo) in different circumstances... Especially interesting is a commemoration to a man still alive. The music is playing, and that man decides who will lead a kolo, while each dancer is given a gift. Cult of life after death is fostered in a special way.“

It can not be exactly determined when the village Manastirica was created. Kosta Jovanović (1940, 69), based on the tradition and the written data considers it came into existence “in the middle of 18th century, or in the second half of the same century...” It was first mentioned as the Monastery of Holy Trinity with 59 houses in it in 1723 (according to Jovanović 1940, 66).² In 1846, village had 27 houses, in 1866 there were 36 houses, and in 1924 only 58 houses. (ibid.) .

Manastirica is lying on the mountain Miroč. The stream Šajna and its tributary, a stream called Manastirica, belong to this territory. The village is 12 km far from Kladovo and it covers an area of 1600 hectares. A narrow, newly paved road leads to the village.

According to census data, after the Second World War the number of inhabitants increased until the year 1971. The village was the most populous (529 inhabitants), mainly inhabited by Serbs (502). Today, there are 168 inhabitants living in 69 households in the village (39 inhabitants are currently abroad), and there is even less inhabitants under 52.2 years of age. According to census data from the 2002 and 2011, in the village, apart from mainly Serbian population, lived less than 2% of Vlachs and less than 1% of Montenegrins and Romanians. It is worth mentioning that regardless of the Serb population, while we were going through the village and asking where we can find the teachers, we noticed that the villagers spoke to Mr. Živanović and us in Serbian, while they spoke Vlach to each other. This somewhat confirms Živanović’s argument, that people here “*declare themselves as Serbs, but many of them have Vlach origin.*“

There are few written data about how the village was created. Kosta Jovanović wrote that, according to tradition, the village existed near the stream Šajna prior to its first official mentioning in the census in 1846, but the inhabitants left due to “Turkish oppression (zulum)“. They were displaced in “Wallachia“ and in villages Kladušnica, Davidovac (then Džedžerac), Sip and Velika Dolina (Valja Mare). According to

² It should be borne in mind that Bojanić Lukač, citing the data from the Turkish defters of 1530/35 and 1560, in his study *Negotinska Krajina* Giulia mentions the village Šajna (Šajinac) next to the stream that the village got the name for, which indicates that there was a settlement in this area before the 18th century (Bojanić Lukač 1969).

his record, they were later displaced in the Velika Dolina and then they returned and established the village Manastirica (Јовановић 1940, 289). In order to find out the origin of the village, we asked one of our interviewees what they know about it. The story was told by a long-time village teacher Vasa, now retired, and even if he weren't retired he wouldn't have anyone to teach since there are almost no children in the village (4 children aged 4, only one five-year-old child and 3 children aged 10-14 years). According to the legend, the village was founded many years ago, after the monastery had been built, owing to the medicinal properties of this region, and the legend says, the village was named after the monastery.

“Even in ancient times, when people were settling, they believed that this was a healing place. The air is healing. As soon as you walk into a church estate, there is rare, healthy and curative air, especially in summer swelter. Here, in the middle of summer, you need something to wrap around, because it is quite cold. A strange freshness reigns in this area, perhaps because, apart from greenery and woods, there is a large number of sources from which the village gets drinking water.

At those ancient times, there was no present-day village, only the monastery. At times of severe disease, cholera, plague, I don't know, and when many children used to die, there came people with children. They stayed here longer to get cured, and eventually started building a shelter, a type of shed to protect them from rain, storm...to hide for a moment. It is believed that this is how the village itself was made.

Since some were dying, they were buried here. During the renovation of the church, a small skull that was found was passed on, and a man of the cloth sang. You see, even candles were lit.“

ABOUT MONASTERY AND CUSTOMS

The monastery has not been sufficiently researched and there is little written material about it, regardless the fact it is the only monastery in the municipality of Kladovo. One of the reasons is the unavailability of materials, because according to the data presented in *Memorial of Diocese of Timok 1834-1934*, by Abbot Filaret Petrović:

“all valuables and belongings of historical values, were transferred from Manastirica to Romania, and they are now in the Museum of Bucharest. This is what a priest from Jabukovac saw, when he went to see the coronation of the Romanian King (Споменица... 1934, 50).“

Mr. Živanović, a former “socio-political worker“ who had important roles in the region, says:

“We have never managed to create a true contact with Romanians and explore their archives to check and historically confirm the data. At one point, the Turks kept records and evidence of the taxpayers, and later the ecclesiastical jurisdiction covered both our and the Romanian territory, so the data became scattered all over the place. The agreements on cooperation were signed, but not much was done about it.“

Written documents about the monastery mentioned hesychasts, St. Nicodemus of Tisman ³ (Nikodim Grčić), a monk of the Holy Mountain who was Serbian-

³ His name is linked to the establishment of monasteries in Wallachia (monasteries Vodice and Tisman), and in Serbia, apart from monastery Manastirica there is monastery Vratne as well (about the life of St. Nikodima

Greek in origin, as the founder of the monastery in the time of King Milutin.⁴ However, “the monastery books were completely destroyed in turbulent days in the past“ (Споменица... 1934, 52), and little is known about the founder, the monastery itself and the monks. Nicodimus of Tismana was born around 1300. According to data from the monastery Tisma, he was born in 1297 and lived 109 years. He died on 26. 12. 1406. According to Bulgarian sources, he lived 85 years, and was born in 1320. There is no agreement on his place of birth. Đorđe Spase Radojčić claims that he was born in the village of Prilepac in Kosovo. As cited by other sources, he was born in Prilep in Macedonia and was of Bulgarian-Romanian origin, whereas the Romanian clergy had a divided opinion. The Metropolitan of Romania Nestor Vroničesku (Nestor Vornicescu) believes that Nicodemus was a Serb, while Ionita Viorel (Viorel Yonitsa) believes that he was “Vlach from the south side of the river (Балкански, http://www.kroraina.com/knigi/tb2/tb_5_4.htm#64).“ Nobody denies his family ties with Prince Lazar and the fact that he knew two languages. It was believed that he was fluent in Serbian and Greek.

He grew up in a religious family and stayed for a while on the Holy Mountain. Upon his return, Prince Lazar offered him a high function in the state, but he refused it and walked towards the Danube. In a place called Šajna, near the Danube, he settled on a beautiful place suitable for hermits and began a monastic life, as a plain hieromonk.

“Here the saint devoted himself to the feats agreeable to God, for which he became known afar, and so many people started coming to him, people eager for monastic life and feats. Some monks of the Holy Mountain and others from the monasteries in Serbia reached there, so a sizeable fraternity gathered around Holy Nicodimus. In this place he built a church in the name of the Holy Trinity and lived there for some time (Кнежевић 1985, 164).“

As the fraternity increased in numbers, a need for the church rules emerged and the monastery with the church of the Holy Trinity was built. In the newly created monastery, he introduced hesychastic lifestyle. Nicodemus later moved to Banat and erected a monastery Vodica, and then he set off to Romania where he built a monastery Tisman at the Tisman river, where he was buried. During lifetime, he raised the church Vratna and the monastery Prislop.

According to the words of Višeslav Živanović and teachers Vasa, there is a legend according to which the monastery, a house of prayer, was above the current building (Fig. 3).

“I often dropped in there and used to talk to people. There is one part that local inhabitants called – *manastirište*. This is where you can discern the walls. The semicircular remains of former buildings, which might have been the monastery altar. The semicircular remains from that time indicate that, at that point, there used to be an altar, or a fortress“ – Mr. Živanović told us.

The teacher shows a clearing on the left side of the current entrance, and confirms the words of Mr. Živanović.

also see: Јаковљевић, 2007 and Јаковљевић, <http://www.rastko.rs/rastko/delo/12771>. Accessed: 3. 5. 2014).

⁴ It is interesting that there is a very brief record about the monastery (10 lines only), and Kanitz states the place where there is a monastery near Kladovo, states that it was founded by St. Nicodemus and that this was the place where the daughter of Prince Lazar stayed, also claiming that it is “poor despite the 250 acres of forest,” and that “ten acres of arable land and a small cash income are not enough even for the modest needs of the monks”, so the monastery “is closed (Каниц 1987, 497-498)”.

“I saw the mark too. It was a building made of wood, a log cabin. But we cannot go now there. You can see how everything is covered with weeds. And I do not think that we could discern something.”

There is yet another legend related to the monastery. According to folk belief, this monastery was the refuge of Olivera, the daughter of Prince Lazar, who married Bayezid. After the defeat and death of Bayezid at Angora, Olivera found the refuge in the monastery of St. Holy Trinity in Manastirica. It is believed that the Radul-bey renewed the monastery Manastirica(<http://eparhija-timocka.org/manastiri/manastir-manastirica/downloaded>).

The old monastery church was used until the seventies of the 19th century, when it collapsed, whereas the monastery got closed at the eighties of the same century. Around 1900, a new monastery church was built on its foundations, initiated by Archimandrite Gabriel and voluntary contributions from the villagers of Manastirica and surrounding villages, but as we were told:

“thanks to the brotherhood of Bukovo led by Timotej Ljubičić, the monastery began to live again. But shortly thereafter, he was demeaned and the material prepared for the reconstruction of the guest house was sold out, and only a deacon Maksim Stojanović stayed in the monastery (Spasoje Đuričić).”

The monastery was built in the shape of a ship. As it was said in the Memorial, only a dilapidated building where monks lived remained from the old monastery buildings at that time.. As proposed by the Bishop of Timok, the monastery was deprived of its independence in 1931, and Manastirica was added to the monastery Bukovo (Споменица... 1934, 52).

The monastery was ruined after the devastating earthquake in Romania, but also due to landslides and groundwater. The ceiling was caved and the construction collapsed in the middle of the temple (Fig. 4).

The most recent renovation of the temple started on 13 May 2003 on Holy Apostle Jakov Zavedejev's Day, thanks to the clergy of the Orthodox Church of St. George in Kladovo, on the initiative of Bishop of Timok Mr. Justin. Restoration of the monastery is still in progress. The reconstruction was initiated by Branislav Pاونović, a native of Manastirica who went to work in Denmark, and financially supported by the people of Timok who live in diaspora.

In the monastery courtyard, left of the monastery, there are unfinished guest house, a wooden bell tower (Fig. 5), both old and new fountain, a few wooden benches. Restoration is being carried out based on the monastery appearance from 1934, keeping a former shape (single-nave building without a dome with a three-sided apse to the east). In the central part, symmetrically arranged, there are three very narrow and high arched windows, gradually carved at the wall mass. The windows at the top are framed by a broad arc with low-relief and painted decoration and a small rosette between ports and windows. These windows can be found on the altar apse as well, and the entrance at the temple is decorated in the same way. The building is covered with a gabled roof. In comparison to the appearance of the monastery at the beginning of the last century, the present reconstruction of the east side has the narthex (Figs. 6 and 7).

The interior of the monastery is unpainted, contrary to the previous times when, according to the words of archpriest of Jabukovica, Nikola Kazimirović, the painting of St. Nicodimus was above the incense-box, and now there are only reproductions of paintings. Inside the church, only a couple of benches, no altar (Fig. 8).

The monastery church was used, and it is still used as a parish church of the villages Manastirica, Davidovac and Petrovo village. It was visited by other inhabitants, regardless of their ethnic origin: Serbs, Vlachs and Montenegrins (who are most numerous in Petrovo village). The monastery had an important role once. People from these villages come there to marry and baptize their children.

The very name of the monastery suggests to the celebration of the Holy Trinity, or Pentecost. It used be like that. However, as our interlocutors told us, village procession (known as “zavetine”) are on Thursday after Pentecost, as it was written by Jovanović (1940, 290).

“1935. Diocese of Timok had a small number of priests so they could not cover all the churches and monasteries. Pentecost was celebrated in Kladušnica, Davidovac, Petrovo village. The priests were simply not able to reach all the villages. One year they skipped Pentecost and agreed that the village feast should be the first Thursday after Pentecost (Spasoje Đuričić).“

It is not surprising that the village feast (slava) should have been the first Thursday after Pentecost, because it is celebrated in other areas, known as the White Thursday. At this day, people do not work in the field and it is specially celebrated in the parts near the city. Mrs. Boldorac’s claim that there is the intertwining of different traditions and different periods is supported by the record of Nedeljković.

“Thursday is a solemn day in Slavic antique customs, known as the day of Perun, thunder God, and this celebration was preserved to present day in a modified form of white Thursday, as evidenced by the belief that those who do not follow bans related to this day could expect the harm from thunder (Heдељковић 1995, 225).“

On the day of celebration, people gathered in the monastery courtyard. Then they would walk through the village, accompanied by music and visit certain places in the field. “Everything began at the church circle, at daytime, before dark. Celebration began here. There was music, and since there was no electricity people would withdraw and the celebration would end with a dance in the village“ – says the teacher.

“At the time of the village slava, everyone would show up in the monastery. The lunches were served on the tables and grass. Later, this custom was abandoned, somewhere in the '70s when people got scattered and went to ‘seek their fortune’ abroad.

They would go to the field, carrying the flags. It was the feast for the benefit of the field and people would carry the banner. There were points, one or two, at which the procession with banners would stop. The clergy with people would come out and then go back. They would go around the church three times and then the tables would be laid. People would bite something, revel and so on.... (Spasoje Đuričić narrated) (Fig. 9).“

The bearer would be chosen spontaneously, because there were many guys in the village. Besides Roma, local musicians played as well. They visited strictly defined points, toponyms in the field, because it was believed that if they go through this part of the village and village area there would be no “heavy hail“. According to the teacher’s words, it is particularly important to celebrate the second Thursday after Pentecost. Both Thursdays are traditionally called Green Thursday, *žuoï verde* in Vlach. The people call the first one Great *žuoï verde* and the other Little *žuoï verde*. In the beginning, only Great *žuoï verde* was celebrated, and then people in the villa-

ge began celebrating second Thursday after Pentecost. Our respondents could not remember since when the second Thursday have been celebrated, but this is what they told us:

“In the southern part of the village, the residents have vineyards. One year, the hail destroyed the vineyards and water became red from the destroyed ripe grapes. On that day, the villagers decided to celebrate the second Thursday after Pentecost “ – the teacher told us.

The residents celebrate both Thursdays out of fear and desire to protect themselves from the hail clouds. Although, as they say, grape becomes ripe in the autumn, they decided to celebrate both Thursdays and as the teacher told us “act preventively“.

Today, the custom of celebrating the Green Thursday, or rather Green Thursdays, is lost. *“There have been no gatherings since the 70s of the last century, and since the late Mateja passed away 15 years ago, only a small number of villagers come to the monastery church. The clergy left the monastery, so did the people “ – Spasoje Đuričić told us.*

His wife quietly adds: *“But people started coming back. This year we are planning a gathering. Some women from the village got involved. There will be a village feast for Holy Trinity. “*

Nowadays, people mostly arrive for the memorial: *“When someone dies, or when they bring the food for the dead, of if they died without the candles. Then they come here and lay the table. They light candles for the deceased, to accompany him to the other world, “ – says the teacher Vasa.*

CONCLUSION

Whether the nature around Manastirica is healing we do not know, but right next to the concrete path of the entrance to the monastery we saw a geranium bush in a rumbled monastery courtyard. Whether the prayers help, is unknown to us as well. But they told us that a few years ago, a woman from the village stopped by in Mateja’s house and took a candle from his adopted child and his wife, and then went to pray. It is not known what she prayed for, but soon afterwards, the road to Manastirica was paved.

If unexpected guests have their wishes come true, the place where prayer was answered acquired the status of a cult place over time. People’s lives and customs in eastern Serbia are shaped by pagan and Christian elements, typical to borderline places where various cultures clash and intertwine; and also there are religious traditions and beliefs that *committing* to certain actions at certain place can break down the existing chain of events or create a new one. For those who visit the place that is believed to have influence on the sequence of events and for the one who has experienced the desired change, it is precisely the change that is a confirmation of his uniqueness: belonging to the chosen ones who are under the mercy of “heavenly force“. Realized change, on the other hand, lead to a profound sense of gratitude, which, in turn, is reshaped into a number of *doings* for the benevolence of “heavenly force“. Therefore, usually in areas where folk religion is “alive“, people invent new celebrations – holidays – for the purpose of making the desired relationship toward this (tangible) and the other (intangible) world.

Ever-present human need to transform uncertainty into certainty, paved the way to those forms of behavior which basically have a magical form of action – certain behaviour can arouse certain consequences. Their ultimate goal is to (a) balance the *pain* and *suffering* and a sense of *joy* and *fullness of life* in the earthly life, or (b)

balance the *fear* and *anxiety* and a feeling of *serenity* and *peace* that embody the idea of the afterlife. Caring for life after death and the rituals associated with this final act of the human drama of the terrestrial stage, occupy one of the central positions in folk religion, and in eastern Serbia they are given particular importance. “Observation“ and “participation“ in the act of transcending from one world to another, in the municipality of Kladovo, is followed by the strange rituals of dancing and singing, and generally accepted form of behavior – praying for the souls at the sacred places. These actions and doings in the district of Ključ have the character of the cult and the cult places, which common element is the *belief* that there is a world beyond this world and the notion of it as a regulated system in which every action triggers certain consequences and fulfills a specific function.

The results of the field research presented in this paper provide information on the cult places and cult activities in eastern Serbia, as constituent elements of Serbian cultural heritage. This is, partly, and ethnographic material which can serve as a basis for further research on Manastirica and the remains of other monastery places, and particularly on celebrating *Green Thursday* (*Žuoi verde* – Great and Little) after the first and the second Thursday after Pentecost. Their interpretation and analysis based on the collection of new and more detailed information can contribute to the discovery and explanation of the ideational basis of the cult and cult activities, their purpose and functions.

This research is a testimony about the conduct of behaviour in special days (holidays) at special places (sacred places), which were characteristic of the man in premodern societies, but somehow managed to survive in the eastern borderline of Serbia. Kladovo and its surroundings are now sidelined by the major trends in society and have the status of the peripheral area, which in many dimensions (economic, social, cultural) lags behind the developed areas in Serbia. However, its weakness is at the same time its advantage: the life near the Danube river is the possibility of preserving certain traditions that foster a specific relationship to the phenomena, people and events; the so-called cultural space of Kladova is an oasis for intangible cultural heritage. The heritage that should be preserved from oblivion.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. Višeslav Živanović and Vasa Pejčić in front of the school in Manastirica (by M. Miltojević)



Fig. 2. Spasoje Đuričić and Višeslav Živanović on the balcony at the house of the last village priest (by M. Miltojević)



Fig. 3. On the left, an unfinished guest house, the monastery; on the right, a forest where the first monastery used to be, the one in which St. Nicodemus lived (by M. Miltojević)



Fig. 4. Ruined monastery
(source:http://www.ptt.rs/korisnici/m/a/manastir/Pre_obnove.htm)



Fig. 5. The bell tower (by M. Miltojević)



Fig. 6. Exterior of the monastery (by M. Milojević)



Fig. 7. The entrance to Manastirica now (by M. Milojević)



Fig. 8. Interior of Manastirica (by M. Miltojević)



Fig. 9. Village slava in 1962 (given by Spasoje Đuričić)

UDK 27-522(497.11 Negotin)

Miloš Jovanović
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THE MEMORIAL IN ROGLJEVO (NEGOTIN)*

INTRODUCTION

*“ Traveller,
in these scorching days
take a rest in the shade
whatever your faith may be.”*

(from one of the plaques at the entrance
to the *sabrašica* in Rogljevo)

With the aim of maintaining the continuity of activities within the project *Sustainability of the Identity of Serbs and National Minorities in the Border Municipalities of Eastern and Southeastern Serbia* (179013), the authors of this text have decided to examine the cult place – memorial (*zapis*), located in Rogljevo wineries (*pivnice*), at the outskirts of the village which has already been the subject of their research.

As far as Rogljevo itself is concerned, it is a winemaking, crop and cattle farming, compact type rural settlement situated some twenty kilometres south from Negotin. Rogljevo rests at the elevation of approximately 120 metres, on the left bank of the Timok river. From Negotin one can reach the village using a direct asphalt road via Veljkovo, or via Rajac if one is coming from the direction of Zaječar. Rogljevo is regarded as one of the oldest villages in Krajina, and the remnants from the ancient times can be found on the territory of the village in the localities such as the Latin Cemetery, Selište and the Old Graveyard. The village was first mentioned in the Turkish censuses as one of the settlements in the estate formed between 1491 and 1521. The current settlement, in fact, connects two separate physiognomic wholes: the village of Rogljevo itself, which represents the main part of the settlement with the Upper and Lower “end”, and Rogljevo wineries, the famous seasonal settlement where grapes are processed and wine and brandy (*rakija*) are stored. The village feast day (*zavetina*)¹ is the Holy Trinity, and the village also has an Orthodox tem-

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¹ “*Zavetinas* are village feast days, which are usually accompanied with a ceremonial procession in the summer. Regardless of the fact whether this procession was necessary or not, for example, in the case of a heavy rain, they would always be formed. The church would organize them, and in earlier times pupils, young women and men, renowned people would take part. All of them would be dressed smartly. They would carry icons, banners, church crosses, and thus arrayed gather in front of the church, i.e. a ‘cross’ – where there was no church, and then visit all of the ‘sacred trees’, in all directions on the village territory, with there being at least four of them. They would circle round each of the trees three times, ‘refresh’ the old cross in the tree, pour wine over it and incense it, in the state of contrition and utter piety” (Petrović 1992, 299). “In his Dictionary, Vuk says that every village in Serbia has a day which is celebrated (usually

ple dedicated to the Holy Trinity, built in 1870, consecrated in 1881, and currently in the process of restoration. The church, by the bye, celebrates St. Elijah. The population of Rogljevo is aboriginal Serbian and settled here from Kosovo.²

Until the end of World War II the village was treated as one of the richest in Negotinska Krajina, but then the stagnation ensued in all areas of life, followed by the dying out of the village which began in 1956, and which is undoubtedly corroborated by the existing (statistical) data (Tasić i Jovanović 2014, 211 and further on).

West of the village, upon the hill, is where Rogljevo wineries are located. Here is the information that can be found on the online presentation dedicated to the cultural monuments in Serbia, which was prepared by the National Centre for Digitalization:

“[A]t the spot of the former, wooden, Sikol and Metriš wineries, whose remnants can be found today in the southern part of the complex, there is a group of objects which comprises almost 150 wineries. The majority of them were constructed over a hundred years ago, even though it is believed that they have been present here, as in the other areas of Krajina, since the 18th century. A plaque embedded in one of the stone wineries bears the engraving of 1863 as the year of its construction, while the inscriptions on most of the other plaques have been erased and are now illegible, which leads to the assumption that they might be even older. Rogljevo wineries, as well as those in Rajac and Smedovac, are the only ones, out of numerous examples serving the same purpose of producing and storing wine, that have been made of stone. The opinion that they were built in the 1880s, after the old vine strain was damaged by phylloxera and the new one was planted in its place, cannot be considered reliable because the dated winery discredits it. As a spontaneously created agglomeration of formed irregular streets and the central plateau with the memorial and the covered well, as a cult and gathering place, Rogljevo wineries possess all of the characteristics of a rural whole. Prior to World War II there were two bakeries and three butcher shops, out of which one worked until the 1960s even when there were no butcher shops in the village itself. The situation was similar in Rajac wineries which endorsed the attitude that the wineries were for the villages what bazaars were for towns. The conservation tasks have not been performed. The entire settlement is subject to random changes. A modern conservation approach would solve the sustainability of this whole in its authentic state (*Rogljevske pivnice*).”

Today, out of the remaining 150 wineries, only around 30 of them produce wine, and it is interesting to know that a part of the winery is dug into the ground in order to ensure the ideal conditions for winemaking, i.e. the necessary humidity and the temperature between 12 and 18 degrees (*Rogljevačke pivnice*) (Fig. 1).

The central square of Rogljevo wineries houses the memorial: a cross and a table for offerings, with a concrete gazebo (*sabrašica*³), and the cult tree: a mulberry (Fig. 2). The cross made of sandstone was erected between 1750 and 1760, and the instalment of the cross was overseen by a certain “Stanoje”. The engraved inscrip-

in the summer from Easter to St. Peter’s Fast). The custom is called *zavetina* in some places, while in the others it is referred to as ‘carrying a cross’ or ‘crossbearers’ (Kulišić, Petrović i Pantelić 1970, 130).”

² The majority of the data in this part of the text have been taken from <http://sr.wikipedia.org/sr/Rogljevo> (last accessed on 27/04/2014).

³ The name probably stems from the word *sabor* (meaning an assembly, a congregation, a meeting), since the object was used as a place where the people would gather on the village feast day.

tions on the cross are not completely legible and are awaiting interpretation. According to the *Serbian Mythological Dictionary*:

“The memorial is a cult place with a consecrated tree or a stone pillar or, indeed, a cross where services (worships) are performed on village feast days. That was the name of the object in a cult place, a tree or a stone which bore the memory (engraved or chiselled) of the cross, which replaced the role of the idol as the representative of the deity (Kulišić, Petrović i Pantelić 1970, 133).”

This cult place is a “classic” example of the cross as a cult place, as described by Danijel Sinani (2007, 137-138):

“These crosses are, usually, positioned within an improvised enclosed space with a roof [...]. Thus arranged cult place is complemented with other requisites which are used in rituals, such as: icons, candle holders, tables, bowls for various purposes, etc. It is common that each of these stones is dedicated to a saint, and so on the day of the saint ‘his cross’ is visited and the holiday is celebrated there. [...] On special occasions the cross is visited by representatives of numerous households or, even, the entire village. [...] Various ritual activities are performed in these cult places. Depending on the occasion when the cross is visited, candles are most often lit, votive gifts and other offerings are left [...]. All of the crosses and sacred objects play a very important role in the religious and ritual life of a community.”

The *trpezarnik*, a small stone table next to the cross, is positioned in such a way so that the person leaving the gifts and offerings is facing east, just as if they were standing before the altar in the church.

Adjacent to the cross and the table, there is an enclosure without walls – *sabrašica*. The *sabrašica* around the memorial in Rogljevo wineries was raised and built by Živan Đaković in 1930 as his and his wife’s Anka’s endowment (Fig. 3). It was the place where joint meals were had during the celebration of the village feast day, when the villagers used to bring the tables and serve the food (Fig. 4 and 5).

“In the central part of the wineries cult places were built, the so-called *sabors*. These places were constructed in the honour of the village feast day or *zavetina* and they were dedicated to it (in Rajac and Rogljevo – the Holy Trinity, and in Smedovac – St. Jeremiah). They were the protectors of the vineyards, wine and wineries. During the celebration of these holidays the inhabitants would organize religious ritual meetings next to these cult places. After the tour and procession, winegrowers would come to the wineries from the fields, and organize a lunch together followed by day-long dances which lasted even for three days (Blagojević 2003, 62).”

The village feast day in Rogljevo is the Holy Trinity or Pentecost.⁴ On the day of the church *zavetina* the procession was organized from the church through the village all the way to the memorial in the wineries. Church banners were carried – standards and icons. The procession circled round the memorial three times after the prayers were read for the protection of the village from diseases and misfortunes,

⁴ “Pentecost – a movable spring holiday falling on the fiftieth day after Easter. The remains of beliefs and rites from the pre-Christian times, related to this holiday, are rare, since they are covered with the veil of Christian teachings and customs. [...] in the villages of eastern Serbia the queens were organized (Kulišić, Petrović i Pantelić 1970, 113).”

for the rain to fall or to stop the hail, for the cattle to grow well, etc.⁵ After that, the people entered the *sabrašica* and the joint meal began, with everyone giving what they had and what they brought from home (Fig. 6).

It is almost completely certain that the memorial was erected in order to protect the wineries, having in mind that viticulture and vinification⁶ were one of the fundamental economic activities of the people from Rogljevo. The crops needed a decent protection from the drought, but also from excessive rainfall, disease, thunder strikes... The “higher power” had to be appeased for a fruitful harvest, which would ensure the survival and development of the community (Fig. 7).

It is very likely that the cult tree was found, as already well grown, at the spot where the first wineries were being built (Fig. 8). What is interesting is that the tree does not belong to one of the species which are most often chosen for the memorial, such as: oak, pear, service tree, elm, sessile oak, ash, beech, apple, field maple or walnut (Petrović 1992, 302 and further on). It is a mulberry tree, over two hundred years old, which still has some green branches. One of the very important religious elements is

“the encirclement of the consecrated tree or the memorial, which was expected to affect the crops and protect them from the elements, and then there was the offering of the sacrifice. For that purpose big and branchy trees were chosen, most often an oak or a walnut, with special attention being paid to the fact that the tree needed to bear fruit (Kulišić, Petrović i Pantelić 1970, 130).”

The tree which served as the memorial would have a cross cut into its western side, so that the person standing before the cross would be facing east, as at the altar in the church. The cross was cut anew each year when the procession of peasants reached it with offerings and prayers. All memorials carry certain taboos with them.

“There are many authentic stories on the ‘memorials’, on how nobody in the village would dare cut those trees down, harm a branch, or do something foul beneath the tree. The branches, or the entire tree, fallen due to old age, were never used as firewood. [...] Even today the examples of Popšica and Radmirovac are still fresh in the memory. After the war the ‘progressive ideologists’ cut down the centuries-old trees, and then experienced trouble in their families. The memorials are usually enclosed, there is a stone cross next to them, and during the village feast days or some other holidays, one can still see the flowers being left by the people (Petrović 1992, 302).”

As far as the memorial is concerned, “taboos relate to spitting, urination or defecation, even sleeping under the memorial” (Bojanin 2008, 326 n44).

“All memorials are tabooed: they must not be desecrated, cut down, climbed upon, slept under, nor their fruit eaten. The fruit may be picked in special circumstances when a person is sick, in order for them to get healthy. Men would take their hats off when passing by and cross themselves, and women would bow (Kulišić, Petrović i Pantelić 1970, 133).”

In the area around the memorial one had to speak the truth, and that is why it was used as a place where cases were settled before a civil court. The tree – memorial

⁵ “The encirclement of icons was, they say, performed so that the fields and vineyards would be fertile and protected from hail and bad weather (Todorović 2005, 145-146).”

⁶ On the Negotin “wine road”, and the famous Rajac and Rogljevo wineries, see: Vlastelica, 2011: 41–47.

was not to be touched under any circumstances, thus there are records of the tree falling down due to old age and people would go around it without disturbing it, which often even forced the villagers, in case when the tree would fall down on the road, to make a new road detouring the memorial until the tree rotted away completely (Fig. 9 and 10).

Today this cult place is inactive. Since 1945, for the well-known ideological reasons, it has been used on rare occasions. The people from the village continued going to the church and celebrating their patron saint's days even after World War II, although more or less secretly. Communists were not allowed to visit other people's or organize their own saint's day celebrations. Village processions were out of the question as well. In the 1960s parties and events were held in the existing *sabrašica*, which was built for such purposes. That was the place where the start of the harvest was celebrated, dances were held with the participation of cultural artistic societies and a mandatory joint feast was enjoyed at the table.

There is no permanent priest in the church in Rogljevo – the previous one died some fifteen years ago, thus the village is today visited only when necessary by the priest from the neighbouring Rajac. This is one of the reasons that still hinders the renewal of this cult place and the accompanying rituals and ceremonies. Yet, the main obstacle to this renewal is the dying out of the village, which according to the last census has barely over a hundred inhabitants. The only hope lies in the re-launching of the production of wine in the wineries bought by well-to-do Belgraders and foreigners (the French). Let us believe that it will bring about some better days for Rogljevo.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. The frontal part of the sabrašica in the central square in Rogljevo wineries



Fig. 2. The interior of the sabrašica



Fig. 3. The central plaque above the entrance to the sabrašica



Fig. 4. The cross



Fig. 5. Details on the cross



Fig. 6. The table and the cross



Fig. 7. The Sabrašica



Fig. 8. The cult tree (mulberry)



Fig. 9. The surroundings of the cult place (one of the wineries)



Fig. 10. The surroundings of the cult place (the well)

Dejan Krstić

THE SUVODOL MONASTERY, “THE HOLIEST” PLACE IN THE TIMOK REGION (ZAJEČAR)*

INTRODUCTION

From the aspect of ethno-culture, the region of the middle Timok, i.e. the area between Knjaževac and Zaječar, that consists of the White Timok's valley and surrounding slopes of the Old Mountain and the Tupižnica, is very rich. One of its ethno-cultural features are cult places – sacred places for communication with the world beyond, with divine. The middle Timok is, among other areas of the Balkans and more, known for number, diversity and ancientness of cult places, richness and ancientness of folk customs and beliefs related to them, as well as their importance in local people's lives. In that area, one can see, as cult objects: cult trees, holy groves, cult springs, stone and wooden votive crosses, remains of old churches, unofficial churches made of wood and mud called *čatma*, official village churches made of bricks... Beside the cult objects, there are accompanying shelters, belfries, auxiliary wooden and stone altars, residences, graves... Mostly, there are several different objects at one cult place, and in the area of one village there are even up to 20 cult places (Krstić 2006). However, if one asks what is the *holiest* place in this region, the people would probably answer that it is the Suvodol monastery – the only active monastery in this region. And not only in this region, but much wider. In 1926, Nikanor, the hegoumenos of the monastery, said that this was one of the most visited holy places in the whole Timok diocese (whole eastern Serbia) (Nikanor 1926, 101). In 1931, Marinko Stanojević said that in the past it had been the central point of interest of all orthodox believers of the whole Vidin eyalet, and in his time for the whole Timok Krajina (Stanojević 1931, 16). Even today's believers prove that it is the most visited monastery in the Diocese, which is why it is different from other ones (Inf. 3).

The Suvodol monastery is situated at the south-east corner of Zaječar municipality territory, a little more than 30 km far from the town, and a little more than 20 km far from Knjaževac, some 5 km to the east from Zaječar-Knjaževac high-way, 3-4 km above the village of Selačka, on the slopes of the Old Mountain, near the Serbo-bulgarian state border. It is located in a beautiful surrounding, in the dell of the Selačka river, between two summits Vetren (703) and Zdravac (823), on a plateau cut into a massif called Manastirska glama, near a lavish spring. Actually, it is situated on a tufa rock made by this limestone spring (Popović 1867, 102). It is dedicated to Virgin Mary.

Given the fact that, from maternal side, my origin is in Ošljane-one of the five parishes leant to the monastery, I have had much personal involvement with it since my early childhood. Even today I use every opportunity to visit it. Since I started dealing with ethnology field researches, almost 25 years ago, I have always left ethnographic records after visiting the monastery. In 1997, I conducted a research campaign for the purpose of writing a paper *The cult springs of the middle Timok*, when I visited the monastery (September 6, 1997) and published some facts about it in the

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paper (Krstić 1997, 137, 140). Since 2001, I have worked as an ethnologist at the National museum in Zaječar, therefore the photos I took at the monastery after that are kept at the ethnology photo archive of the museum. The work on my MA thesis *The cult places of the middle Timok* (Krstić 2006), which I defended in January, 2007 at the Department of ethnology and anthropology of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, was an opportunity for enriching and systematization of the knowledge about this monastery. During the research for my MA thesis I also recorded many data about the monastery from informants from nearby villages, especially the legends about its formation. Later, I published these legends in a paper *The legends related to the cult places of the middle Timok* (Krstić 2008, 77-78, 81-84, 86-89). Later, on one occasion, in 2007, I observed ethnographically a procession around the village of Selačka which is related to the monastery, and published reports from this area in two newspaper articles (Krstić 2007a, 2007b). The work on this paper was also an opportunity to have a few interviews about the monastery at the end of May and the beginning of June 2014 and to visit it on the June 3rd 2014. There are several records from other authors about the Suvodol monastery, dating from the second half of the 19th and the 20th century (Popović 1867, 102-110; Kanitz 1987, 361-362; Nikanor 1926; Nikanor 1932; Stanojević 1931; Gacović 2012, 412-413, 438). There is enough information about the monastery for one monograph, which should depict it from the aspects of history, ethnology, anthropology and history of art, and I am taking this opportunity to bring a review of what makes it a cult place.

The Suvodol monastery is very old. A historian Slavoljub Gacović, analyzing history events, supposes that it was founded in the 11th century. He points to words on a tombstone (which was found during the demolition of an old residence in 1986 /Inf. 1/) that lies in front of the church's door today and which served either as a transom or a doorstep of some object, maybe a church. Those words read the name of hieromonk Nikita and the year of 1255 (Gacović 2012, 412-413, 438). According to the saying of hegoumenos Justin, today's head of the monastery, it was here that an octoechos and the 14th century evangelistary were found and later in 1923 commended to Serbian Royal Academy by a researcher Marinko Stanojević. The cadets of the University in Belgrade, led by their professor Josif Pančić, visited the monastery in 1863. and saw frescoes dated 1645 in the old church which was demolished soon after that (Popović 1867, 105-108). The frescoes were, according to archimandrite Joseph, a former hegoumenos of the monastery, the last of three coats of the fresco (Stanojević 1931, 8). Beside the year of the frescoes, an inscription in the church included the name of Pimen who is in Bulgarian orthodox church assumed to be Saint Pimen Zograph, a fresco painter, a church builder and a writer (bg.wikipedia.org), but this assumption has never proved to be correct. But, although the monastery is old, except the medieval tombstone, there are not other objects older than the second third of the 19th century. Until 1834 and during the First world war from 1915 to 1918 it belonged to Vidin Metropolis, and from 1834. until today, except the First world war period, it has belonged to Timok diocese of Serbian orthodox church. Until 1946 it was a men monastery, with a brotherhood, and from then it has been a nunnery, with one monk who serves Holy Liturgy (Gerasim 1976). Today, there are two nuns at the monastery Evdokija (1936) and Melanija (1938), a novice Tomislavka (1963) and hegoumenos Justin (Figs. 6 and 7) as a head. During summer months, the nun Melanija's brother Ljubo Vidović (1945) from Bijeljina in the Republic of Srpska comes to the monastery and helps with the chores.

THE MONASTERY'S OBJECTS

Cult objects

The church. Naturally, the main object of the monastery is the church. Before current church, on its place there was a medieval one that was demolished in

1865, which was replaced with today's church until 1866. In 1860, Felix Kanitz, a traveler, stayed here and produced, except short description and some other facts, a drawing of the old church with its surroundings (Fig. 1). There are facts about the church in a travels of the cadets of the University. They gave facts about the condition of the old church, the transcriptions of its inscriptions and descriptions of its frescoes (Popović 1867, 102-110).

According to the archimandrite Joseph, the old church was demolished in 1865 because the then Government insisted that a new church should be built in the Timok valley, near the main road, on the monastery's property. People from five parishes (Selačka, Mali Izvor, Novi Han, Ošljane, Novo Korito) strongly opposed that proposition, so the Government relented and agreed with building a new church instead the old one in the monastery (Stanojević 1931, 8). After the old church was demolished, in the same year, in 1865, in May, they started building the new church and finished it in August 1866. It was consecrated by Negotin (Timok) bishop Evge-nije on October 25th, 1869. On that occasion, he put a part of St. Panteleimon's relics in the altar. Whole interior of the church was painted and frescoed, but during the Serbo-turkish war in 1876. the Turks filled the church with straw, poured kerosene on it and lit it, leaving only bare walls behind. The dome itself cracked due to fire. The old iconostasis burnt down. After the war it was renewed (Fig. 2). It was frescoed by Milisav Marković from Knjaževac in 1892 (Stanojević 1931, 9, 14). During the 20th century, the exterior of the Suvodol monastery's church was painted a few times, while in 1990 mortar coat was removed and then it was mortared and painted again. At the same time, concrete sidewalk around the church was built (Figs. 3 and 4). In 2002, frescoes and icons were renewed (Inf. 1.) (Figs. 5 and 6). There are two bells in the church, one from 1834 and another from 1858 (Gerasim 1976,27).

A chapel in the residence. In one room of the residence built from 1978-1979. (Figs. 3 and 4) a chapel dedicated to St. King Milutin was built. It was done at the then Timok bishop Milutin's request (he was later buried in the monastery). Both the residence and the chapel were consecrated by Serbian patriarch German on July 29th, 1979. Icons on iconostasis were painted by nun Voskresija from the Grnčarica monastery near Kragujevac (Inf. 1) (Fig. 7).

Cult springs. Except for the very church, the cult of this holy place is due to cult springs. In the churchyard of the Suvodol monastery there is a cult spout built in 1866, of stone and tufa slabs. It was built after an old spout had been demolished. The water flows through five pipes – three on the frontal side and one on each lateral side (Fig. 8). Near the residence built in 1979 there is *Banjica*, a concrete box, through which the water runs and which was built at the same time as the residence, for cult bath (Fig. 9). Before this concrete box, at the same place there was a wooden box for the same purpose (Inf. 1, 4). A few hundred meters far from the monastery, at a place called *Višnjar*, there is a cult spring called *Lisavetino kladanče*. It is a small spring, that springs from the roots of three trees, above which there used to be a monument, so the water flows under it. Today, this spring is dry, and beside it there are three pieces of the broken monument. According to memories (Inf. 5, 6, 7) this spring was arranged by Lisaveta (Jelisaveta) from Selačka, and according to the remains of inscriptions on the monument (read ten years ago, unreadable now) it was formed in 1925. for healing eye illnesses and dedicated to Virgin Mary.

Cult trees. In the area of Selačka village there are more *zapis* (cult places with a cult tree and/or wooden or stone cross), but they can also be found on the monastery's property-on three locations. One is near the monastery, on a place where a pedestrian shortcut branches off from a circular road that leads to the monastery. It is a big tree of wild hazelnut dedicated to the *Annunciation* (Inf. 1). Ten years

ago, its condition was fairly good, with two framed paper icons on it. Today, it is damaged, because once a candle lit it. Pieces of cloth are tied to the branches of bush that is around the tree.

Away from the monastery, but close to the road that leads to it, at a place called *Dobrovica*, there is another monastery *zapis*, dedicated to St. Archangel Gabriel (*Sveti Randjel*). It is a big oak tree beside which there is a wooden cross driven into the ground. The remains of an old cross from the end of the 18th century or from the first half of the 19th century lean against the tree.

Another monastery *zapis* was even further from the monastery, at a place called *Urov dol*. It is also a big oak tree, but it dried a while ago. The hegoumenos of the monastery doesn't know which saint it was dedicated to. Otherwise, he doesn't know neither who arranged them nor why they were formed (Inf. 1).

Small cult object. As in all churches and monasteries, in the monastery's church and in the chapel in the residence there are icons, crosses, choirs, banners, the Eileton, censers, candleholders, books, chalices and spoons for Communion, wedding crowns and other objects (Figs. 5, 6 and 7). There are also icons and a cross in the box for cult bath (Fig. 9), and as was mentioned above, icons were previously hung on the *Annunciation* cult tree.

Auxiliary objects

The residences. The dwelling places in the monastery's churchyard were built according to building standards and of appropriate material of the time. The older, built in the 19th century, were built of wood and mud, called. *čatma*, and later of wood, broken bricks and mud called *dolma* and were covered with *čeramida*. Later, if it was possible, they were covered with tiles. The first residence in the monastery was built after the Turks left this area, between 1833 and 1839, but it was burnt down during the Serbo-turkish war in 1876 (Nikanor, 1927, 69, 71, 72). After the Serbo-Turkish wars a new residence was built, but it was reconstructed in 1911 (Nikanor 1927, 72). During the time of hegoumenos Nikodim, who was the head of the monastery in 1885, a residence north from the church was built (Nikanor 1927, 73) (Fig. 2) which was demolished in 1986, so that a new one could be built on the same place. Before the Second world war, a separate small building was built, made of *čatma*, for a monk Polikarp who suffered from tuberculosis, but he died before the building was finished. This building wasn't taken care of, so it collapsed 15 years ago (Inf. 1).

Between the two world wars, also in lower villages they started building houses of hard materials, in civic, western-European style. Therefore, in the monastery, in 1928, a new residence was built, in this architectural style (Nikanor 1929) (Fig. 4). Even today, it is called *Nikanorov konak*, after the head of the monastery who built it.

In 1978-79, on the place of the old residence, a new residence was built, made of hard material (bricks and concrete) (Inf. 1) in the then architectural style (*gable roof*) (Fig. 3 and 4). In one of the rooms of this residence there is the chapel dedicated to St. King Milutin, mentioned above. On the place of the other old residence from 1885, which was demolished in 1986, the latest residence was built from 1986. to 1990 (Prosp., Inf. 1). It was also made of modern materials, but partly in traditional architectural style (the fashion of *returning to traditional styles* from the end of the 80's of the 20th century) (Figs. 3 and 4).

Graves. The whole churchyard of the monastery is, in fact, a graveyard. When the old residence was demolished, in its foundation the huge rectangle-like slab mentioned above was found. It was probably a transom or a doorstep of the old church but, after it was demolished, the slab was used as a tombstone for a hieromonk who died in 1255 (Inf. 1). Now, it is placed in front of the entrance of the cu-

rent church (Fig. 10). Archimandrite Joseph noted that the old monastery church, at its southern side, had an ossuary full of skulls and that a small, child skeleton was found between two big plates when a foundation for the new church was dug. He also noted that after the old church was demolished the whole place was leveled, on the occasion of which numerous skeletons were dug out, which means the whole place was covered with graves. The bones were collected, transported and buried on the place called *Višnjar*, the current place of the monastery cemetery (Stanojević 1931, 8). Later experiences during constructional works also showed that whole churchyard and its vicinity contain bones, as well as a cave above the monastery (which is otherwise closed, but bones come out when underground waters are high) (Gerasim 1976, 25-26, Prospect, Inf 1). For example, when the newest residence was built, in 1990, three holes in tufa with many human bones were found (Inf. 1). The Suvodol monastery, as mentioned above, has its own separate cemetery, on the place called *Višnjar*, 300-400 meters away, with 10-15 tombstones. However, around the very church, there are five marked graves and in the churchyard another one with a tombstone. Those are the graves of prominent monks and nuns, predominantly the heads of the monastery. Inside the church, next to the southern wall, at his own request, in 1992. Timok bishop Milutin was buried.

Farm buildings. The Suvodol monastery has its farm on the place called *Dobrovica*, across the Selačka river, 500 meters away from the monastery. The farm includes a stable, a barn and other facilities. There are some facilities within very monastery such as barn and a wood shed. Around the farm, at places called *Dobrovica* and *Vetren*, there are 30 hectares of fields under crops (corn, wheat, barley, clover, meadows, garden, two vineyards with about 1000 vines). About 40 hectares of land located in the valley of the White Timok should be returned to the monastery through the restitution, because the land was nationalized after the Second world war, but the whole process goes with administrative problems. The monastery has a lot of forests, which were returned through the restitution. In total, it has about 305 hectares – both arable land and forests (including land that should be restituted). It used to have much more cattle, today it has 6 cows, some poultry and ten hives of bees (Inf 1).

SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL ASPECT A holy place of dogmatic orthodoxy

Because of specific historical and ethno cultural circumstances, a prominent feature of religious life of people in the middle Timok, even the whole Timok region, is so called *folk orthodoxy*. The dominant in number are those who declare themselves as orthodox believers but, in terms of religion, most of them don't observe the rules of dogmatic orthodoxy. They observe inherited system of beliefs which includes, except dogmatic orthodoxy, many customs and beliefs that have non-ecclesiastic, even non-Christian character. However, since the post-socialist period, especially in urban area, in families who lost the contact with the folk orthodoxy, many genuine believers of Serbian orthodox church grow. They are much fewer than the former ones.

This *genuine* believers come to the Suvodol monastery on the occasion of important religious holidays that are marked bold red in the church calendar, especially on the day of Nativity of the Virgin (September, 21st), which is the *slava* (the feast) of the monastery. They also come on Sundays, even 20 of them, regularly 10-15, fewer during the winter. Of all of them, only a few are from surrounding villages, the others are from Zaječar and Knjaževac. On important holidays, here come believers from more distant places (Inf. 3). This attendance from Zaječar and Knjaževac in the monastery, even from more distant places, although there are churches

in these towns with their regular services, means that for *genuine* believers the monastery plays a special part.

Their motive for attending the service in the monastery lies in the dogma and the central event of their religious lives is the Holy Liturgy at a specific, by churchly rules defined, time (on holidays marked with red in church calendar and on Sundays). In winter months, the Liturgy is performed not in the church, but in the chapel in the residence. It is accompanied by venerating the icons on the iconostasis and the walls, offering them money and flowers, lighting candles for living (above, at a specified place) and the dead (below, at a specified place), taking the Communion after periods of fasting, priests' reading prayers for individuals and after the service, face washing with the water from the spout in the churchyard. It is important for believers to take Communion on the day of Assumption, because it is how they conclude their fast. A genuine female believers are known for covering their heads with scarves, mostly black.

A holy place for healing

Even at the times of the old church, Felix Kanitz noted one disturbing impression of his, a sight of a girl who lied unconscious in front of the door of the church, her face a bit twisted, her limbs in spasms. Her mother was squatting beside her, with a dull look in her eyes. She brought her to the monastery so that monks could exorcise the devil from her (Kanitz 1987, 362). When consecrating the new church, Negotin (Timok) bishop Evgenije, according to sayings, put the relics of Great martyr and Healer St. Panteleimon and said that because of them many of the ill would be healed in the monastery (Gerasim 1976, 24; Stanojević 1931, 9). In 1926, Nikanor, the head of the monastery, said that in this monastery God healed the ill (Nikanor 1926, 101). In 1976, a monk Gerasim testified that during his 17-year stay in the monastery he was a witness of many healings of people suffering from both bodily and mental illnesses (Gerasim 1976, 24). The nun Evdokija, in 1997 testified that, after visiting the monastery, many childless couples had got children and that many ill people had got cured, which were considered as miracles (Inf. 3). The hegoumenos Justin confirms that the monk Gerasim used to read prayers for the ill and that he does the same if needed. He reads different prayers for exorcising the devil, different prayers for other illnesses (headache, fatigue...) and different ones for childless couples. In order to heal, he performs the anointing of the sick. He describes those possessed by the devil – they resist entering the church strongly, they scream and utter other strange voices. He testifies of some cases he remembers, although he doesn't keep the record (Inf. 1). One believer, who comes to the monastery regularly says that this monastery is famous for healings, and that father Justin is famous for reading prayers for the ill (Inf. 3).

On holidays, the reading of prayers is performed in a way that immediately after the Liturgy, father Justin goes to the icon of Virgin Mary holding Christ that is in the left part of the church, the nuns sing, and ill people approach one by one, cross themselves, kiss the icon, kneel and bow their heads; then, father Justin places his epitachelion on their heads, reads a prayer briefly, makes a cross sign over their heads with a wooden cross he holds in his right hand, removes the epitachelion from their heads, they kiss the cross, rise, kiss the icon again and put money on it.

Therefore, beside strictly dogmatic motives, other motives for coming to the Suvodol monastery are also ethno medical. Beside prayers, ethno medical content is complete with cult springs. The face washing at the spout, which is done by almost everyone who comes to the monastery is, according to a belief, very beneficial for health. When it is the Nativity of Virgin Mary, the monastery's *slava*, one has to wait in front of the spout because it's crowded. At the same time, people light candles at the spout, put money, flowers and small breads (Fig. 11). Ill people, mostly women, have

bath denuding their ill parts of the body, pouring water on them, and after that they put off and leave a piece of garment and light a candle. This was done in a wooden box previously, but since 1979 it has been done in a box of concrete through which a stream flows, in which there are several icons and a cross. All of this is done even when there are many people around, for example on the day of the monastery's *slava*. Even though ill people come here when they feel a need, important holidays are, therefore, the occasion for the ill to seek the healing at the holy moments in this monastery. On the day of the monastery's *slava*, many go to the distant cult spring for healing eye illnesses, called *Lisavetino kladanče*, wash their faces there, leave flowers, coins, towels, shirts and light candles. Although the hegoumenos Justin doesn't know anything about it, it seems that the tree of wild hazelnut, above mentioned *zapis*, at the beginning of the pedestrian shortcut to the monastery, has an ethno-medical function. People light candles at the tree and leave pieces of garment and cloth on the branches of bushes around.

According to records, many people from the Timok region and wider have offered some objects for their health (Nikanor 1932, 81-82). There used to be a dominant custom, although today forgotten, of offering white towels with embroidered messages with the names of people—either as a gratitude for good health or as a hope for expected healing (Inf. 1).

The symbol of identity

Except for religious and ethno-medical purposes, many people come to the Suvodol monastery because they belong to parishes around it or to Timok region in general. I am one of the witnesses. In my childhood, in the second half of the 70's and in the first half of the 80's of the 20th century, I participated (with my grand-grand-mother) in a massive visit of inhabitants from Ošljane (a monastery parish), walking many kilometers across fields and hills, on the day of Assumption (August 28th). Women dressed in trappings, with buckets filled with food, flowers and candles covered with white towels or tablecloth went in groups. In the monastery, they entered the church, lit the candles for the living and the dead, left the food as an offering (oil, sugar, wine, brandy, coffee, cakes, cheese pie, various fruit and vegetables), put money and flowers on the altar and icons and attended the Liturgy. Many women used to arrange breads, some of which were from shops and some of them decorated for a rite. They stuck lit candles into the breads with a branch of basil, sometimes with a sugar cube on the bread (Fig. 12). This type of believers attends the Liturgy, but they are not mentally involved in it. They only take care to cross themselves when a priest does it. After the Liturgy, they have lunch with relatives on tablecloths and blankets spread in the churchyard. Interestingly, on this day, the Assumption, the only visitors to the monastery are people from Ošljane, Vitkovac and Minićevo (the latter two are parts of formerly one village). This day is a sort of their families' *slava*, although it is the *slava* of their villages. From my personal example and from the aspect of identity, I know that this kind of experience during socialization binds the people with the monastery and their birthplace strongly. The monastery is eventually adopted as a symbol of a local identity.

People from other villages in this area usually come to the monastery on the day of its *slava* – the Nativity of Virgin Mary (September 21st) According to Marinko Stanojević, even between two world wars many people used to come here, not only from nearby places, but from the whole Timok region (Stanojević 1931, 5). Today, the road to the monastery is filled with row of cars and huge number of people, whereas years ago it was filled with carts one day before the *slava* and fires could be seen with people who slept beside them. People with carts used to come even from

Negotin. On that day, the churchyard is crowded even today. As a help in serving the Liturgy, priests from Zaječar and Knjaževac come here. The liturgy takes place, and then, with the toll of the bells a procession goes three times around the church with banners and icons as a spearhead. Then the priests cut the cake, consecrate the water and sprinkle present people with the basil immersed in the consecrated water. Many women bring their bread-cakes and after the main rite is performed, a priest cuts them too. Then, many people have lunch in the churchyard or outside. People are entertained by a music band, there is an improvised tavern, a few stands with various merchandise (years ago, sellers of candies, grapes, sweet wine and a cooperative tavern). All the time, church banners are leaned near the church door. On the occasion of this holiday, in the village of Selačka they used to welcome their guests in the eve of the celebration and go together to the monastery taking food. Many used to sleep there and attend the service, after which they had lunch in the churchyard or somewhere outside the monastery. Many years ago, in the eve of the *slava*, there was an orchestra in the churchyard and people danced. Nowadays, people from Selačka welcome their guest and serve lunch, after their guests visit the monastery.

People from surrounding villages, one day before May 1st or the Transfiguration, go in groups and spend two days in monastery's vicinity, with barbecue and drinks or roasted lamb.

In parish villages, before the Second world war, when processions used to take place, boys from the villages went to the monastery for church banners and icons, and then took them back after *slava* was over. In Selačka, the procession was restored in recent years and is held in turns after a few years. In this village, being the nearest village to the monastery, a procession for village's *slava* St. Jeremiah (May 14) begins at the monastery, going three times around the monastery's church. Then it goes to a monastery *zapis* Sveti Randjel (where on the day of the saint, July 26th, the monastery also cut its cake), and then proceeds to other village *zapis*, until the procession ends at the village *zapis* of St. Jeremiah. The procession is always led by hegumenos Justin.

The respect of the local population for the monastery as a sanctity is great. In the village of Ošljane, for example, when passing across the monastery property, after leaving it, they would thoroughly stripped the mud, in order not take anything with the mud from the monastery's property.

When it comes to the identity importance of the Suvodol monastery, many people, because of these reasons decide to perform a wedding or a baptism of their children in the monastery. I am one of those who, although living in Zajecar, had my wedding organized in this monastery and baptised all my three children here. Thus the monastery becomes a part of personal and family identities.

There is another interesting reason for the attachment of the people of the surrounding villages to the monastery. In the socialist era, in the 60's and early 70's of the 20th century, a monk Gerasim, a theologian and a lawyer, a former high school teacher in Belgrade and in Zaječar, a skilfull in seven languages, mathematics, literature, and philosophy, prepared children from surrounding villages for corrective and entrance exams, in the churchyard, for 17 years, without any payment (Živković 2003).

The identity significance of the Suvodol monastery for the people of this region is seen, among other symbols, in the sign of the Homeland Society of Timočani-Torlaks, founded in 1997 in Minićevo. It is therefore not surprising that the central event of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Homeland Society Timočani-Torlaks in 2007, was a delivery of gifts to the Suvodol monastery – a carved wooden cross, which still stands above the icons on the altar. The importance of the monastery Suvodol for the people of the middle Timok is shown in the fact that legends

associated with it are widespread in the Timok region (there aren't any other more widespread). There are a few legendary stories.

The first is a summary *of the massacre in the church which was previously announced by a raven*. On the holiday the church is dedicated to, people, mostly youth, dance and are merry. The raven, or, less frequently, a crow, or two ravens, once or up to three times flies over a *kolo* (dance), cawing or throwing objects into *kolo* (a bloody piece of cloth, bloody, black, gray, red or Turkish *obljalo* /a linen insert for peasant shoes/, a piece of meat, bone...), which is a sign of impending disaster. The people do not pay attention to this, but the Turks come and commit a massacre. Some individuals are specifically saved, or, again, are killed in a specific way. For example, in one version of the massacre a young girl ran away, but being exhausted, she fell down and was slaughtered, and that place was called *Kadin grob*. This summary is, except for the Suvodol monastery, related, but only in certain cases, to the remains of old churches in this region (Krstić 2008, 77).

The second is a summary *of a massacre in the church and moving a defiled river across the river to be cleaned*. These legends are in this area mainly associated with the Suvodol monastery. They occur mainly on the left side of the Timok (across the river in relation to the monastery), and are the most prevalent in the village of Marinovac, especially in his part Stubal, where they are generally associated with church remains in place called Kaluđerovo on the Tupiznica mountain. This summary is often with a full first part, which consists of above mentioned summary. In front of the church there was a *kolo* on the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin (to which the monastery is dedicated). Above the *kolo* a raven or two ravens or a crow flew for three times cawing, dropping object into it, announcing a disaster in this way. But, nobody cared. The Turks came and killed people. Since this act defiled the church, it moved from its place and went to the slopes of the Old Mountain, to the present site of the monastery. On that occasion, according to some versions, some voices were heard. In some versions the church flew, and in some it moved across the ground and left a trace behind. In some versions, it was pulled by cattle guided by an invisible force. There are sayings that before going to the present site of the monastery it took a bath in the Timok in order to wash away the dirt or, according to some other, the blood. According to some, the church was transferred by angels, and to other – by very Mother of God (Krstić 2008, 81-82).

The third, also very widespread summary is about *moving the church while it was being built*. It appears in the villages on the right side of the Timok, in the vicinity of the monastery, as well as in the villages close to them on its left bank. According to these legends, the construction of the monastery church didn't begin where it is now, but on nearby *the Dobrovica* hill, which is where the monastery farm is now. However, everything that was built in one day, during the night, was transferred to the place where the monastery is situated now, by a divine power, according to some sayings-by fairies. According to some other sayings, during the night human voices could be heard, yelling at cattle and cattle pulling a heavy load could be heard. After several failed attempts to build a church where they wanted, the builders built it on a new location (Krstić 2008, 86-88).

The fourth summary, which is exclusively related to the Suvodol monastery, is the *foundation of the monastery by a ruler who had a camp there with his army*. According to one informant, Napoleon Bonaparte, advancing towards Russia, was supposed to cross the Old Mountain saddle called Kadibog with his army. However, making a mistake, he didn't enter the valley of the Klisura river, which leads to the saddle, but a neighboring valley of the Selačka river, where the Suvodol monastery is located now, and strayed. Because, when an army going to war starts to go ba-

ck means a bad luck, he stayed there until they broke through. In the meantime, they built the present church of the monastery. According to another informant, this church was built by King Milutin on his way back from Dardaneli when he spent a night with his army at the Suvodol monastery's place. There were some ruins and the army built a church which was later rebuilt (Krstić 2008, 88-89).

Tourism value

Occasionally, tourists come to the Suvodol monastery. It is about individual cases of cultural and travel tourism, but not as a part of organized tourism system. A nice stay in it, except for the fact that it is a holy place and a place that is a cultural value, is completed with its natural environment. In the churchyard there is a lavish spring, the monastery is enveloped in greenery, and at times when waters are high, before one gets to it, a very nice waterfall can be seen. A travel writer Felix Kanitz, who traveled so much, said he had rarely seen more picturesque gorge. He mentions lime rock, lush vegetation, crystal clear stream and over 20 m high waterfall, which falls in more cascades (Kanitz 1987, 361; Stanojević 1931, 5). The travels of cadets said that at the time of high waters, the waterfall looked especially nice (Popović 1867, 102).

There are cases of organized tourist visits. For example, several times, tour buses from Bulgaria came here, organized by the Pimen Zografski association (Inf. 1). The monastery also has a travel brochure. However, at the moment we can not consider the Suvodol monastery as a tourist site, but only as a tourism potential to be valorized. It should be a joint work of the Church and tourist organizations and the museums in Zaječar and Knjaževac. All knowledge of it in the field of ethnology, history, art history and archeology should be systematized, as well as scientific knowledge about its environment. If necessary, additional research should be carried out. Attention should be paid to infrastructure development and the area around it. Facilities for the numerous guests must be arranged and people who will welcome the guests and maintain the facilities must be provided. A small monastery museum should be built, where people could see the history of the monastery and valuable objects that it owns. Finally, a tourist presentation should be made. The richness of the middle Timok in cult places, led me to suggest a draft tourism project *The Holy Timok Valley* (Krstić 2014), in which it would be offered as a tourist value in all its diversity and richness. The Suvodol monastery would take the central place among them all. The Suvodol monastery is, therefore, a very important place with its historical, archaeological, ethnological and artistic aspects, a place where people express a wide variety of feelings: devotion to God, grief due to illness and hopes and wishes for healing, local history and family background and ties, a place where people enjoy classic Balkans feast and celebrations. But as such, it may be a part of the tourist offer (religious, cultural, travelling, event, climbing, rural, scout, congressional and other types of tourism). Tourism is an economy sector that, in addition to agriculture, may be the economic boost for demographically and infrastructurally devastated middle Timoka.

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Informants

- Inf. 1. – Hegoumenos Justin, the head of the Suvodol monastery. The interviews were carried out on the July 30th in 2006. and on the June 3rd 2014 in the Suvodol monastery.
- Inf. 2. – Evdokia, a nun in the Suvodol monastery. The interview was carried out on the September 6th in 1997.
- Inf. 3. – Slobodan Petrović from Mali Izvor, born in 1968 in Zaječar. The interview was carried out by phone on May, 27th 2014.
- Inf. 4. – Mihajlo Marković from Selačka, born in 1936 in Selačka. The interview was carried out on June 2nd 2014 in Zaječar.
- Inf. 5. – Dragomir Begić from Selačka, born in 1925 in Selačka. The interview was carried out in Selačka in 2006..
- Inf. 6. – Boban Živković from Zaječar, with origins in Selačka, born in 1975 in Zaječar. The interview was carried out in Zaječar in 2006.
- Inf. 7. – Zorka Miletić from Selačka, born in 1922 in Selačka. The interview was carried out in Selačka in 2006.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig. 1. The old medieval church of the Suvodol monastery, demolished in 1865, Felix Kanitz's drawing

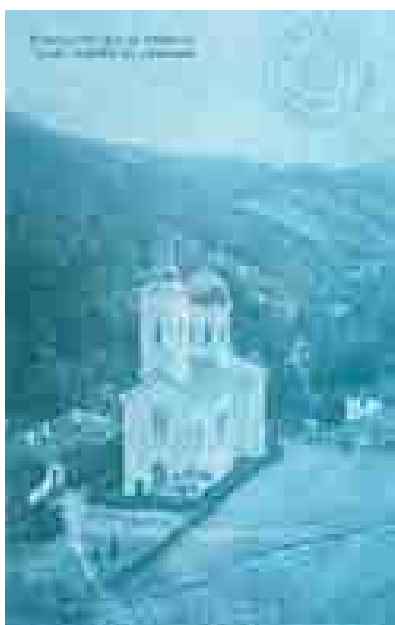


Fig. 2. Suvodol monastery, about 1900



Fig. 3. The church of Suvodol monastery, the residence from 1979 (left) and the residence from 1990 (right), June 3rd, 2014



Fig. 4. From left to right: the corner of the monastery church, a part of Nikanor konak in 1926, a part of the residence in 1979, and a part of the residence in 1990



Fig. 5. The interior of the Suvodol monastery church



Fig. 6. Heggumenous Justin, the head of Suvodol monastery in the monastery church, June 3rd, 2014



Fig. 7. Heggumenous Justin, the head of Suvodol monastery in the chapel in the 1979 residence - June 3rd, 2014



Fig. 8. The spout in the churchyard of the Suvodol monastery, June 3rd, 2014



Fig. 9. Banjica – the box for healing bath in the churchyard of the Suvodol monastery, June 3rd, 2014



Fig. 10. The tombstone, previously used as a transome, June 3rd, 2014



Fig. 11. Face washing at the spout on the feast of the monastery- the Nativity of the nVirgin Mary, September 21st, 2011



Fig. 12. Offerings in the church on the feast of the monastery- the Nativity of the nVirgin Mary, September 21st, 2011

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THE CELEBRATION OF SAINT GEORGE'S DAY AT THE VOTIVE CROSS IN VRTOVAC (KNJAŽEVAC)*

INTRODUCTION

The Knjaževac region¹ is very rich in centuries-old beliefs and preserved customs. The celebration of Saint George's Day is held in the unique practice of pagan rites and Christian customs, which from the standpoint of the socio-religious manifestation of the votive cross uncover changes and adaptation to historical circumstances, that encourage the shift from the collectivistic to the individual. Even though, as ethnologist Miljana Radovanović (1998, 174) says, votive crosses are no longer what they used to be a century or more ago, "the vow [still] pleads for mercy and protection". During Christianization, the rite of the village feast day (*zavetina*) fell under the category of Christian holidays, yet essentially retained its pre-Christian characteristics.

In the traditional sense, a votive cross is a cult and holy place, on the border between this world and that, possessing the properties and peculiarities of both worlds, thus representing "a break in the homogeneity of space, and at the same time the place from which the communication with the divine world can be established only ritually" (Dragojlović 1998, 133). The term for the village feast day, *zavetina*, comes from the expression "to take a vow" (*zavetovati se*), which means that the whole village took the vow to celebrate a specific day dedicated to a Christian saint, who protected the village at some moment in time from bad weather, an epidemic or some other misfortune (Kulišić, Petrović i Pantelić 1970, 129). The vow in the village of Vrtovac was taken in the name of the Christian saint George, whose image is engraved in the relief of the stone cross. At that "tabooed" place an ancient rite of butchering a lamb ("prayer") is performed, as the pagan act of offering a collective village sacrifice.

The uniqueness of the ritual of this celebration is based on the cult of stone and the cult of plants, on the knowledge that "the lives of people depend on the fruits that the earth bears" (Bandić 1991, 73), as well as on the preserved belief of the ancestors in the complex and mystical intertwining of life and death, which reminds one of immortality and eternity, as well as cyclic transience, through stone and awakened nature. Stone is the symbol of eternity of divine powers, the cross is the symbol of transition, while the holy tree (memorial) is the symbol of constant renewal. "A stone connected with the tree is also found on the holy altar representing the eter-

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¹ The municipality of Knjaževac is located in the eastern part of Serbia, along the border with the Republic of Bulgaria, on the territory which has geographically and historically been known as Timočka Krajina. This municipality is fourth in size in Serbia, and it borders with the municipalities of Zaječar, Boljevac, Sokobanja, Svrlijig, Bela Palanka and Pirot. The terrain is mountainous, and the highest point of this region is the peak Midžor on the Balkan Mountains (2169 metres). Knjaževac is located on the spot where the Trgoviški and Svrlijski Timok meet and form the White Timok. The White Timok flows northward, and joins the Black Timok in the vicinity of Zaječar, forming the Timok river, that gives the name to the entire region of Timočka Krajina.

nal existence of God and divine powers, while the tree stands for the cyclic human transience (Bandić 1991, 66).” Before the stone cross one celebrates the awakening of nature, asks the saints for protection, offers blood and bloodless sacrifices. The cult of plants as the cult of fertility emphasizes the right to life and preserves the belief that “the elixir of life can be found in the mystical strength of holy trees and magical plants” (Čajkanović 1994, 182). The period around Saint George’s Day is the celebration of the awakened nature, a holiday of a blooming spring, ritual splashing and washing up in the “unsullied water”, picking up plants and “braiding wreaths”. The cult of plants is closely related to the cycle of life and stands as a strong female cult in its significant segments (Stjepanović Zaharijevski 2004, 84).

In the entire village feast day ritual, the central position belongs to the ancient custom of offering a blood sacrifice (“butchering a lamb called prayer”) and the ritual eating of the “totem” at the organized feast. The people believe that the sacrifice is a gift to the powers of the other world, for which they in turn provide the people with the protection of the crops, the progress of the household, health and fertility of people and cattle. The presence of mysticism and holiness in the act of killing the sacrificial animal, according to E. Leach, is related to the fact that “sacrifices are markers of boundaries in social time” (Lič 1983, 125-126). Sacrificial customs contain a number of elements from earlier, pre-Christian religions. “It was a common belief that various deities and demons as higher powers could be appeased or acknowledged by offering blood and bloodless sacrifices” (Živković 1996, 165).

The village feast day ritual also includes “the ritual encirclement”, which in fact implies the formation of magical circles, in some places around the village, while in others around the sacred object, holy space or, perhaps, by circling around the holy tree, with the aim of protection ensured by encirclement, that is, marking and separating the “inner” from the “outer” space. “By marking with holy objects a circle around the territory of the village, the ritual procession claims protection for whatever is found within that circle – from the people who dwell within, to the crops that grow inside it” (Dragojlović 1998, 136). Ivica Todorović (2007, 192,198) says that the manifestations of processional encirclement, recorded in the 19th and 20th century in Serbs living predominantly in rural areas, clearly show a general intertwining of Christian and pre-Christian motifs, which has resulted in the dual semantic basis of this complex ritual. At the manifest (clearly visible) plane, the basic function of the processional encirclement ritual is the securing of favourable weather conditions and a fruitful year by performing adequate magical and sacrificial procedures, while the main latent (hidden) function lies in the unification of the entire village community. Furthermore, there is an agrarian, protective, sacred and social function (on the basis of primary social needs as a classification criterion), while one of the functions of the procession is also the strict determination (i.e. confirmation) of the boundaries of the village territory. Todorović concludes that the “Christian and pre-Christian contexts intertwine in a specific manner, forming the processional ritual as one of the most important ritual systems in the Serbian folk religion, a living myth which enabled the fulfilment of basic spiritual needs at the collective level. In the Orthodox Christian interpretation, the procession was used to establish a direct contact both between the Church and the people and nature (i.e. “the Church coming out from the temple”, “the sanctification of nature”) and between the people and God. Thus, this ritual was aimed at resacralization of the individual, the community (the people) and nature...” (Todorović 2006, 286). In the village of Vrtovac, for years now the inhabitants have been circling around the chapel (cell) with the votive cross and the “myrrh tree” (*memorial*) at Saint George’s Day.

The symbol of the magic circle is recognized in the offered ritual bread and the way it is spun around a few times; the braiding of flower wreaths which symbolize light and life (according to the pre-Christian belief that they possess a magical role to protect from evil forces); as well as the obligatory ritual "dancing in the kolo".

PAGAN-CHRISTIAN SYMBIOSIS IN THE VILLAGE OF VRTOVAC – SAINT GEORGE'S DAY PRAYER

Vrtovac, a crop and cattle farming village in the municipality of Knjaževac in the Zaječar district, is located at the foot of the Balkan Mountains and almost at the spring of the Trgoviški Timok. According to the 2011 census the village has 143 inhabitants, and it is populated with Serbs.² The majority of people living in the village are the elderly (with the average age of the inhabitants being 64,9 years) (RZS 2012, 416-417). The village has a doctor's office, a local office, the villagers receive their mail regularly, but there are no convenience stores or a place where the inhabitants could gather. There is no church as well. The Trgoviški Timok river flows through the village, some 35 km away from the municipal centre. The inhabitants have telephone lines, bus routes, a water supply system, electricity and an asphalt road passing through the village. They are friendly and hospitable. They spoke to us willingly about the village and the celebration of Saint George's Day.

Predrag Milkić, a retired military officer, born in 1947, spends most of his time in the village, despite having a house in Zaječar, because he loves this place dearly. He told us a legend about *čuma* (a plague, usually represented in the form of an old, dark-haired woman), i.e. how this village got its name. According to the tradition – for the village to "take root" (*zavrtelo*) it was named Vrtovac:

"The plague was rampaging through Europe and so it came to us as well. Young women were the ones who were dying the most. People didn't know what it was so they talked about *čumas* visiting houses – some women with long, dark hair (2-3), and that the girls who were ready for marriage had to comb the women's hair, which caused them to die in the morning. Then those women would visit other houses on the following night and so on. The plague spread and few people were left in the village. They didn't know what to do so they asked the priests for advice. The priests said that they should take a pair of oxen white or coloured, I can't remember which now, to pull the plough and encircle the entire village, so that the evil forces couldn't enter. That's where the name of the village Vrtovac comes from. The last person was buried there between the church and the metal fountain, there's a large plaque there, it can be seen. That's when the people left the village. They took everything they could of the movable property and left the village. They travelled toward Bulgaria. They lived there in another village. When the plague stopped, three families returned, my ancestors the Milkićs and two more. Some remained there, some moved on, and these three returned and so the village took root."

Vrtovac is famous for the fact that the inhabitants have hanged onto the ancient custom of celebrating Saint George's Day as the village feast day, with the ritual butchering of the collective sacrifice (lamb) before the stone votive cross at the place called Kalavat (Fig. 1), where the chapel (cell) dedicated to Saint George is located (Fig. 2 and 3). The cell has the surface area of some 25 square metres and it has been renovated recently. Inside, there are crosses, an altar, icons, a candleholder and can-

² The villagers say that there are several Roma in the village, but that they declare themselves as Serbs, observe their holidays and that some of them do not even speak their own mother tongue.

dles that people buy themselves.³ In this region, the sacrifice is called “a prayer”. Such an ancient custom has persevered only in Vrtovac. Even the oldest inhabitants of Vrtovac cannot remember the beginning of the custom of the ritual sacrifice of a lamb, yet they nurture it and convey it to the younger generation. The specificity of the ritual lies in the representation of the image of the ancient cult of the “Thracian Horseman” engraved in relief in the votive stone cross, which was transformed into the personality of St. George after Christianization.⁴ The votive stone cross (*obrok*) (Fig. 4) is located in the cell (the folk term for chapel), which is called the church by some villagers, on the other side of the river⁵ which flows through the village of Vrtovac (some 200 metres away from the river), and there is a large bell tower by the chapel, that has recently been renovated, a place where the lamb is roasted and the lamb soup is prepared, and also a place for tables and food.⁶ The total surface area of the parcel is around 20 ares. The interior of the chapel has remained authentic, while the bell tower, the place where the lamb is roasted and the place for tables and food are of a more recent date. According to the inhabitants, in 2006 the Municipal Assembly of Knjaževac financed the restoration of this cult place, and Dragan Milojković donated the funds for the renovation of the bell tower. Next to the chapel (cell) there is a memorial or “myrrh tree”. The oldest female villagers say that it has always looked that way. No one touches the broken branches. The cult place belongs to the village and all of the inhabitants take care of it. It is visited by the local population, but also by the population from the neighbouring regions and countries. Ljubinko Stojanović (72) says:

“It’s the oldest cross in this region. The cross is being increasingly visited. Buses are coming, cars. Bulgarians are coming, too. The church is never locked. Anyone can enter. I tend my sheep up there and I can see them as they pass by. They cross themselves, leave some money. Light the candles. Sometimes they even ring the bell. Well ok, it’s not rung always, but let them be, let them hear the bell ring, we get scared a bit, thinking that something has happened, but now we’re used to it. It was very derelict before, but even then the people went. Now it’s different. It was renovated in 2006. There are two canopies. Everything is tidy. The priest comes as well. There’s also a procession, three circles are made around the church, well, we call it a church. The people believe. Saint George’s Day is their patron saint’s day so

³ The price is written down and everyone charges themselves as much as they take.

⁴ This Vrtovac custom is the candidate of Serbia for the UNESCO list of non-material heritage as a unique combination of pagan elements and Christian religion. The proponent for the registration of the “Prayer” in the List of non-material cultural heritage of the Republic of Serbia is the Municipal Assembly of Knjaževac in cooperation with the Heritage Museum in Knjaževac (the idea was put forward by Dušica Živković, an ethnologist, who is currently employed by the Ethnographic Museum in Knjaževac), the Local Office of Kalna and the Association for the preservation of tradition “Spring” from Knjaževac. The proponent of the Saint George’s Day proposal is the Heritage Museum in Knjaževac, while the proponent for the saint’s day for the UNESCO list is the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade. Anthropologist Marko Stojanović believes that the decision on the nomination of Saint George’s Day will be made in September 2014. The list of the countries which have joined the nomination includes Turkey, Romania, Croatia, Macedonia and Moldova (<http://bigportal.ba/nas-durdevdan-i-turci-slave/> (last accessed on April 30, 2014).

⁵ Once, the people also lived on that bank of the river, but they all moved in time to the other side since they were not able to cross the river constantly. Only a few of them stayed, but they all died, thus there is no one living now on that side of the river. One can see a house which is 150 years old on that spot. Now they have a bridge (constructed two or three years ago according to the inhabitants) and they can cross the river without any difficulty.

⁶ The villagers say that the chapel is 7x4 m, the place for tables and food is 17.5x3 m, and the place for roasting the lamb and cooking the soup is 7x3 m. The height of the oldest cross, located by the votive cross dedicated to St. George, is 50 cm and its width is 44 cm. Next to the small chapel itself there is also a place for seating and a table for food. The bell tower is around 6 metres high.

they perform the custom. I go there when there's a celebration. I sit at the table and enjoy myself. I don't even enter the church. Who wants to, goes inside. Donates money, lights a candle, there's everything. Who doesn't want to, doesn't have to go inside. But nobody mustn't touch anything. It's open even when there's no holiday, but nobody touches anything. The people are afraid. I wouldn't take anything from the church myself. Who knows, it might be a sin against God. I wouldn't dare. There's wood, left from the renovation, there are bricks, cement, concrete, but nobody dares take anything. They're afraid, even though they would like to take something. People should give things there, and not take them. I like to go. The whole world saw me some ten years ago because the state television covered the thing. I milked sheep and they taped me. It's nice knowing that other people can learn about us, where we are and what we do. And it also means a lot for my faith. You see, all the people believe now. They even mention God on television. Everybody believes now. We believe, too. Back in the Tito's times you weren't allowed to mention God or a priest, and now you can. We have to believe in something. Children are also taught. Teachers come and they educate children. They tell them everything, so that they know what to do."

The cult place is visited by both women and men, the elderly, middle-aged, youth and children. They come with their families or individually. Usually all the members of a household come together. They gather collectively on May 6 (Saint George's Day), but the villagers say that they go on other days as well, when they want to light a candle or say a prayer. The cult place is respected by being adorned with flowers, money donations, lighting candles, kissing icons and the cross, or leaving embroidered towels (hand-made), socks, scarves. Goran Stojanović (48 years of age) explains:

"People are coming more and more. They leave scarves, embroidered towels, flowers, money donations. Brass music comes as well, folklore ensembles, two lambs are butchered, lamb soup is prepared (curative), the authorities from Knjaževac arrive. The Municipal Assembly financed the renovation. The tourist organization and the Museum donate a lamb each, big ones, up to 40 kg, that's the way it has been lately. Previously, all the money was collected and left there for all saints' days and a lamb would be bought, eaten and that would be it, but now the Municipal Assembly of Knjaževac, the Tourist Organization of Knjaževac and the Museum secure the funds for two lambs. Even some money is raised. There are a lot of people and everyone leaves something. Rich people give more, even a red one, the tourists give money as well. That money is not needed for anything in particular now, since everything has been renovated. I like going there for the holiday. People see each other, talk. There's music, it's like a wedding. Everyone comes and stays there till 12 o'clock. What are they going to do in their houses when the lunch hasn't started yet? To see each other, to have fun. Some people don't go. They do celebrate but they don't go there, but not in spite of anything, they're just not interested. But most of the people go. Some protest, say that the sacrifice should not be offered. It's the thing that has remained only here. But it has always been acknowledged. People used to go even during the Tito's times. Five or six people got together, but they went. If they didn't have the time to prepare the lamb, they would divide the raw meat and go home. Even though it was forbidden, people had always gone. The thing never stopped being performed. Even when there was no bridge and the water took away the log, people went. Then they would go all the way around into another village, a kilometre and a half away, and then come back that way. People have always went. Now we have a bridge, for 2-

3 years now, it's much easier. And as far as the custom is concerned, the things are a bit different. Now the lamb is butchered earlier and roasted, and then the roast is just brought up, while the soup is prepared there. It's cooked in an hour or two. Previously, everything was done there, but with a smaller lamb (15-16 kg) and cooked into a stew quickly. Now it's not possible to do all of that. The roast takes up to 3-4 hours. People leave, who can wait. That's why everything is done earlier. And all of the guests eat, there's a place to sit, we have utensils and dishes. Bulgarians come as well. Well, we're brothers. An old woman (born in 1934) says that she was nine when the stream overflowed and everything was swarming. Then the Bulgarians came and ordered all the able men to gather around and clean the whole thing so as to reach the crosses. It was not covered back in those days, it was on the meadow. There, the Bulgarians respected it also."

The custom is observed by the youth as well. They come with their families and braid flower wreaths. Sara Živković (14 years of age) says:

"I come here all the time. I come for my health. It's important for everyone, and it's also important for the faith. Other people will come as well. Today is a work day, so there'll be fewer people, but they'll come nevertheless. When Saint George's Day falls on the weekend everyone comes. It's nice here. I live in Knjaževac because I go to school there, but I like coming to my village, especially for this holiday."

We asked several inhabitants to tell us what happens with the money donations left at the votive cross. They say that all these donations are collected by the villager Milenko Videnović (who is approximately 60 years old) and that he takes that money to a monastery. However, some people doubt this:

"The money is taken by the *witch doctor*. He rings the bell on Sunday and takes the money. The money isn't controlled by anyone. He says that he takes it to a monastery. But who knows. He treats people. The people from our municipality, from our medical centre, go to him as well, people from other regions also. He performs magic rituals for them. He doesn't tell them the price, they give what they can. He says that he takes that money to a monastery, that he leaves some of it for himself and takes the rest to a monastery, the same as with the cross donations, but who can believe him, he takes it all for himself. Some 40 to 50 people visit him every day. He talks rubbish, they throw money at him, 500 or 1000 dinars. Unbelievable."

In Vrtovac the celebration of Saint George's Day usually starts a day early with the milking of sheep (*premlaz* or *muzigruda*). A ewe (with a wreath around its neck) who gave birth to a lamb for the first time that year is milked then, and the milk is used to make young cheese. Flowers are also picked on the slopes of the mountains with a wish for the strength of the young plants to be transferred to people and cattle. Flowers (bigroot geranium, lilac, dandelion, lily of the valley...) are picked by young women and men, and then taken to the river where they are used to braid wreaths. Flowers are tied with red thread, and most often three wreaths are made: for the sheep, for the cauldron (pot) and for the lamb. While this is being done the youth usually sing. A *kravajče* (small ritual bread) wrapped in bigroot geranium, salt and an egg used to be taken as well. The *kravajče* would be salted while saying: "I give you salt, you give me milk," and then the salt and the egg would be placed in the river. For the first milking the girls braid a wreath in the water because the wreath has to transfer the power of the risen nature to the herd, since water has a very im-

portant customary role according to the principle of magic "the similar achieves the similar". The soaking of young women has the same significance – to have as much milk as there is water – when the wreaths are braided the young women would sprinkle themselves with water and everyone would return home. At the same time a "hollow bread" was baked at home for *premlaz* and a "procession" (string) was woven from red and white wool. *Kolca* (loops) cut from the roots of common butterwort and three strings of garlic, nettle, celery and geranium each were threaded onto the procession. Apart from this small wreath and *kravajče*, the pot also included a raw egg or *peraška* (an egg dyed in red), a batten, a comb, a ring (usually made of silver) and all those objects were taken where the sheep were kept (a sheepfold). Usually the entrance into the pen was used, where an arc was made of young willow branches and decorated with flowers. The shepherd would form a magic circle using the brushwood, flowers and red thread. Beneath that arc a hole would be dug in the ground and the egg would be laid in it (the red *peraška*), along with the *kravajče* and salt, and a pot or a cauldron with the wreath and the hollow bread would be placed above it. By burying the egg and the small ritual bread, the magic circle was closed and it was meant to protect the herd from any misfortune and to ensure its milkiness and fertility. The ewe that first gave birth to a lamb would be taken out for milking, positioned under the arc, the geranium wreath would be placed around its neck, and then it would be milked. After that, everything would be taken out from the pot, so that all of the other sheep could be milked as well. After milking, the small bread and the egg would be taken out of the hole and buried in an anthill so that the sheep could multiply as ants. The flowers were thrown in the river while saying: "Little river, little river, a flower for you, good health for me." The wreath from the pot was cast into the water with the aim of sheep producing a lot of milk. After milking, people would look under the pot to try and find an insect or a worm for the year to be fruitful. The bread, i.e. the hollow bread, was broken and shared among everyone, and it had to be eaten on the spot during lunch so that it served the purpose of a sacrifice. No lamb was eaten prior to Saint George's Day, but every house would ritually butcher a lamb called *đurđilče* on that day for the first time during the year. When the head of the family butchered a lamb, he would place a small wreath around its neck, light a candle on its right horn and give it salt to lick, since the taking of the salt would establish, according to the folk belief, an unbreakable link between the man and the sacrifice. Then he would cross himself three times and say: "It is not me who is butchering you but Saint George's Day." The butchering would usually take place by the water, and the intention was for the blood not to fall on the ground. Female children would smear that blood, which was considered healing, on each other's cheeks and foreheads in order to be healthy. The rest of the blood, together with the *kravajče* and flowers, was ground using the cattle's yoke – this part related to each household, but the same was done for the collective sacrifice as well. Apart from the *đurđilče* which was butchered in every house, a lamb was also butchered on behalf of the entire village.⁷ In the village of Vrtovac, a custom of offering the collective village sacrifice, called the *prayer* by the people, has been preserved. The Saint George's Day prayer is a customary practice with pre-Christian elements, which have persevered to the present day. A male lamb is offered decorated with a wreath made from fresh spring flowers. The lamb is butchered by a host, a *kolačar*, on behalf of the entire village before the stone cross in the cell – a small chapel dedicated to Saint George. The host is selected each year and he takes care of the further religious content of this custom after the sacrifice has been offered.

Predrag Milkić (67) says:

⁷ The description is recorded on the basis of the statements of the inhabitants of Vrtovac and the explanation is provided by Jelena Kurtić, an ethnologist from the Heritage Museum in Knjaževac.

“Our ancestors said that the Romans had a religious object dedicated to their gods before Christianity in this region. I don’t know the exact location of that object but it was destroyed after they had left. Our people took some stones from that location and built their own object on the current location. That’s when they also took their cross which had their symbols, and some 10-15 stone blocks from the building which were processed in the way that it was done back then. However, that part was flooded multiple times by the water after that, the stone blocks were buried and the level of the entire plateau was raised. I think that the last renovation took place in 1943. What remained were four blocks, the bigger ones, while our ancestors took the other blocks from the stream and the surrounding area and built the object that can be found today. I don’t know how accurate this is, but that’s how the story goes. As far as our custom is concerned, I go there and I try to help organize it as much as possible, we’re planning to raise a fence around the church, take down that metal thing and construct a picket one, then pave the access path in stones, and pave the interior as well. We have already done it in brick, but we didn’t have experience, and we made a mistake, it’s hard to remove it, but we’ll mend it somehow. It’s nice that we gather here. To see each other, to count ourselves. We are fewer and fewer. Lamb is eaten on Saint George’s Day, even though some believe that it should not be eaten during the fast – on Wednesday or Friday, while others think that it should always be eaten on Saint George’s Day and so we have a conflict. We’re not some religious fanatics but we are doing our best to preserve some of the religious customs. However, we don’t know what’s right. The priests say do as you see fit, they don’t have a clear stance on it as well. The butchering custom was practiced in polytheism. Apart from the cross (the oldest stone from the pagan building), there is a stone in the church which serves as an altar for the sacrifice. A flat, large stone plate. You can see the trail of blood. Now the altar is covered, yet not for religious reasons but for practical ones, it’s convenient as an icon stand. There is a conflict with the Orthodox Church because they believe that there should be no butchering on that stone in the church. The rite can be performed in the church, but no butchering, no blood letting. I often talk to the young people about our customs, but they are not fond of those stories. Soon, no one will remember what it was. There will be no one to talk about it anymore.”

The stone cross (*obrok*) dedicated to St. George is particularly interesting since the engraved relief of St. George reminds one of the relief of the Thracian Horseman.⁸ The sacrifice is offered by first decorating the gate with flowers (Fig. 5), followed by the cross and the lamb. The blood of the lamb should be sprinkled on the

⁸ “On the territory of Knjaževac the monuments of the Thracian Horseman have been witnessed as well. It is known that in the border regions of the Roman provinces of Upper and Lower Moesia (which in this part stretched approximately over the peaks of the Balkan Mountains) there was a strong cultural influence from Thrace, most often materialized in votive icons, plates, plaques and the like, with representations of various deities. Among them is the Chthonic deity, hero, god of ancestors and hearths, whose polyvalent nature is still the subject of scientific discussions. The Thracian Horseman, according to the iconographical influence and character, appeared much later in the Christian religion, as a Christian saint St. Theodore. It is interesting to note that Vrtovac was, until recently, the place where the equestrian races started on Theodore’s Saturday. The development of the cult of the Thracian Horseman is also substantiated by certain archaeological findings. Votive icons dedicated to the Thracian Horseman have been found on the plateau of the late-ancient fortification in Kalna and on the hill of the Holy Trinity above the ancient locality of Timacum Minus in the village of Ravna. [...] On the other hand, the votive icons usually present the Thracian Horseman as a horseman with his chlamys fluttering and spear raised, and a snake, dog or boar and altar usually below the horse. Such a relief representation reminds one of the Vrtovac cross of St. George, who is presented by the folk artist on a horse with his spear stabbing the dragon (a stylized dragon reminiscent of a snake). The rustic engraving of the relief, the cross which is very shallow (like a woodwork), also reminds one of the icons of the Thracian Horseman” (Živković 1996, 167).

altar, i.e. the stone cross. During the butchering, the head of the lamb is positioned on the bigroot geranium leaves so that the blood does not fall on the ground, the lamb has a flower wreath around its neck, and a candle is placed on its horn and lit. Then the person who is about to butcher the lamb crosses himself and says: "It is not me who is butchering you but Saint George's Day!"

The saint's day bread is prepared for this holiday, and it is ritually broken in every house by the saint's day host and the priest or the oldest guest (according to the villagers there is no house today that the priest does not visit on that day), while in the chapel (cell) the bread is broken by the host *kolačar* of the patron saint's day and the *planinka*, a chosen woman, decorated richly with various plants, who represents the spirit of nature and is considered the keeper of milk processing. It is usually the wife of the *kolačar*, but it does not have to be. The prayer continues with the procession. The ritual procession goes around the chapel where the lamb was sacrificed and around the memorial (*zapis*) which is located next to the chapel. The procession is organized in the predetermined order: at the front there are two people who carry the rattle and the bell, followed by the others who carry the church banner, crosses and icons decorated with flowers (Fig. 6).

After that, the priest cuts the bread with the other inhabitants who always bring cheese, bread, wheat, candle and red wine (the food is placed on the ground, Fig. 7), so that the priest can bless the food which is then returned to the house for lunch. Some people even bring lamb and cakes. By blessing the cheese, cutting the saint's day bread, decorating the *planinka*, the woman representing the spirit of nature, with flowers and accepting the saint's day for the following year, the customs are completed (Fig. 8). This is followed by a celebration accompanied with bagpipes, brass music and folklore. Apart from the villagers and their guests, the members of the folklore ensemble of the Culture Centre and the brass orchestra "Timok Merry Men" also take part in the ceremony (Fig. 9 and 10). Then the group lunch is prepared. Once, the entire lamb was cooked in the pot as a stew and each person received a piece of meat, then, everyone present would get a piece of raw meat and cooked intestines from the sacrificial lamb, while today two lambs are roasted and all guests can help themselves to the meat. The soup is prepared separately and is also served. Also served are cheese pita (*gibanica*) and *belmuž* (a meal made from young sheep's milk cheese and corn flower).

Thus, the votive prayer is an act of collective village sacrifice, a preserved ancient custom which contains many pre-Christian religious elements. The custom of votive prayer is related to the protection of crops, health and fertility of cattle and the progress of the household and the village. Farmers once believed that the protector of their herd gathered and dispersed the clouds on the Balkan Mountains. In order to appease him, shepherds singled out the prettiest lamb, decorated it with spring flowers and offered it as a sacrifice upon the stone altar.

Ethnologist Dušica Živković believes that the similarity between the visual representation of St. George by the village stonemason on the stone cross with the relief of the Thracian Horseman is not coincidental:

"The Balkan Mountains, the roof of the Balkans, have preserved many other pre-Christian elements of various cultures and peoples who have lived here for centuries, which was probably the background and role-model for the artist for his relief of St. George. Perhaps, this is the reason why during the rite of praying at this stone *obrok* in the Vrtovac cell, apart from the presence of the priest, one can also sense the mystical atmosphere that has been created and preserved by the people for so many centuries (Živković 1996, 167)."

ETHNO FESTIVAL “SAINT GEORGE’S DAY ENCOUNTERS”

Along with the “Prayer under Midžor”, under the patronage of the Municipal Assembly of Knjaževac, the Tourist Organization of the municipality of Knjaževac, the Heritage Museum and the Culture Centre of Knjaževac, the cultural-artistic and tourist manifestation called “Saint George’s Day Encounters – the Prayer under Midžor” was established in 2000. The traditional manifestation is held on the first Saturday after May 6 in the village of Balta Berilovac, which is located next to the village of Vrtovac, and gathers a large number of villagers and tourists. The manifestation is held in the courtyard of the old school, which has been let for five years to the Heritage Museum for use. The manifestation includes performers of traditional songs and dances, the most beautiful shepherdess is selected, and on the clearing above the village school shepherd games are also organized (“Sister, bring me some milk”, “Let there be cattle as ants”, “Wreath braiding”, “Rope pulling”, “Stone put”, “Standing long jump”) in which the inhabitants from the surrounding villages participate (Fig. 11). Tourists are most drawn to the competition in the preparation of old meals from this region. The most famous meals are *klínka*, a type of broth made from sauerkraut, the prunes soup, dried peppers filled with leek, and as far as sweets are concerned there is the *kiselica* made from cherry plums (plum compote). The competition part of the manifestation includes the preparation of *belmuž* on the spot, the preparation of the lamb soup on the spot, an exhibition of old meals and dairy products prepared at home and served in the traditional manner (Fig. 12), an exhibition of souvenirs, an exhibition of old crafts products, a demonstration of old crafts, and shepherd games. During the manifestation, one can also see healing herbs and their application. The departure is organized from Knjaževac. First the cell of St. George is visited, followed by the ceremonial opening of the manifestation in Balta Berilovac, the cultural-artistic program, the announcement of winners and the presentation of awards.

The manifestation is visited by both young and old, and everyone is very satisfied with the organization. Ljubinko Stojanović (72) from Vrtovac says:

“I go up there every time. There’s a tavern as well, so you can sit down and observe. You watch a little, drink a little, mingle a little. It’s more beautiful up there than in Vrtovac. Musicians come, accordion players, flute players. The old school has been redecorated as a museum. People come and take a look. It’s very beautiful. *Belmuž* and cheese are made, a jury grades the best one, everything is prepared, there’s a name and a surname, they pass and give grades. It’s really very beautiful.”

The manifestation is covered by the television and numerous newspaper teams which has contributed to the fact that in the last couple of years through film, photography and accompanying texts these elements of national identity have become visible.

CONCLUSION

The picturesque and mystical customary practice related to Saint George’s Day in the village of Vrtovac is a genuine record of the culture of past times; a symbolic construction and action for regulating and controlling relationships between people, as well as between people and divine powers; an ethnic marker, having in mind the fact that it contributes as a routine cyclic ritual manner of behaviour (at least it is believed so) to the regulation and renewal of the life of the village community toward the strengthening of its solidarity and belonging, but also the continuous

assuring of protection and progress. In the shared "communication experience" (Lič 1983, 64) in the function of the unification of the entire community, but also securing the favourable living conditions, the social unity and the sense of control over one's own life are strengthened. The uniqueness of the customary and ritual Vrtovac practice, its latent and manifest functionality, is a rich cultural heritage which should be protected as a cultural monument.

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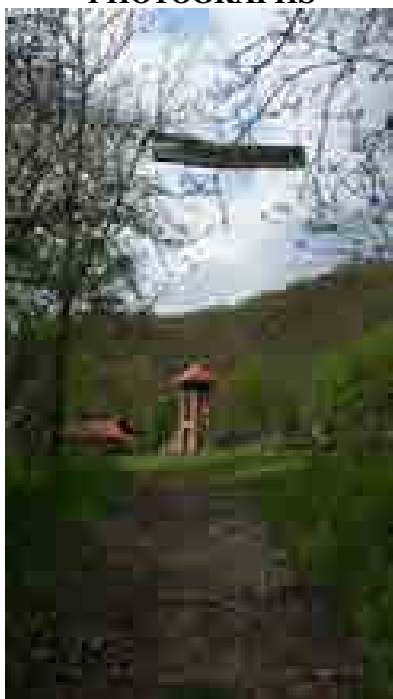


Fig. 1. Place Kalavat in Vrtovac



Fig. 2. The cell (chapel) before

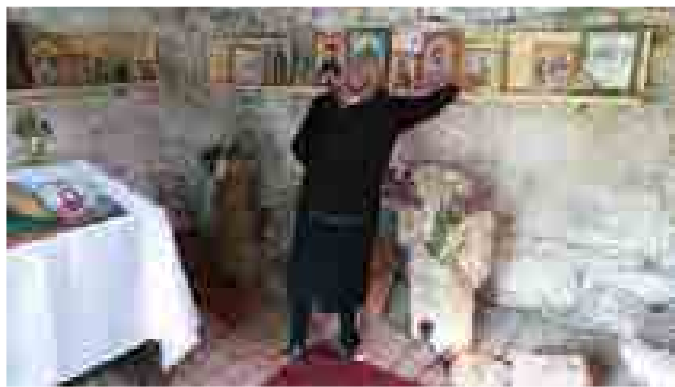


Fig. 3. The cell (chapel) today



Fig. 4. The crosses before and today (the larger cross is dedicated to St. George; and for the cross on the left side the villagers say that it dates back to the 13th century)



Fig. 5: Villagers braid a wreath for the gate



Fig. 6. The procession around the cell (chapel) and the memorial



Fig. 7. Villagers take out food



Fig. 8. Joint prayer



Fig. 9. Celebration with bagpipes and the brass orchestra “Timok Marry Men”



Fig. 10. Member of the folklore ensemble of the Culture Centre of Knjaževac



Fig. 11. Balta Berilovac – Shepherd games



Fig. 12. Balta Berilovac – Traditional meals⁹

⁹ Photographs 2 and 4 (the first part) are taken from: <http://nkns.rs/popis-nkns/молитва-под-мицором/> Photographs 11 and 12 are taken from the Heritage Museum in Knjaževac (2013). The author of all the other photographs is Lela Milošević Radulović (2014).

Marija Marković
Danijela Gavrilović

CULT PLACES IN THE BABUŠNICA REGION*

Holy places represent the holy geography of human civilization and they do not have to necessarily coincide with the important places in profane geography (Šušnjić 1998, 341). These places are the objectification of the mystical link between the higher power and people, and their strength can be based on magical and religious beliefs. Their vitality, number of visits, ways of communication and rituals performed upon attending cult places can speak volumes on the level of religiosity or, indeed, secularization in that region. Cult places are in theory defined as those places where “a cult activity is performed” (Cvetković 2005, 247). The cult places that we have come across in the Babušnica region are treated by the local population in accordance with our earlier conclusion that religiosity in the people from this part of the country is at a very low level (Gavrilović and Cvetković 2013). The people in this region remember these places mostly as gathering places of the past, but the idea of the meaning, role and reasons for their cult importance is slowly fading away. The Babušnica region is largely depopulated, and this fact is particularly relevant for the villages, therefore, the cult places should also be considered in that light.

“The projection of the development of the population in the villages of the Babušnica region which is based on the analysis of the trends thus far, and is the product of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (it can be seen on the website of the Municipality of Babušnica), shows that the majority of villages in this municipality will become completely desolated (Gavrilović and Cvetković 2013a, 190).“

The forms of cult places presented in this text are observed as specific for the inhabitants of this region. These cult places are part of the collective consciousness in Serbia in general, and they stem from the cult of nature which later formed a syncretism with Christian elements (a spring near a monastery, a cross near an oak).

One of the examined cult places is located on the territory of the village of Gorčince (on the demarcation line with the villages of Izvor and Suračevo), next to the monastery of Saint Paraskeva, and it is a spring which is believed to possess healing properties (Fig. 1). The monastery itself represents a place visited by the peasants from the Babušnica villages during great holidays. The village is well-populated, with around 450 inhabitants, bearing in mind the conditions present in the Babušnica region. The dominant fraction is the Serbian Orthodox, although there are some Roma, whose houses are grouped into a mahalla, and who are also Orthodox and “consider themselves Serbs”, as witnessed by an interviewed respondent, Borivoje Milenković (a pensioner from the village of Gorčince). The spring is visited by the members of both ethnic communities. There are also visitors from other regions, and our interviewee speaks of the place as of “an excursion site”. Babušnica does not have many recreational sites, and that is why, according to him, this place is visited.

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The spring can be reached by a treaded path, and the electricity has been installed in front of the monastery (but not inside). The interviewee thinks that even though there is a committee which is in charge of the maintenance of this place, it does not do enough for it.

Young people usually visit this place for rest and recreation. The elderly have religious feelings as well, and those who visit the place “light the candle”.

“The youth go out for picnics and they sit there until the middle of the night. They light fires, play music, drink something, have fun. I can say, it’s a remote place. Nobody bothers you there. They always come in 5-6 cars. That’s how these young people are connected to picnics.”

The spring itself is located on the land which belongs to the monastery. This monastery is very old “from the Turkish times” (the 14th century is mentioned, it was active until World War I). It was a male monastery, which was closed after World War I. It was burned down and renovated many times in the past. Another respondent (Stanislav Mitrović, a retired professor of mathematics and physics) claims that the renovation of the monastery which took place ten years ago also caused some damage, since the monks’ cemetery with tombstones was destroyed on that occasion. The spring itself is called “The Holy Water”, according to him. It is believed to help those who have eyesight problems. The water is not for drinking, it is thermal, and it is used only for washing up. Many people take the water from the spring with them. At the bottom of the stream which flows from the spring one can see a number of coins which are left there by visitors. They also leave candles and flowers, which can be seen in the photograph of the spring (Fig. 2). This interviewee emphasizes the fact that this cult is connected with the god Svetovid. His memory can be traced back to the explanation offered in this lines by Sreten Petrović (1995, 278):

“Sick people wash up with the water from those springs, wipe their faces and eyes with a napkin or a towel, and then leave those objects by the spring, believing that the “sickness” is thus transferred magically to the objects and that it remains there by the spring in the clutches of Svetovid’s demons.”

More than the Turks and other conquerors, according to our interviewee, it was the population of this region who caused the most damage to the monastery and the surroundings, as well as the forest in which the spring is located. Gold searchers damaged and desecrated the monastery and the surroundings.

“The only monastery in Lužnica, St. Paraskeva, is almost completely ruined. The front doors are destroyed, the iconostasis of great artistic value is broken, while the pots which were built into walls for better acoustics are now missing. All of this was done by treasure hunters (Forski, 2001, 45).”

The big forest has also been cut down. However, there is a traditional story that says that all of those who did that, who used the trees for firewood, or in any other way damaged the forest, eventually suffered misfortune. Our respondent, even though he remembers his childhood when the rituals connected with religion, the Christian one and the one related to the folk tradition, were performed, emphasizes the change in the function of the monastery, the spring, and the surroundings:

“Today young people go up there to make barbecue. The purpose of the celebration has changed today. It has changed completely. It is more for young

people to gather, to go up there to make barbecue. A tournament in baking banitsa is held up there. They make decisions on the best banitsa. Which brandy is the best. It has become something of a tourist propaganda.”

The third interviewee (Zoran Spasić, director of Electro Distribution Babušnica, an architect), a participant in the renovation of the monastery and the area around the spring, says that the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Niš has prohibited the disturbance of the natural configuration of the spring for the sake of authenticity, but also emphasizes a weakening need of the people to preserve and nurture their cultural goods. He offers an interesting characterization of the believers in this region in the words of Mihajlo Obrenović: “Serbs are believers by duty.” He is critical of the population in the surrounding villages: “Now, this wasn’t torn down by the communists, nor by anybody else, but by the villagers who simply didn’t want to take care of the place. Nobody banned them from anything.” This respondent also speaks of the “carnival” approach to cult places.

“It’s more of a tourism thing nowadays, that is, people go to have lunch there. As an excursion site. For example, on St. Panteleimon’s Day, it being in August, a lot of people are on vacation. It gets really crowded. Last year it was impossible to go up there by car. The police had to stop the traffic all the way down here, so that they wouldn’t go that way. The program, cultural-artistic associations. And then you go on the next day: stone put, rope pulling.”

Nobody takes care of the area surrounding the cult place and the monastery, according to our respondents, even though there is a Committee for the renovation of the monastery. Some attempts have been made to bring in a monk who would perform such tasks, but the inhabitants of the villages did not want to provide a house for the monk to live in, regardless of the fact that there are many empty houses in the area.

This region is also the home of the cult of other springs for which people claim to possess healing properties as well (Ljuberađa, Zvonačka Banja, Vava), but the visits have died away, along with the memory of the possible healing power. However, there are still myths of the cases of miraculous healings: “a girl, a boy...” This spring of healing – holy water is a place visited by the people in this region precisely because of its closeness to the Orthodox monastery. One could pose a question whether that would still be the case if the spring was an independent holy entity.

The other set of cult places which we have found as characteristic of this region, as well as Serbia in general, is a cross and an oak – a votive cross and a memorial tree (myrrh). Although such crosses are specific for eastern Serbia, our interviewees confirm that the Babušnica region also had a developed practice of raising cult crosses which were used as cult places during the times of village processions and saints’ days (Fig. 3). Let us take the example of the cult cross in the village of Aleksandrovac. One of our respondents points out a very important factor which influenced a break in the continuity of these cult places, the fact that a lot of the villages began celebrating state holidays (November 29, May 1) instead of the village saint’s day after World War II. This is the very reason why there was no need for those crosses anymore. By the way, this practice used to be performed in such a way which included butchering shared cattle and gathering the families for a meal together... Since there were no priests in each of the villages, hosts from the villages used to perform the ritual of incensing the gathered. What our interviewees emphasize as characteristic of Aleksandrovac is great poverty, which forced the people to bring around what they had at home, cheese, bread, brandy. They were not always in the position to prepare lamb or some other roast meat which was needed. The holidays at which the cross was visited were St. George’s Day, St. Paraskeva, St. Panteleimon, St. Elijah.

The cross is a Christian symbol, in Serbia often a subject of syncretism and connection with the folk religion, the cult of nature – trees and stones. The crosses that can be found in eastern Serbia date back to the period between the 17th and 19th century (Krstanović i Radonjić-Živkov 2006, 164) while the cross which serves as an example of a cult place in this text was erected in 1902, the information carved in the cross itself (Fig. 4). Apart from the year of its erection, also carved are the names of the donator families. However, our interviewees tell us that the members of the families whose names are carved in the cross do not live in the village anymore, they have either moved out or vanished demographically. The peculiarity of the cross in the village of Aleksandrovac is the still visible stones: “Every house had its own stone around the cross”, which symbolized the families in the village (Fig. 5). The village of Aleksandrovac is a Serbian Orthodox village, there are no members of other ethnic groups. The cross and the memorial are taken care of by the family whose household is located nearby, there is no organized maintenance, nor any kind of “infrastructure” (Fig. 6). It has almost completely lost its function today, but the taboo still exists. This places are not to be disturbed, since it is believed that the person who does such a thing will encounter misfortune later on in life.

The oak is a holy tree of the Serbian people and this is evinced in its presence in the collective consciousness of the population of the Babušnica region. “Cult places are also all those places that the people call “myrrh” (memorial). It is usually a tree, most often an oak. It should not be disturbed. However, such blasphemy occurred in Lužnica as well” (Форски 2001, 23). Myrrh is a tabooed tree, in Serbia in general as well as in the Babušnica region.

“It’s like a village memorial. The names of the families who funded the erection of the cross are inscribed. I don’t know anything that is connected with religion. The oaks around the cross are linked to religion. Nobody likes to cut it or touch it. Anyway, there were 5-6 of them but they were cut down when the school was built. They were measured and sold as firewood. There is a belief that says that something bad will happen to the person who touches them. It exists still. The people believe. Nobody likes to touch it.”

What can be concluded after the analysis is that the cult places have died away in accordance with the high level of atheization in the Babušnica region during the period of socialism, as well as in line with the low rate of religious practice today, in spite of certain elements of revitalization of religiosity in the period of transition.

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Fig. 1. The Spring – “Holy Water” and the Saint Paraskeva Monastery



Fig. 2. The “Holy Water” Spring



Fig. 3. The cross and oak – a memorial on the territory of Aleksandrovac



Fig. 4. The cross up close with the memorial on it



Fig. 5. The stones which surround the cross, symbols of the village families



Fig. 6. Overgrown paths leading to the village shrines

Suzana Marković Krstić
Aleksandra Kostić

**ZAPIS (THE CROSS) IN THE BORDER AREA OF CRNA TRAVA:
A SYMBIOSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL LIVES OF THE
VILLAGE OF MLAČIŠTE***

INTRODUCTION

“The ‘zapis’ had a specific meaning in those villages where there were no churches. Usually, a cross (often a stone one) was set next to the ‘zapis’, and the entire area was fenced. The fenced space was regarded as a local sanctity.”

Zapis, Slavic mythology, 2001,189

In this paper, a sociological and psychological perspective was used to show a religious aspect of the celebration of the village slava of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and the gathering of the locals and the guests around the Zapis (the Cross, Virgin Mary, Prayer), a sacred place of the village of Mlačište in the “iconic birch grove”, on the plateau called Ivanovica. Even though the exact age of this iconic place of worship cannot be determined today, it is assumed that it is as old as the oldest settlement of the village of Mlačište, which was founded after the Great Serb Migration after 1700.

The village of Mlačište is one of the 25 village settlements in the Municipality of Crna Trava (it is located 9.9 kilometres from the centre of the Municipality), which has been populated and depopulated multiple times throughout history, depending on the historical, economic and other circumstances. Mlačište is a mountainous village in the form of a dispersed settlement and it has hamlets of Kukulinci, Paunovci, Miljkovci, Mlačiške Mehane and Kamenjari, and several families, where each of them makes a mahala within the hamlet. Kukulinci originated from Glavanovac (Bulgaria), Paunovci from Kopaonik, and Miljkovci from the surroundings of Prokuplje. Mlačiške Mehane was created around 1850, on the plateau in the foothills of Jerič, including the former road which was used by migrant workers from Bosilegrad, Krajište, Vlasina and Crna Trava who traveled looking for work. Later, some families from the “old” Mlačište migrated there. Mlačište is located on the western, mild slopes of Čemernik, facing the Grdelička Gorge, at an altitude of 1,100 – 1,300 metres, bordered by the Golema, Rakicka and Bajinska (Rupska) rivers.¹ It is assumed that the village was named after ‘*mlačila*’ (mlačiti – eng. to cool)², places where the ores, which were excavated in the area of Čemernik, were processed (cooled).

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¹ More information on the village of Mlačište, its history, origin of population and the process of decay of Mlačište, can be found in the text by Radosav Stojanović on Wikipedia (<http://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Млачиште>).

² The fact that there was an extraction and processing (cooling) of ores on this “iron terrain” is also confirmed by Felix Kanitz (2007, 274-275).

The population was engaged in agriculture and livestock breeding until the end of the 19th century, and later they started to work abroad, when the craftsmen (bricklayers) went in search for work all across Serbia and Bulgaria – up until the Serbian-Bulgarian War from 1912 to 1913 (Stojković 2013, 51). Since olden times, the territory of the village was overgrown by beech forest with numerous springs of healthy water, but, from the middle of the 1970s, birch trees started to be planted. According to the latest census (2011), the population of the village is made of 20 people (13 women and 7 men) with the average age of 64.2 years (SORS 2012), while the census of 1948 shows that there were 474 residents in the village (SORS 2004). Depopulation and aging, due to insufficient newborns and intensive migrations, represent basic features of the village of Mlačište from the mid-20th century till today.

The Zapis (the Cross) was made some 80 years ago from carved stone in the form of a four-angled monument of equal sides (2 metres high), with a cross inside a halo on the top, carved in sandstone. Before that, a wooden cross and then a stone cross within a halo were embedded within a cavity of a large beech tree, but after the tree decayed, the cross was set onto a stone foundation. “An equal-armed cross made of stone, encircled by a stone, of unknown age and origin, was embedded within a beech tree, and when the beech tree burned out, a foundation made of stone was built and the cross was transferred onto it. The following words were carved into the circle-shaped stone: VAZNESENIJE (ASCENSION) and USPENIJE (ASSUMPTION). The first rebuilding of the foundation was done in 1935 by Milenko Rakić and Saltirko Milosavljević. The latest rebuilding of the foundation was done after the Second World War” (Stojković 2013, 83).

At this iconic place (which is a votive place of the village slava), during the religious holidays of the Feast of the Ascension (29th of May) and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (28th August), certain religious services are done and broad folk gatherings and merriments are organised, and local people and guests decorate the Zapis with flowers and light candles (for the dead and for the living). The Zapis is an iconic place in the village, where there is either a tree, a stone column or just a cross, beside which prayers are performed during the votive days (*zavetni dani*), therefore, it is also called *‘zavetina’* (*kermesse*) (Bojić, 2009, 97). However, local people light candles at the Zapis even on secular days (outside religious holidays, during everyday life and work); therefore, it takes, more and more, the role of a church.

“In ethnological science, it is well known that “votive crosses”, whether they were made of wood or stone, were built in the centre of the village, on the outskirts, along the boundary, or on other adjoining entities such as roads, on the lands of votive people and families and alike. They were built in order to protect the community, people, crops and livestock from sickness, pestilence and natural disasters. In the folk culture of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, a similar purpose was ascribed to a *zapis*, that is, a cross was carved (“inscribed”) into a tree bark or an icon was put onto a tree. The above-mentioned purpose of a cross in folk heritage undoubtedly indicates the segmentation of the social space of the community. Places which are marked by a cross were regarded as sacred and, as such, they were singled out from their environment, either physically, by a fence, or by imposing certain rules of conduct (Bojanin 2008, 325-326).”

Besides the fact that it has a significant role in the religious life of the village community, this iconic place performs an important function socially, that is, it affects the social and moral behaviour of people (in regard to the way an individual behaves towards the social community, towards other people and towards himse-

lf/herself). Social dimension of the celebration of the village slava around the Zapis (the Cross) in Mlačišće is particularly emphasised, considering that, even though the village has around twenty elderly residents, during the celebration of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, more than ninety visitors gather and they actively participate in the prayer rituals, but also in a shared meal, socialisation and enjoyment. Additionally, the desire to return to hometown in order to celebrate the votive mass for Saint Mary is so strong that it often eliminates all inconveniences suffered due to a long and exhausting journey (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Bor), bad traffic communication, but also state borders (Chicago). In this view, a satisfied spiritual and emotional need of those people, regarding the opportunity to participate in a traditional church festivity of the village, at the same time contributes to the preservation of religious, national and cultural identity of the Serbian people, regardless of the side of the Serbian state border he or she comes from.

ZAPIS (THE CROSS) AS A MATERIAL SYMBOL OF THE SACRED (ICONIC) SITE IN MLAČIŠĆE

“A *zapis* is an iconic place with a sanctified tree or a stone column, or, rather, a cross where prayers (oratories) are held on votive days. That is the name of an object on an iconic place, a tree or a stone, which has a mark of a cross ‘inscribed’ (cut or carved) into it; a mark which has replaced the role of an idol, a representative of divinity.”

Serbian Mythological Dictionary, 1970, 143)

The iconic place in the village of Mlačišće has several names: Zapis, the Cross, Virgin Mary and Prayer. The name of an iconic place indicates its special role for prayers where people gather (the locals and guests) in large numbers during the village slava of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (28th August) and, in a much smaller number, during the celebration of the Ascension (29th May). In Mlačišće, a *zapis* is located within the territory of the village, at Ivanovica, a mild hilly plateau surrounded by a birch forest. It is situated at the hill, in the center of the main hamlets (mahalas) of Mlačišće, which are almost properly lined up around the plateau and the Zapis (the Cross); therefore, on the one side, there are Paunovci and Kukulinci and on the other side there is Miljkovci. Near this votive place, there was a small hamlet of the Kostić family, consisting of several houses. At the beginning of the 20th century, they moved to Mlačiške Mejane (Mejane), the newest hamlet in the village (it is located on the crossroads of roads which led from Crna Trava, Vlasina and Krajište towards Predejane and a train station). The place where the houses of the Kostić family were situated soon became desolated and turned into meadows.

The village of Mlačišće does not have a church, and the closest church is located in the place called Ruplje (7 kilometres from Mlačišće). Considering the fact that, in the past (the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century), Mlačišće was officially registered as a mahala of the village of Ruplje, it can be said that the church of Mlačišće is in Ruplje (dedicated to Saint Apostle Peter), where a folk gathering used to be organised on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (12th July). The cemetery of the village is in Mlačiške Mejane, used by Mlačišće and the village Bajinci which was officially registered as a hamlet of Mlačišće until recently.

The population of the village of Mlačišće is of Serbian nationality, as well as the visitors of the iconic site. The iconic site is taken care of by the population of the

village, and, during summer, people who live in towns across Serbia, but also those who live abroad, and have originated from Mlačište, are specially engaged in that process. The iconic place can be reached by a narrow dirt road, which is overgrown with grass and bushes, and tends to be slippery during spring rains, so it is harder or even impossible to get there by car. Besides this road, there are a few paths which lead from every hamlet to the Zapis, but also from the Zapis to the village cemetery (two kilometres away).

Next to the iconic place, the stone zapis, there is a small wooden table onto which the host of the slava (*kolačar*) puts an icon of the Virgin Mary (Fig. 1). Somewhat lower, next to the young beech tree, there is a set table where the priest performs the ritual. On a small plain, under the Zapis, there are four large tables with benches on both sides, made of beech, birch and fir trees, where meals are served after the service. There used to be a few smaller bushes next to the zapis, but around thirty years ago, the entire area overgrew with birch forest, which surrounds it, thus creating an extraordinary ambient (Fig. 2). The iconic place does not have a proper infrastructure (there is no electricity, and during the village slava the locals use electric generators; the water supply system does not exist also). However, near the Zapis, there are a few springs which used to supply Mlačište with fresh drinking water, until the construction of the water supply system in the village in the 1970s. The object of the iconic place (the Cross) belongs to the Eparchy of Niš of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

When it comes to a more detailed description of the appearance and the content of the iconic place – the Zapis (the Cross), we cite the words by Radosav Stojanović (64), an acknowledged literate, journalist and lexicographer (Fig. 3), originating from Mlačište, who was an inexhaustible source and a true treasury of information about the Zapis, but not about the village, its people and customs:

“Zapis is built of a strong carved stone, in the form of four-angled monument of equal sides, with a cross set within a halo on the top. The cross within the halo is carved in sandstone (as well as a few monuments in the cemetery of Mlačište), and, it has an illegible inscription in the Old Church Slavic language. The Zapis has a stone parapet, which holds a two-metre-high pedestal, which then holds a four-sided dome in the form of a pyramid with a built-in cross within a halo. From the parapet upwards, the pedestal is gradually narrowed by 10 centimetres until it reaches the four-sided dome which holds the cross. It is built of the strongest stone by using a cement mortar, some eighty years ago. Before that, a stone cross within a halo was embedded into a cavity of a large beech tree, but, when it fell due to old age and bad weather, the cross received its small stone monument. Before the stone cross in the beech tree (which was the middle one out of three), a wooden cross was used. Therefore, it is hard to determine the age of this iconic place. Most certainly, it is as old as the oldest settlement of the village of Mlačište, sometime after 1700, i.e. after the Great Serb Migration, led by Arsenije Čarnojević. I claim this due to the fact that the family tree of the nearby mahala Miljkovci dates back to 1700, when the first settler here was Jona from the Carpathian Mountains. On the west side of the stone zapis there are two square recesses, in two levels, with dimensions of 60x60 cm, around twelve centimetres deep, which are used for lit candles. The upper niche is used for lighting candles for the living; the lower is for the dead. About ten centimetres under the crown of a four-sided concrete dome, there is a steel wire which encircles the zapis, and it is used for holding flowers which decorate the zapis on different occasions. Even during other periods than religious holidays of the Ascension and the Assumption, when the rituals are performed and wide folk gatherings and mer-

riments are organised, the local people decorate the zapis with flowers and they light candles. Ever since it was built, the zapis has taken the role of the church which is located in the village of Ruplje. It is closed most of the time, and liturgies are not performed in it. Therefore, the local people use various occasions during the year to light candles at the zapis.”

The stone zapis (the Cross) in Mlačišće, which is set on a plateau, on a mild elevation, between the main hamlets and main roads, represents an entire iconic (sacred) area in the birch grove. Due to its size, appearance, location and surroundings, the Cross shows that, not only during holidays but also during secular days, its role is clearly visible. It also refers, among other things, to the prominence of the affiliation of the village to Christianity, the respect for votive holidays and celebrations, a mutual responsibility of the entire village in keeping the tradition of festivities, in a material and in a spiritual way, a positive attitude towards religion, but also an integrating and motivating power of faith in the process of the preservation of tradition and customs.

THE ICONIC PLACE AS AN EMBLEM OF RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE VILLAGE

The Zapis (the Cross) in Mlačišće has a particularly important role during religious celebrations, the celebration of the village slava of the Assumption of Mary³ and the Feast of the Ascension⁴. Mlačišće, like every village in Serbia, has a day when it celebrates a votive day – the village slava by its Zapis. In the past, the same as in some Serbian villages today, this was done between Easter and the Fast of Peter and Paul (the first week after Pentecost), when processions were organised and crosses were carried. The Zapis was considered a local sanctity and it served as a kind of original shrine where cult actions, rituals and rites were performed.

“It would be consecrated on one of the holidays of the Church calendar, which was then celebrated as a votive holiday, or 'obetina', that is, the village slava, primarily with the aim of protecting the village and crops from meteorological disasters (that is why votive holidays were mostly celebrated during spring and summer), and also because of harvests and the benefits of the livestock, etc. (Tolstoj and Radenković 2001, 189).”

Votive holidays or celebrations honouring a saint, a protector of the village, are very significant for the village community. Namely, the very word “zavetina” (kermesse), originates from the period when the village vowed to celebrate and respect the saint who saved its people from certain misfortunes (sickness, hail clouds, meteorological disasters and alike). It is also named: procession, ‘preslava’, God worshipping, God's doing, cross bearers, prayer.

The celebration started with the gathering of people in the area around the zapis, and then people in a procession with a priest walked around the zapis; prayers

³ The Church and the believers celebrate the Assumption of the Virgin Mary as an important, holy day of obligation and, on this day, people do not do anything but go to the temple and attend the service to God. The Virgin Mary helped the apostles by giving them advice and wisdom. After her death, she came back to life and she assumed into Heaven (the Assumption). She is a patron of women in labour, who pray to her for help in times of trouble.

⁴ The Feast of the Ascension, the Ascension of God, is celebrated 40 days after Easter Day. There are two days of celebration and they are both on a Thursday: Great (Grand) Ascension is before Pentecost, and Small Ascension is after Pentecost. On the Ascension Day, it was customary to slaughter a lamb as a religious offering to a saint, offered by stockbreeders and farmers. 'Spasovnice' are shared village feasts, which are organised at the top of a hill, accompanied by a folk festivity (Bojić 2009, 250).

were read and the cross was inscribed into a place where it was standing since olden times, and, often, a lamb was sacrificed under the zapis. The sacrifice was also offered by cutting the slava bread, which was divided among all participants. When the zapis (the tree) is walked around three times, it is mandatory to pour wine over it, and, in some places, it is pierced with an auger. The inscribed cross is on the west side of the zapis; therefore, when someone stands in front of it, he/she can look towards the east, the same as towards the altar inside a church. After the zapis (the tree) was gifted with flowers and fruitage, the procession of the slava walked around the village, and the same ritual was repeated on other trees which were believed to be sacred. During the procession, prayers for the protection of the village from sicknesses, misfortunes and meteorological disasters were said, and after that, the procession returned to the village where the celebration was continued. The meal had to be served at the zapis, but before eating, people lit candles for the living and for the dead. For the shared meal next to the zapis, people slaughtered a lamb which belonged to the whole village, and it represented an offering. During these rituals, it is an old custom that all hosts break the ritual bread together next to the zapis. In some places, the priest pronounced the names of all living heads of families during the ritual.⁵

In Mlačište, the celebration of the Feast of the Ascension and the Assumption (the Assumption of the Virgin Mary) next to the Zapis, has specific characteristics, considering the fact that nowadays, as well as during the period between the two World Wars and after the Second World War, it does not include carrying a cross across the fields (the processions – religious walks), but it only entails a celebration around the stone zapis (the Cross). Emilija Miltojević (84), who lived in Mlačište until 1957 (she has been living in Niš since 1962), speaks about the celebration of village slavas during the period between the two World Wars. She stresses that the celebration of the Virgin Mary gradually takes precedence over the Feast of the Ascension:

“There were no processions across the fields in the village, either for the Ascension or the Assumption. The celebration was only done next to the Cross. The host of the slava prepared a meal with two lambs, a stew and the “slava bread”. Other women from the village brought pitta and their own slava bread to Ivanovica. There were no tables back then, and everything was put onto a field, forming a long line. Then, men sat on the one side, and women served food from the other side, each one served what she had brought herself. The priest cut everyone’s slava bread, and then everyone gave money for the lambs. The stew was served to all. Then, people started to dance a kolo (Slavic folk dance) to brass music. There were even two brass bands and other musicians from Prekodolac. At night, when it was time to go home, each woman took some stew which was served around the Cross and put it into her own earthenware. After the War, there were no more such celebrations. The celebration of the Assumption of Mary was reestablished when a woman who returned from the US, started to celebrate it and then all others joined; now, the priest also participates.”

The oldest villager, Zora Spasić (90), who was born in the hamlet of Paunovci, and was married in the hamlet of Kukulinci, confirmed that there were no processions throughout the village or the village territory. She gives special significance to a shared meal around the Cross, after which there is a celebration accompanied with music and folk dances.

⁵ More information on this topic can be read in Kulišić, Petrović and Pantelić, 1970, 141 and 198 and on the website <http://www.glassrbije.org/srbija/%C4%8Dlanak/verovanje-u-sveto-drvo-zapis>.

“We used to bring a slava bread, pitta and brandy, whatever we had. The host slaughtered a lamb, and made a stew in a kettle. Around 9 or 10 o’clock he went to the Cross, and the others came when they could, but it had to be until 12 o’clock. The priest was also there. We all cut the slava bread together; then, we sat on the ground, crossed our legs and had lunch. We all took some stew to bring home for dinner. Oh, there were many young people, God knew how many. They were dressed in folk costumes and they danced a kolo, everybody was merry. Some young people stayed up late, they got drunk...”

The text by Srba Stojković (2013, 83-86) testifies about the way of celebration, about modifications which occurred as time passed, about the break with the tradition of mutual cutting of the slava bread and the ritual participation of priests, as well as the rebirth of customs at the beginning of the 21st century:

“The host of the slava volunteered himself. The task of the host was to prepare the slava bread, some food and to provide music. Each of the other locals brought his/her own slava bread and food of his/her own choice: pitta, cheese, brandy and other. The host sat with the guests he had invited at the table (which was brought from home) next to the very Cross, and the others sat on an adjoining field, thus forming a line of several metres. On the pedestal of the Cross, on the frontal, i.e. western side, two recesses (as wide as the pedestal), in two levels, were made during construction; they are filled with sand and they serve as candle holders; the upper is for the living, the lower is for the dead. The Cross is a place of sanctity for Mlačišće and the villagers respect it the same as the church. Fire was lit next to the centennial beech tree, the Cross was decorated with flowers, candles were lit for the living and for the dead, and people danced a kolo on the small plain under the very Cross. In the old times, the host of the slava cooked lamb’s drob (minced lamb’s offal wrapped in caul) on fire, under the beech tree, and all those who were present could taste it. As the number of villagers lowered, this way of celebration stopped around the end of the 1970s.

The restoration of the traditional cutting of the slava bread started in 2003, on the initiative of Stanica Cana Zlatković-Pakić from Belgrade. The field around the Cross was mowed, thorny shrubs were cut, and fallen branches were moved. Joca, Zoran, Račko, Goran and Pakić made benches and two tables from birch beams, and then each host of the slava added something. More tables and benches were made, the pedestal for the icon and the table for the slava bread were also made; everything was repainted and the field around the Cross was extended. In the beginning, there were around ten people present, but more and more people came each subsequent year. In 2007, there were more than 90 people. That year, when the host of the slava was Jovica Stojković along with his wife Radmila, the cutting of the slava bread was done by the priest Sava Momčilović from the church of Predejane. This was the first time after 65 years that a priest came to the slava in Mlačišće.”

During the celebration of the village slavas in Mlačišće, the accent was put on the gathering at the iconic place (“at the Cross”), lighting candles for the dead and the living members of the village community, cutting the slava bread with the priest’s blessing, the shared meal and socialising. Therefore, it can be said that there is a dominance of the social dimension of the celebration at the iconic place (socialising, a reminiscence of the ancestors and their way of life, the preservation and development of cultural identity); then, there is the religious dimension (lighting candles for the living and for the dead, the ritual of the cutting of the slava bread) and the emotional dimension (the feeling of closeness among the participants of the ritual,

joy and happiness due to the comeback to hometown, pleasure and inspiration, spirituality). The reasons why the processions are not a segmental part of the celebration of the village *slava* in Mlačišće, even after its restoration, can be found in the changes which occurred in agricultural activities. The processions are sacrificial offerings for vegetation, and then for the livestock, and they are mostly of agricultural character (they affect the yield of crops, they shelter them from meteorological disasters). Since the local villagers of Mlačišće engage in neither an intensive nor, since the 1990s, an extensive agricultural production, their orientation towards the religious ritual around the Cross (Prayer) can be understood. The religious ritual marks a prayer for the dead, as well as a spiritual bond and connection with them/the ancestors (lighting candles for the dead), but, at the same time, it presents a prayer for a happy and blessed life of the descendants (lighting candles for the living). The main service for the holiday of the Virgin Mary, which is celebrated around the Cross, is an important spiritual support for all members of the village community, regardless of their socio-economical status, age and gender. Therefore, it is a gathering place for the old and the young, during votive holidays and *slavas*, but also during other days when they feel the need to gather, or when some large misfortunes occur, which threaten individuals and their family members.

After many changes in the celebrations at the iconic place in Mlačišće (starting from mutual celebration around the cross within a beech tree, then, around the cross on a stone pedestal, and later, on a rebuilt pedestal, continuing with the prohibition of the celebration, to the reestablishment of the celebration and the participation of a priest in the ritual of the cutting of the *slava* bread), a period of “stabilisation” and continuity of celebration has occurred, which implies a participation of a priest and more people in the ritual.

What does it look like to celebrate around the Cross in the first and the second decade of the 21st century? A few days before the holiday, the host of the *slava* makes preparations around the iconic place for the ritual (mowing of grass, cleaning and painting wooden tables and benches, preparing the niches for lit candles) (Fig. 4). On the morning of 28th August, the host of the *slava* and his family members go to the iconic place in order to decorate it with flowers and to light the candles for the dead (in the lower niche for candles) and for the living (in the upper niche); he puts aside more candles for those who will arrive later and sets the icon of the Virgin Mary onto a small wooden stand next to the Cross (Fig. 5). A larger number of locals arrive around noon (visitors of the iconic place, who decorate the Cross with flowers and light candles for the dead and for the living) accompanied by a priest, so they perform the ritual of the cutting of the *slava* bread (a large ritual cake made of flour) with the host. The bread is turned three times from left to right, and then they break it in two halves and pour red wine over it. One half is given to the priest (or the host of the *slava*, if the priest is not there), and the other half is given to the person who will be the host of the *slava* (*kolačar*) the following year (Fig. 6). Later, all other people who are present also receive a piece of the *slava* bread. Even though “*zavetina*” is a shared custom of the village, with the participation of all homes of the village, after the service all visitors/locals of the village break their own *slava* breads with the priest or among themselves, next to the *zapis* (Fig. 7). The breaking of the “family *slava* bread” can also indicate a genealogical character of the *slava*, as well as the sitting order during the shared meal around the *zapis*. Namely, each extended family usually occupies one “*sofra*” (dining table), that is, a large table next to the *zapis*.

Radosav Stojanović, who was the host of the *slava* of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in 2009, sees and describes the celebration around the Cross in this way:

“The Cross is a votive place, but also a place for praying, and that is why people call it Prayer. Twice a year, a large number of people come here for praying to God for help, to protect them, because they have a spiritual need, in the same manner in which they go to church. There used to be a celebration of the Ascension in Mlačišće, when people gathered around the Zapis, and the host of the slava baked slava bread, slaughtered a lamb at home and brought lunch. However, over time the accent was put on the Assumption, so the Feast of the Ascension was put into the background. There were no priests before, up until 28th August 2007, when a priest cut the slava bread here, after many years. The people of Crna Trava are not used to a priest. However, our fellow-villager (as the host of the slava) whose father moved to Vojvodina after the War invited a priest again.

A few days before the celebration of the slava, the host comes to set up, to clean and to tidy up the iconic place (we were painting tables and benches). The host invites his own guests, from other towns also, and it is his duty to prepare the lamb dish and the slava bread which is cut there, as well as to provide music. If there is no priest, older men know how to do that really well. The basic thing for the host and his wife is to arrive to the site in the morning, to light candles and the wife should decorate the Cross with flowers (from “gradina”- garden). The host puts the icon of the Virgin Mary onto a small table next to the Cross (in a way, he “inherits” the icon, but this tradition is more recent; our ancestors did not have this practice) and, after that, he and his wife go home. As each person arrives, he/she lights a candle and decorates the Cross with the flowers he has brought. Those who find it important come even earlier. The host and his family come back to the iconic place at noon. In 2007, the host of the slava (who lives in Vojvodina) bought and served everything as they do in a tavern, so no one would worry about anything. He thought that he would help his fellow-countrymen. However, considering the fact that the locals had always brought something from their homes, because, in some way, they felt a spiritual obligation, they brought their own offerings from home. They felt that it was their slava, not that they went to someone else’s slava. But, he wanted to prepare everything himself. The priest came for the first time after many years, performed his duties quickly and left. The following year (2008), we broke the slava bread without the priest and I had taken over the duties of the slava. Then, we went to Predejane and we invited the priest to come and stay with us that day. In 2009, priest Sava did his part of the job – the church ritual; he also cut the host’s slava bread, and then he did the same for all the families which had brought their slava breads.

As each person arrives, he/she lights a candle, kisses the icon (and if he/she wants, gives a voluntary contribution for the priest and for the slava) and then comes to the priest (Fig. 8). The priest stays for the celebration of the slava, which is very good for the people. After the slava bread is cut, the tables are set for a shared lunch (consisting of food which has been prepared by the host – the lamb and the other, as well as the offerings which have been brought by the locals) (Image 10), and, after that, folk festivity starts together with some musicians and brass bands (Fig. 11).

As far as the structure of the visitors of the iconic place is concerned, it is important to mention that there are older (Fig. 9) and younger people, as well as children. Sometimes, there are over ninety visitors (Fig. 12 and Fig. 13). Most of them live outside Mlačišće. Those are people who live and work all over Serbia, spread across the cities of Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Bor), but also, across the world (USA, France). There are professors, philologists, engineers, doctors, journalists, executives, teachers, farmers, and pensioners among them. They come back to their hometown during summer, and they always stay “until the Assumption”. Peo-

ple from neighbouring villages also come, but they do not bring food, they only join the celebration. People also come to Ivanovica in order to sell their agricultural products (fruit and vegetables), as well as, to sell livestock (piglets, lambs). An area which is 10 to 20 metres from the Cross is filled with stands where different products are sold, and livestock is tied to nearby trees.

The celebration of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Mlačište gradually became some kind of a pilgrimage for all those who originate from this area, who moved out of it long time ago, but they are now coming back to it again, giving much importance to religious customs and traditional spiritual values. They visit the iconic place, which guards the memory of the ancestors and represents their local divinity and protector, because it fulfills and empowers them, both spiritually and physically. They speak to It through prayers, with the wishes for It to help them preserve the health of their children and themselves, to protect them from sickness and misfortunes, as well as to help them achieve their goals. The journey towards their hometown makes them closer to a primordial Christian faith and tradition, and the visit to the iconic place deepens and strengthens religious and human feelings.

CONCLUSION

The ways of the celebration of the Assumption (28th August), the slava of the village of Mlačište in the Municipality of Crna Trava, went through different transformations over a period of time. Sometimes, those changes were of formal nature, and sometimes content-related. Sometimes, the introduction of new contents results in the change of the form of the ritual, in accordance with the participants' new experiences, needs and concepts. Despite all this, a continuity of the celebration of the village slava has been established, and the essential religious, social and emotional functions of the ritual gathering of people at the iconic place in Mlačište have been preserved. Starting with the concept of a religious ritual, gathered villagers and their guests, as well as former residents of Mlačište who live in other cities or countries can participate in different forms of unification with others, thus combining tradition and modernity. The iconic place, the Cross, offers them a space for sharing mutual values and memories, a unique exchange of individual experiences and accumulated emotions, for catharsis. *Zapis* is a place for nurturing and "embodying" not just religious, but also universal human norms.

The residents of Mlačište were able to recognise a true way in which the celebration of the Assumption around the Cross could unite all past and present experiences, individually and collectively, and the levels of social exchange and social expectations. The tendency to find the most suitable form of celebration, a form which suits residents' current conditions, beliefs and needs, speaks about their careful thinking and flexibility. It is these features that can be responsible for the established continuity of the celebration of the village slava in Mlačište.

A ritual form of the celebration in Mlačište, besides religious, also has an accentuated social and emotional function. Any form of integration with other people, even if it is temporary and ritual, can give an image (or maybe an illusion) of the benefits for the community, protection, safety, stability, good relation management and collective identity. Accordingly, the religious rituals of celebration represent the means for strengthening the connection and closeness with other people, instead of separation and social distance. It is this that brings hope and opens up new perspectives.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. The stone zapis (the Cross) in the village of Mlačište (2013)



Fig. 2. The surrounding of the Zapis in the “birch cult grove“
(a table for the icon, a ritual table and tables with benches) (2014)



Fig. 3. A talk to Radosav Stojanović about the iconic place in Mlačišće (2014)



Fig. 4. Preparation of the iconic place for the ritual (2009)



Fig. 5. The Assumption morning – host's family members have lit the candles (2009)



Fig. 6. Cutting the Slava bread in 2008 (current and next hosts)



Fig. 7. Cutting the Slava bread with the priest (2010)



Fig. 8. Praying to the icon of the Virgin Mary and giving voluntary contribution (2009)



Fig. 9. Stojadin Stojča Kostić from Mlačiške Mehane at the iconic place with offerings (2008)



Fig. 10. A shared lunch around the Cross (2009)



Fig. 11. A national kolo beside the Cross (2009)



Fig. 12. Visitors of the Cross at the celebration of Mother of God (1967)



Fig. 13. Visitors of the Cross at the celebration of Mother of God (2007)

Marija Stanković
Dušan Stamenković

THE REMNANTS OF THE CHURCH OF ST PETKA IN KALIFER (SURDULICA)*

ON CULT PLACES

The term *cult* has become a widely used term which frequently denotes a group or belonging to a particular group based on a system of religious veneration and devotion directed towards a particular figure or object. Sometimes the term is related to fear or a feeling of dislike, whereas there is a general conviction that these groups are opposed to the dominant religion, beliefs or culture (Richardson 1993, 348). A similar attitude directed towards alternative religious groups can be found in Serbia and the Balkans (Stajić & Sinani 2011). On the other hand, there are approaches which treat such groups as being legitimate forms of expressing one's religious belonging (Abanes 1997, 13). The very term *cult place*, crucial for this study, need not be related to alternative religious groups – it can be linked to at least partially alternative or modified religious practice within a dominant religion. Perhaps the best example for this would be the notion of *cults of saints*, a part of Christian religious practice that developed through centuries together with the spreading of Christianity. According to Peter Brown (1981) and Thomas Head (1990), cults of saints have had a great impact on the expansion of Christian thought in Europe and the whole phenomenon is so widespread that it is sometimes taken for granted. Although these authors primarily discuss and refer to the Catholic practice, we can easily apply such a claim to Orthodoxy as well. In the publication *Belief Narrative Genres* (Karanović & de Blécourt 2012) we find a number of papers related to cults of saints and their links to various natural entities and phenomena, as well as artefacts in different branches of Christianity. In one of these papers, Jasmina Jokić discusses patron saints of miracle springs (Jokić 2012). Sometimes aspects belonging to cults lead to certain overlaps in religious practices between different religions and cultures (Čolić 2005; Đorđević 2010). In cults of saints we frequently encounter elements and practices transferred from paganism to Christianity. In his study of paganism, Ken Dowden (2000) lists a large set of entities that used to be linked to cult places – these include stones, springs, wells, trees, hills, mountains, lakes, seas, shores, islands, caves, meadows, groves, gardens, statues, temples, cemeteries, graves, shrines, etc. When comparing this list of potential cult places or objects with descriptions of religious processions in Orthodoxy (Todorović 1998, 2005), we can see a number of similarities. Some of these similarities confirm the idea that a number of the items from the previous list came directly from paganism – these elements fused with Christian elements and as such survived through centuries. Another fact that might support such a claim is the fact that cult places are very frequently linked with legends (Krstić 2008). Of course, in the Christian world, the list should be enriched with various churches, chapels, monasteries, relics, and, of course, the cross, the key symbol of

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Christianity. It has played a significant role in spreading Christianity in Serbia since the middle ages (Bojanin 2008). In his attempt to establish a typology of both religious and non-religious cult places of the Balkans, Dejan Krstić (2010) lists the following groups: natural objects (cult trees, cult stones, cult springs), monuments with religious attributes (wooden monuments, stone monuments, metal crosses, brick monuments, concrete monuments, niches), graves and places of death, auxiliary objects for performing a rite (belfries, auxiliary altars, tables, shelters - "venjaci", cemetery chapels, auxiliary rooms for boiling the sacrifice), houses, sacral buildings (Christian sacral buildings, Muslim sacral buildings, Jewish sacral buildings), archaeological remnants (remnants of older churches – "crkvine" or "crkvišta", rooms in an archaeological site, archaeological stone objects), small objects (the scene of a rite, objects for performing a rite, offerings on cult places). Our task here is to give a detailed description of a cult place in South-eastern Serbia, namely the remnants of the church of St Petka (Saint Parascheva of the Balkans) in Kalifer, Masurica.

ON MASURICA

The village of Masurica (Fig. 1) is one of the largest villages in the municipality of Surdulica and it is situated 3 kilometres to the south of the municipal centre. It lies at an altitude of 700 metres in the valley of the Masurička River, bordered on one side by a part of Vranjska ravine and the slopes of Mount Vardenik. The village is considered to have a favourable geographic location – the ravine and the slopes of Mount Vardenik are abundant in forests, whereas the flat part of the area contains numerous fields of fertile soil. Nevertheless, a very small percentage of the population (3%) is engaged in agricultural activities. The village has around 1200 inhabitants, mainly Serbs and Roma. Although it is historically divided into the Upper and the Lower 'mahala', this division is no longer visible. Although we can find traces of various earlier settlements on the hills around the village, modern Masurica was founded by the Arbanasi immigrants in the second half of the eighteenth century and they remained to be the most numerous ethnic group all until the liberation from the Ottoman Empire. Serbs started inhabiting these lands and, in the beginning, they worked as servants to the local Arbanasi and Turks, being subject to constant oppression. During the Ottoman rule, Masurica was an iron smelting centre – the Serbs and the Roma were engaged in the smelting process, while the profits were shared by the Turks and the Arbanasi. After the liberation in 1878, the Arbanasi population scattered towards Preševo, Bujanovac and Kumanovo, so the local Serbs soon became the majority and the Roma became the most dominant minority. Between the two wars, Wallachian cattle breeders would spend their summers in Masurica, due to the high quality of local pastures. In the foothill of Mount Vardenik they made the famous Vardenik cheese. World War II saw the Bulgarian aggression towards these parts and very many households were destroyed. After the war, the ethnic tensions defused. The proximity of the municipal centre caused the village to start integrating into the town of Surdulica and thus convert into a suburb. The village faces the increasing emigration of young people and unemployment, while the Roma population also faces terrible poverty (Stamenković 2002; Stamenković & Stanković 2012; Vlajković 2012).

ON THE CULT OF ST PETKA

Saint Petka or Saint Parascheva of the Balkans was an ascetic female saint born in the town of Epivates in the 11th century. The legend says that, as a child, she heard the following words of God: "Whoever wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8, 34). These words made her

flee from her rich parents to Constantinople and start living an austere life, engaging in different voyages and experiencing visions of the Virgin Mary. Parascheva's cult became confused or united with that of other saints with the same name, as well as with a pre-Christian Slavic deity associated with Friday. This cult is quite active in Serbia as well, where you can find a large number of churches and springs associated with this saint (*Patron Saints Index*; Riasanovsky, Struve & Eekman 1980; Hubbs 1993; Rybakov 2014).

THE REMNANTS OF THE CHURCH OF ST PETKA IN KALIFER – A SHORT HISTORY

The description of the church, its history and the legends and stories related to it were provided by Mr. Najdan Stojanović, the secretary of the Association for Restoration and Reconstruction of the Church of St Petka in Kalifer. The church (Fig. 2) was built in the 16th century on the spot where another church had existed; it had a single nave, an altar and its own land. It is believed that St Petka walked barefoot on this location, so the church was built to honour her. The church is located in Kalifer, near Masurica, and the small village of Kozarnica – there is a road leading to this cult location – it was built in cooperation with the association of Vlasina hydroelectric power stations. However, in the bad weather, one cannot reach the remnants (Ser. *crkvište*) by car – a part of the road is narrow, but paved, whereas another part (the last few kilometres) is not paved. The first significant object close to the cult place is *Sanatorijum*, a special hospital for pulmonary diseases, built in 1924, for the rehabilitation of war patients. The location for the hospital was chosen due to the extremely favourable climate characteristics of this area.

The church was burnt and demolished by the Turks during their long reign and after the liberation of Serbia it got simply neglected. It stopped being considered a religious place – moreover, it started gaining pagan characteristics. For many years people would bring food to the remnants, as a part of a sacrifice ritual. Besides this, they would hang different clothes on the remnant stones or the branches of the trees surrounding the object (Fig. 3), as they believed that hanging a piece of clothing which covers a particular part of one's body would eliminate pain from that part of the body – the object was considered to be able to liberate the body. Clothes hanging was forbidden by the priests, but people still show a tendency of doing it. As long as food is concerned, nowadays it is usually sugar and oil that people bring, which has always been common practice of paying respect to the dead.

In 2004, a decision was made to found the Association for Restoration and Reconstruction of the Church of St Petka in Kalifer and this Association was officially registered – the founder of the Association was Laza Ivanović, who died in 2009. In 2006, the whole spot got archaeologically processed and the Association developed a project to build a new church at this location along the lines of the original project stored in the Cultural Heritage Institute in Niš – this original plan was based on the excavated object details. When the excavation of this object started, the foundations of the church were immediately located (Fig. 4), but in order to start any sort of restoration and reconstruction, one needs to own the land in question. The Association asked the current owner of the land (Serbian National Forest Company "Srbijašume") to transfer the ownership to them, but they still have not received a response. The local authorities have supported the project only unofficially. In the meantime, the Association managed to raise enough money to connect the spot to a spring, build a fountain (Fig. 5), candle shelter (Fig. 6) and buy a marble plaque with a painting of St Petka (Fig. 7).

The church's land was located some 50 metres away from the object – in the Middle Age, the inhabitants of Masurica and the mountain village of Vardenik would gather here during religious holidays and hold various meetings. The idea to build a fountain was initiated by the fact that very many hunters, medicinal herb and mushroom pickers frequent this location. There are many visitors even in those non-festive periods, which speaks in favour of the beauty of this location. They use either the main road or various steep paths (Fig. 9) to get there. As there is a candle shelter there, they usually stop to light a candle there and leave a donation. In 2010, a metal cross with a concrete basis was set up (Fig. 10) and there are four icons besides it. Once an icon gets broken or disappears, it is replaced by a new one. There are no permanent icon lamps there – priests bring them during their rites or some other people bring and sell them on this location.

In the period of larger religious holidays (Good Friday and Easter in particular) and on St Petka's Day (27 October), people from the whole municipality, especially from its lower parts, gather here to pray to St Petka. Since the village Masurica, as well as Surdulica, is inhabited largely by the Serbs (Orthodox Christians), people who visit *crkvište* and who look after it are also mainly the Serbs and, in a smaller number, the Bulgarians. It is the Serbian Orthodox Church which is, as a religious community, responsible for the cult place. There is no traditional keeper; however, the place is visited by the president of the Association almost every day, or by the members themselves when needed. When it comes to the local people, both men and women of all ages, individually or as a family, frequent the cult place to pay respect to the Saint, bring flowers, light candles and pray. Some of them have decided to hold their patron saint celebration feast (Ser. *slava*) on this spot. They have developed a tradition of passing the celebration organization from one family to another, the so-called *kumstvo*. During the event, they are accompanied by a priest delegated by the Serbian Orthodox Church (Fig. 8), and the first part of the celebration, the ritual offering of bloodless sacrifice, takes place on the Remnants. The *slava* cake ritual is performed: the families venerating Saint Petka bring the *slava* cake, adorned with the sign of the cross and other relevant symbols, here instead of taking it to the church. It is on *crkvište* that they attend the service and have their *slava* cake blessed. The attendants, previously sprinkled with holy water, say a prayer, cross themselves and are offered a cross to kiss. The *slava* cake, turned upside down, is cut crosswise by the priest who pours wine over it three times. Together with the host, they rotate the cake, kiss it and break it into four parts while lifting it in the air. One part of it is then given to the next year's host, and in that way *kumstvo* is passed on. The present people are served with food. The money which is raised on these occasions (by donations and candle sales) gets paid into the Association's bank account and is later used to preserve the object. Approximately one hundred people visit the cult place on this day, but not all of them take part in the ceremony.

PERSPECTIVES

The location of the Church of St Petka in Kalifer has a tourist potential, as there is a possibility to build a running track around it – the terrain is very suitable for hiking and jogging. It is assumed that this location ought to be one of the better picnic spots with religious features in the foreseeable future. Besides this, a potential reconstruction of the church would allow the inhabitants of Masurica to have their own religious object – right now, the closest one is the Church of St George in Surdulica.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig. 1. The Landscape of Masurica



Fig. 2. The Remnants of the Church of St Petka at the Time of Excavation



Fig. 3. Clothes left around the object



Fig. 4. The Foundations of the Church of St Petka nowadays



Fig. 5. The Fountain near the Remnants of the Church of St Petka



Fig. 6. The Candle Shelter near the Remnants of the Church of St Petka



Fig. 7. The Marble Plaque of St Petka



Fig. 8. Celebrating St Petka near the Remnants



Fig. 9. A Steep Path leading to the Remnants



Fig. 10. The Metal Cross

Zoran M. Jovanović
Jasmina Petrović

**THE CULT SPOTS IN SERBIA'S BORDER AREA –
EXAMPLES OF THE SEARCH FOR DESIRABILITY
IN MONASTERIES SUKOVO AND RSOVCI NEAR PIROT***

Man's Search for God and salvation, the eternal and earthly life, is known to all civilizations. History has seen countless cases of God being claimed by the “chosen”, while emphasizing their “special relationship” with God, that they, being his favorite, as they saw themselves, tried to use to sacralize themselves and their uniqueness, considering themselves, among other things, a kind of a moving object of the cult, the pilgrimage. These people have always had close by those who confirmed and preserved their status, wishing to obtain even a fraction of that sanctity, as they saw it. Their opponents have mostly longed for the same, believing that with the help of their own “conductor” to God, they will get their own place in the sun, even through violence. In this fight, there were often objects they believed possessed supernatural powers, sanctity, in whose help they trusted. With time, these sacred objects, according to them, have multiplied, including paintings, sacred images, among which were those false or counterfeit, which did not make those who made and affirmed them feel bad before God or before men.

The desire to attain this special status has led in the course of history to the cases of collecting holy objects that belong to others in the form of the so-called, sacred robberies (Jovanović 2009, 298, 299), and then to the formation of cult spots in the locations where they were kept, so that those who possessed them could gain additional power, and thus control “their own” beliefs and the beliefs of the people they had stolen from (often simultaneously thinking to make those who did not possess these objects feel inferior in different ways). Far from being unimportant is the fact that these newly established cult spots brought economic benefits to their owners, that is, the area in which the cult spot is located, owing to those who visit them, anxious to search for God, to attain peace and/or mystical states, salvation and/or enrichment, spiritual and material, their own and, almost as a rule, that of their closest and most beloved ones.

The thirst for uniqueness, and thus, at least indirectly, for economic gain, has made the fine art of the Church, as “the window to heaven”, a maid to different interests. Something similar happened with the cult of religious painting, for example, when iconophilism exceeded the extreme, and when the need to own icons attributed miraculous powers exceeded all norms of exemplary Christian behavior.

The aspiration to own a uniqueness for various non-religious interests was reflected when the cases of Virgin Mary appearing to “the chosen” was affirmed and then in the style of apologetics in a variety of ways proven as authentic, or when the icons of the Mother of God wept, or swam or walked to certain spots which then became places of pilgrimage, that is – in modern terminology – the centers of the so-called religious tourism (Стаменковић 2006; Радисављевић-Ћипаризовић 2013).

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A special group includes the works from the field of Christian sacral art, which were attributed certain specific properties, though not miraculous, with the aim of bringing prosperity to the environment they are set in, of economic nature above all. For scholars of religious life in Serbia the above-mentioned does not seem to be a favorite topic, because it is not given due attention, due to reasons that can only be guessed as in some other instances, all because of possible condemnation and even punishment, retribution (Јовановић и Петровић 2014, 242–244) (as a somewhat taboo question whether a stone or a tree, for example, will at some point in future also become the subject of a cult, even a family cult, obtaining monumental value, and thus the importance for museology and heritology /Јовановић 1994, 135/).

Such examples can include those from Pirot municipality. Probably the most famous being the portrayals of *Bald Jesus*, *Holy Virgin with Wings* and *Dog-Headed saint*, as they have been affirmed in public in recent years, as “rare items that should definitely be seen”. It is possible to recognize diverse aspirations in the cited words, including those that belong to the objectives of the said form of tourism, in which culture gained its place. It will remain an enigma whether or not, in these examples, orthodoxy, that is, the Serbian Orthodox Church, in our case, and tourism in general are connectable, especially if we bear in mind that “tourism contradicts orthodox and dogmas and practices” (comp. Стаменковић 2006, 13; Радисављевић-Ђипаризовић 2008, 427–431).

Either way, regarding *Bald Jesus*, Serbian media have consistently pointed out, even with a vague sense of pride, that this is a portrayal of Jesus painted on the north wall of the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Rsovci near Pirot, painted in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. What (unfortunately) prevails as the primary measure of the work is that it was interpreted as “unique in the Orthodox fresco painting” that is “almost unique in Serbian fresco painting”. For, as emphasized, “Jesus is shown as young and bald”, which means that “only hermits could paint it” (the Sinai), since their creation was not “subject to the episcopal censorship” (Petrović 6. 1. 2009). The promoter of the belief that Serbia is “the only country in the world that has an unusual fresco of Young Jesus with no hair and a divine halo” took care to make things more picturesque. All this has recently received an international approval owing to the special award for the film about the fresco in Jahorina Film Festival (for promoting religious tourism). It happened thanks to the author of the film Dragica Pavlov Krstić, who showed that “in a cave church in Stara Planina a mystery of Bald Jesus has been preserved for centuries, still attracting a lot of attention of experts and believers /.../ as one of the most precious segments of cultural heritage of the region” (TV Pirot Nagrade na „Jahorina festivalu” 30. 9. 2013). Moreover, why is Christ “painted bald in the Church of St. Peter and Paul will remain an eternal mystery”, as published by Telegraf (M. B. 22. 11. 2013).

Concerning the fresco *Holy Virgin with Wings*, however, the media has pointed out that it is located in the cathedral church of the monastery Sukovo, also near Pirot, built at the end of the sixth decade of the nineteenth century on the foundations of an older temple, and painted in 1869, including the mentioned portrayal of *Holy Virgin with Wings*, the work of a priest Vasil or Vasil Radoikov (“Vasil pop Hristov”) from the Bulgarian town of Samokov, that is, according to the other version, the work of two brothers from Samokov, Vasilije and Risto (Татић-Ђурић 1991, 123–140; Милеуснић 1995, 393; comp. Пејовић 2002, 1882). In our case, one of the most important segments of information placed in Serbian media that relates to this portrayal says that this fresco was painted “opposing church canons, which precisely determine how the saint should be painted” (with our observation that this statement in the masculine gender in the Serbian language can not refer to Virgin Mary,

for it is not masculine, which thus demonstrates the power of misused concepts inherent in the Church, as well as in its connoisseurs /Јовановић 2012, 887–903/). To make the above-statement more convincing, emerging – an impression – from the desire to testify at the same time about the familiarity of the author with the secrets of Christian art, it was pointed out that wings “in Christian iconography can be portrayed /.../ only the archangels and St. John the Baptist as the one who announced the coming of Jesus Christ”, which means that it is “very strange that in this monastery Virgin Mary has wings” (M. B. 22. 11. 2013).

On the walls of the monastery church in Sukovo, the hands of the artists who painted Holy Virgin with Wings, also painted a portrayal of St. Christopher (Christ-bearer, from Greek), which the media characterized as “amazing”, because the “saint /called “Kristofer” by the public, which is also nonsense (Hristofor, in Serbian)/ is shown with an animal head.” According to certain media, “in many shrines of 'little Jerusalem', as Pirot was called by St. Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović due to a large number of churches, monasteries and pilgrims, mysterious frescoes that are rarely or never found in the Orthodox fresco painting have been kept”, including “even those of cannibals”. This statement refers, in fact, to the “dog-headed saint”, that is, to the “holy donkey”, as this saint was also called in one tourist guidebook about the Gradište Monastery near Bar in Montenegro, although the fresco depicts St. Christopher.

Whatever the coveted truth may be, what art history testifies differs from the quoted. In this respect, a symbol of what was to be assessed as a rarity in the art of the Orthodox Church in southeast Serbia, “that should definitely be seen”, regardless of the cost of the travel, that is, the pilgrimage, understood as religious or touristic (disregarding that “a pilgrim is half a tourist, and a tourist is half a pilgrim” /comp. Стаменковић 2006, 78/), may be treated as a farce, as it was qualified by Svetlana Pejić, an art historian at the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia, whose stance on the iconographic peculiarities of “Bald Jesus” did not receive appropriate treatment, because, apparently, the church in Rsovci would lose its guests, and thus the coveted future. Pejić emphasizes that “the issue is the misinterpretation of the fresco called 'Bald Jesus' from the 13th century, which was painted in the cave church in Rsovci. The whole thing was made into a farce, and the fresco does not portray bald Christ, but is a classical composition of the vision of St. Peter of Alexandria, of which one detail is preserved” (M. B. 22. 11. 2013).

The mentioned art historian was certainly led to such a stance by the fact that in *the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria* – which is certainly missing parts in the church in Rsovci, the Christ is since old times depicted as a boy and as a young beardless man with clothes that may seem torn, in accordance with the tradition of St. Peter of Alexandria and his vision of Christ¹ (There is an extensive literature on how

¹ Peter of Alexandria, the Archbishop of Alexandria, died as a martyr in 311. He attended the First Ecumenical Council. He is known primarily for his defense of the Orthodox teachings from the teachings of the sect and the conflict with Arius, a heretic whom Peter excommunicated from the Church of Alexandria and cursed. Because of his teachings he was imprisoned, and then, according to tradition, Christ appeared before him, as a twelve year old boy at the holy table, in bright but tattered clothes. Peter then asked God: “Who has treated Thee thus, my Lord, and rent Thy garments?”, to which Jesus replied: “That madman Arius has torn it by dividing the people whom I have redeemed by My blood. Do not receive him into Communion with the Church, for he has worked evil against Me and My flock.” (When released from prison Peter refused Arius's request for pardon, cursing him forever, “both here and in the future world”). The Vision of Peter of Alexandria has often been depicted in the frescoes of the Eastern Christian Church since the Middle Ages, with the established compositional scheme, while iconographic variations follow the development of the portrayal since the Palaeologus epoch and in the post-Byzantium art. The image traditionally illustrates the event of Peter's vision of Christ. Peter of Alexandria, dressed in pontifical liturgical robes, usually standing in a gentle gift, at the service in front of the altar table, sometimes with a canopy. At the table, in line with his vision, there is Christ as a boy wearing a veil, blessing him, while his left hand can hold loincloth.

Christ is portrayed throughout history, without ceasing to be the object of attention of art historians to this day /Rebić 2004, 1079–1134; Тагић-Ђурић 1991, 131–148; Jovanović 2009, 730–752/. Experts certainly know that there is an immense series of depicting Christ as a child with certain characteristics of old age, including details of clothing characteristic of antiquity).

In fact, based on the study of the development of depicting the *Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria*, it was observed that in the frescoes of the Byzantine world and its spiritual circle certain iconographic changes appear, expressed in the treatment of Christ figure, with a magnification of his height and insisting on classical beauty. Portrayed only with a cloth around his thighs and shoulders, the image shows not only the event that remains in the tradition of the Church, but also as the separation of his divine nature from his human nature (which heretic Arius tried to do, and thus gave cause for the vision of St. Peter of Alexandria). Moreover, *the Vision of Saint Peter of Alexandria* is painted in a thematic program of the altar space from the era of the Byzantine dynasty Palaiologos, regularly in the proskomide, because of its eucharistic symbolism. Something similar was done in the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Rsovcí, in accordance with the capabilities of its space, that is, the wall surfaces.

As for Holy Virgin with Wings, that portrayal is also not unique, at least in terms of iconography, since it has been known in church painting for centuries back, including the area of present-day Southeast Serbia (it should be noted that Pirot and its environment was under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church for a long time, also at a time when the cathedral church in Sukovo was painted inside /Тагић-Ђурић 2005, 123–140; Jovanović 2009, 116/).

Moreover, the Virgin could be dressed in mafforion and the so-called bottom dress, or she is in royal garments, as an Empress, since she is also celebrated as Vasilisa /= Empress, from Greek/ (in the same sense, she is also called “the despotess”). Depending on the portray, showing Virgin Mary in the said manner more or less points to her earthly life as a virgin, appropriate for the so-called Angelic Shema (characteristic of monks), and to the Byzantine hymnography where she was celebrated as the “governess of the angels”. The image of the Mother of God with wings also appears in the portrayal known as the “Holy Protection” (Jovanović 2012, 131–133), with the inspiration in the poetic interpretation of Virgin Sophia (= wisdom, from Greek), but also in the apocalyptic vision of St. John the Divine, who mentions a woman who was “given two wings of a great” (Revelation 12, 14). The mother of Christ was recognized in this verse of the Apocalypse, while her wings were seen as a symbol of protection, to which the images of Holy Protection point. In modern times some homilies include associations to a “winged holy protection”, which has led to the Mother of God being shown with wings in compositions depicting Holy Protection, protecting the believers with her mantle (i.e. the developed western variant of the Virgin as a patron with a mantle, the so-called Mater Misericordiae).

Finally, no matter how much one may insist on the belief that there is an “amazing” image of St. Christopher on the church walls in Sukovo, shown with an animal head, and that it is a “mysterious fresco which is rarely or never found in Orthodox fresco painting”, this is worth denying, no matter how this review may affect the perception of the said fresco and its impression on the ignorant or those who would like to withhold the legacy of history (of art), in this case the one that is related to the characteristics of Church painting, but also the development of religious tourism in the Pirot region.

Hence, it is worth saying that St. Christopher, otherwise equally popular with the Orthodox and Roman Catholic believers and as such celebrated, is known as a person of unusual characteristics and giant growth, which makes him easily reco-

gnizable in paintings (in addition to this Christopher, a dozen other canonized Christian martyrs have the same name /Патријарх Павле 2007, 204–213; Стошић 1999, 127–133/).²

According to preserved sources from the field of church painting, St. Christopher was presented in several ways in the East and in the West, most of which are “normal” to human eye, mind. The most interesting, and some say the most bizarre iconographic type of St. Christopher (inherent in the Byzantine world and its spiritual circle /Vujičić 1984, 40/), is the dog-headed portrayal. It is the saint as a standing figure, turned so that his profile is always visible, with a long, sharp nose, similar to dog's, sometimes wider so that it often looks more like a horse's nose, with small, pointed ears. His unusual appearance was sometimes contributed to by a wide, pleated neck and long hair like a mane. The rest of the standing body is no different from human, as he was shown with a chiton and a himation or an armor. Almost as a rule, he is wearing a shroud. Such portrayal is encountered in the iconography (portable painting) and church frescoes (wall paintings) created in the period between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century, from the area of Northern Russia to the Sinai area, including the Balkan Peninsula.

The cause which led to holy Christopher having a physiognomy of a dog is explained in a version that should be particularly emphasized. Specifically, on Mount Athos, where portrayals of dog-headed St. Christopher also exist, a tradition has not been forgotten which implies that painting the saint in this form was a desire to illustrate the thought: “The liberation of the people from the animalistic, through the grace of God, becoming a humanity akin to God”. Moreover, it could be argued that such a figure of St. Christopher may express the idea from the New Testament: “Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all” (Col. 3, 11), i.e. in Christianity, holiness can be achieved by all people, of any nationality, regardless of outward appearance, color, cultural peculiarities.

In other words, the belief that a person's appearance, ethnicity, religious or sexual orientation and social status are crucial to human reasoning, and the inner, moral values are decisive in the final judgment, is the key guide in both the Old and the New Testament (I Sam. XVI, 7; Ps. VII, 9-10; Gal. III, 28; Col. III, 11). Those same Testaments placed between the covers of each Bible (2 Ex. 20, 16; 2 Ex. 23, 1; 5 Ex. 5, 20; Mt 19, 18; Mr., 10, 19; Lk. 18, 20 Rom. 13, 9) talk about perjury, which can refer to the evaluation of portrayals that are the focus of our attention.

² According to certain sources, a gigantic warrior Reprobos, a native of Lycia in Asia Minor, wishing to join the service of the most powerful ruler of the world, accepts the responsibility to carry people over a large river on his back. Coincidentally, there was a male child on his shoulders that during the transition of the river constantly gained weight, so that the giant, who barely managed to take him to the other side, was under the impression he carried the weight of the world on his shoulders. When Christ has revealed himself in the image of the boy, he confided to Reprobos that he was not wearing the weight of the world but his Creator who has baptized him in water out of gratitude, and gave him the name Christopher (Christ-bearer, from Greek). He is considered the patron saint of travelers, carriers and bridge builders, and the saint who can quickly protect against serious diseases, demons, spells and sudden life danger. According to Basil's II Menolog from Constantinople (X century), he lived and suffered for Christ in the third century. He came from a barbarian tribe of cannibals, and dog-headed giants. Greek sinaxaria recorded the episode from his hagiography in which he was described as a dog-headed demon-cannibal, for which he was deprived of the power of speech until – after praying to Christ – an angel touched his mouth so that he spoke and got a human form. He then became one of the most zealous defenders of the Christians, which, with its strikingly ugly face, an unnatural height and unusual strength, contributed to Christopher's open and fierce persecution and death in suffering – as a martyr, specifically a blood martyr, because he underwent a sacrifice in the name of faith. There are some other legends concerning the cause of him being painted as dog-headed, including those moral and didactic coming from Mount Athos, where he is also shown as kinokfal/os (=dog-headed, from Greek).

There are other approaches that can paint a representative picture of the objects of religious character, as the ones mentioned so far. A review of their features placed in the context of our time is among those approaches.

Thus, when it comes to the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Rsovci, for example, it is possible to point out, among other things, that a growing interest in this cult place and the work on its restoration has taken place in the last decades. This process coincides with a wave of global (and local) revitalization of religion³, the growth of social importance of religious thought, practices and institutions, which started at the end of the twentieth century.

The church is located in one of the larger settlements in the Visoka area, about 23 km away from Pirot, whose municipal territory it belongs to. It is located on the right bank of the river Visočica and is part of the complex of *Stara Planina Nature Park*. People know it as the “Cave Church”, given that it is located in one of the many caves in the hill Kamik.⁴ Far from irrelevant is that the church is carefully preserved by the inhabitants of the village, that, according to the census of 2011, count 106 people, of which only thirteen are under 50 years old (the average age of the population of the settlement is 68.4 which ranks it among the oldest in Serbia /SORS (P3C) 2012a/). According to the penultimate census, this settlement is inhabited exclusively by people who said they belonged to the Serbian nation (SORS /P3C/ 2003).⁵ We make conclusions on the declaration of the local population on religious grounds according to the last census indirectly on the basis of the data on religious and confessional affiliation of the population of the entire municipality. According to these data (SORS /P3C/ 2013), in the municipality of Pirot, 94.6 % of the population is of Orthodox faith; the remainder of the population consists mainly of Roman Catholics (0.15 %), Protestants (0.02 %) and the members of the Islamic faith (0.25 %).

In order to reach the church, located some five hundred meters away from the main road that passes through Rsovci (to Visočka Ržana), one should first follow rocky trails. Then, cross the bridge over Visočica, one should overcome a trodden path along the shore of the river and a stone staircase to the lobby of the church. The church is located at least ten feet above the river. It is believed, which is worth repeating, that it comes from the thirteenth century, and that it is the result of broadening the space of a small hermitage.⁶ It is actually a cave room, whose entrance is somewhat shaped by human hands. The massive stone is fitted with wooden doors and two windows that allow natural lighting of the church interior (together with the light coming from the south through a smallish window) (Fig. 1). Above the door there are two stone slabs, probably painted earlier in the fresco technique. Between them there is a shallow, arched niche in which there is a “tailor-made” icon of St. Peter and Paul, protected by glass from moisture and weather conditions. According to the researcher’s estimation, the inside surface is between 50 and 60 m².

³ This wave has not bypassed Southeast Serbia. On the intense work of the inhabitants, secular and ecclesiastical authorities in the reconstruction and construction of new places of worship in the neighboring municipality of Dimitrovgrad see more in Petrović, Jovanović 2013.

⁴ On the same site it is possible to observe a number of smaller and bigger caves; It is believed that some were used to hide the local population from enemy armies.

⁵ The data from the most recent census is not available since the results of the last census on the ethnicity of the population are expressed on the municipal level, not on the level of minor settlements, so it is not possible to determine from the publications of SORS how the population of individual settlements declared themselves along ethnic lines. The same would apply to their religious declaration (see SORS /P3C/, 2012b and SORS /P3C/, 2013).

⁶ According to respondents, there is a belief that the ascetics of Sinai, who for some time resided in Medieval Serbia, lived in a cave at a location known as “Vladikine ploče” (Bishop’s slabs) and that they prayed to the Lord in the hermitage – “Cave Church” today, in the area of the village Rsovci.

On the north wall of the nave, close to the sanctuary, there is a fresco portrayal of “Bald Jesus”, greatly damaged by the cave moisture, so that the rest of the composition can only be speculated about, which was already discussed (Fig. 2). The church has a simple wooden altar partition, built a few years ago (Fig. 3). It holds several icons, recently made. Due to the high humidity in the area where they are located, the icons and the altar partition show noticeable traces of decay.⁷ One of the icons is the gift of the Tomić family as specified in the inscription: “To the health of the Tomić family /.../” (Fig. 4). That inscription, along with other physical evidence and preserved legends about the healing properties of the location gladly affirmed by the residents of Rsovci testifies on the multidimensional force of its cult.

North and south of the entrance to the church, there is a series of tables covered with decorative fabrics and lace handicrafts, donated by local residents and pilgrims. At one table, with the function of a proskinitar, icons are arranged (covered with plastic sleeves due to the water that drips from the ceiling of the church) (Fig. 5). There is a table for the gifts left by visitors, as well as a table with candles next to which there is a plastic container designed for storing money from the sale of candles.

At the heart of the pre-altar area in front of the altar partition, there is a table in the form of a tetrapod with an icon showing St. Peter and Paul (“the patron icon”). By this icon displayed for kissing, there is gifted money in coins and paper denominations, as well as fresh flowers, which can also be defined as a form of votive⁸ (at the time of our visit, lilac was gifted). Of particular interest are the so-called prayer votives in the form of pieces of paper on which there are the names of believers and the cause of their prayers to God (“for the health of my son /.../”) (Fig. 6). The front of the table was covered with a cloth with distinctive patterns, characteristic of the so-called Pirot rug. Between the altar partition and the aforementioned table is a space designed for burning candles.

In addition to gifts of food, which, according to respondents, are left by the visitors to the church⁹, we find votive towels of different sizes (from towels to tissues/napkins), hand-made and those of industrial production. Among them, some are decorated with embroidery. There are crocheted milieus (Fig. 7).

Votives in the form of coins, in addition to those on the icons, were left in natural hollows in the walls of the church (Fig. 8). This custom is directly related to cleansing with water that pours from the walls and a belief in its healing powers.¹⁰ The washing (eyes first) is only a part of the repertoire of cult activities exercised by devotees in Rsovci. What is also striking is the “stay” of the objects that some visitors leave for a certain period of time in the temple to, according to belief, receive miraculous healing properties. The owners of these items then take them to their homes as holy objects and sources of overall well-being, health first. This is, in fact, an ancient tradition that belongs to ethnomedicine, widely elaborated in the literature.

⁷ For these reasons there is an initiative to replace the wooden iconostasis with a marble one more suitable for the climatic conditions in the cave area.

⁸ In Christian religion, under the term votive, one can find different objects which faithful, as an addition to their prayers – as a vow or in gratitude for an answered prayer, gift to monasteries, churches and cult objects, such as especially venerated icons, relics of saints and other relics including holy waters (in some cases they have been interpreted as a sacrifice of a vow or a sacrifice of gratitude). They can be in the form of fruit, coins, jewelry, liturgical objects, icons (or enchirions for icons), crosses (often with added written pieces of paper – prayers), but also objects, primarily those used for worship. A special type of votives are votive plates, usually made of metal, primarily in the shape of particular diseased body parts or organs, which were gifted in gratitude for healing. The existence of the belief that the sanctity and miracles of relics and icons is transferred to objects that were in direct contact with the object of worship, including their stay in the same physical space, is testified by the so-called enchiridions and brandea.

⁹ Gifts of food are then donated to the poor or sold in the village while the collected money is used for works on the church or the space around it.

¹⁰ On the cult of water, its origin and meaning, see more in Jovanović, Petrović 2012.

Our informant said that there is a belief that the church space does not end with the altar space, but that there is a hidden extension, painted with “priceless frescoes”, which is why there are considerations about professional research of the area.¹¹ The questioners were not able to verify the above, nor were shown where approximately the hidden room is located.

The wooden bell tower, built on a small plateau near the entrance to the church, was rebuilt several times (Fig. 9). Its bells are a product of the Kragujevac foundry from 1900, and funded by the local population. This is evidenced by the inscription on the bells: “To the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Rsovci by the residents of the village Rsovci, with the effort of Nastas Radović – the priest, Military Technical Institute of Kragujevac in 1900”. The informant spoke with obvious pride about their “uniqueness and special value”. According to him, the bells can be heard on the day of the celebration of the church patron saints, on major church holidays and announcing the death of a resident of Rsovci (which is a custom peculiar to many rural areas, with a bell tower). A metal cross is placed by the bell tower.

Intensive restoration of the Church of St. Peter and Paul started ten years ago with funds provided by the residents and municipalities. Thanks to them and the gifts in money left by the visitors, the place of worship and its immediate surroundings are periodically renewed or organized further. The staircase was built in 2012. According to the information published in the media, it was made thanks to the Association for the Preservation of Traditions and Crafts *Damsko srce*, which provided funds for its construction in the amount of \$13,000 through the World Tourism Organization. Up to that time, the “Cave Church” was reachable only by a narrow, barely passable mountain trail (Pilgrimage Trail, 13. 7. 2012). According to our respondent, the staircase was built largely from funds donated by an “American Serb”, who, as a sign of gratitude for his own healing,¹² sent the funds for its construction. Based on the same source, the donor dreamt that he would get better if he washed his face with water that runs down the stone walls of a cave church. Searching for the church that he saw in his dream, he found the Church of St. Peter and Paul. The respondent did not fail to point out that the Municipality “helped a lot the construction of the staircase”.

Either way, the construction of the staircase made the Church of St. Peter and Paul closer to those less physically ready for the climb. In the middle of the climb, there is a corner for prayer with a stone cross of St. Peter and Paul, whose age is hard to determine (Fig. 10). Recently, it was repaired by the residents, “fixing” it with plaster.¹³ This is one of the actions that are mainly financed by Rsovci residents and returnees (mostly those who on retirement returned to their birthplace). They also help the maintenance of the temple, as well as the construction of additional facilities. Donations to the church come in the form of money, building materials or in the form of physical engagement, “working hours”.

At the foot of Kamik, there is a wooden venik with a table and benches, set up for rest and refreshment of visitors to the church dedicated to the First Apostles. In this area, a seesaw and a swing for children is made. According to our source, the construction of another wooden table with shelter for a large number of people is planned. The authorities in Pirot approved certain funds in 2013 (58,000 dinars) for bringing water from the village water supply to the location.¹⁴

¹¹ It is an unconfirmed information that the respondent got from a gold prospector.

¹² In connection with the cause of funding the construction of the aforementioned stairs, the practice the respondent recounts is widespread. He found that many visitors to the water that runs down the walls of cave churches wash their eyes in the hope that they will get better vision, or cure a serious eye disease.

¹³ The stone cross of St. Peter and Paul also has related traditions. They told us that there is a belief that when one stands by the cross for about ten minutes, a snake comes from the near-by openings, hermitages (in this area there is a large number of viper snakes which is a protected species).

¹⁴ We found our respondent at the place near the fountain, where currently earthwork is being done for drainage and landscaping of the entire micro region.

The Church of St. Peter and Paul is visited by members of different nations. Tourists and believers come in much larger numbers for St. Peter's Day (12. 7), and on the day of village's patron saint, St. Nicholas. The narrator points out that there is a growing number of organized visits to the place of worship, especially during the summer period. It is visited by people of all ages from Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, even from distant European countries, such as Sweden, for example.

The church is taken care of by the residents of Rsovci, led by Siniša Antonović, the head of the Church Board of the village, as he said in our interview. According to Antonović, he, like his predecessors in the said board, has the responsibility to take care of the church, to participate in its maintenance and the upgrading of the surroundings. He assumed the obligation to show the worship site to tourists and pilgrims, and to provide basic information about it.

The impression is that with the general development of religious (pilgrimage) tourism, the concern of Municipal authorities and its population for the church in Rsovci is also growing. One might sense the aspiration that the Church of St. Peter and Paul obtains a more important place in the "pilgrim's map of the world", if by no other means, than by the perpetuation of the stories of its uniqueness. "Bald Jesus" and water, attributed healing properties, are identified as possible targets for tourism.

Otherwise, the liturgical life in the church is under the care of the brotherhood of the monastery dedicated to Holy Virgin in Visočka Ržana, except that, it should be noted, the service is performed only a few times a year. Recently, the church is open to the public every Saturday and Sunday.

Drastic desecrations of the holy shrine were not recorded, except for attempted thefts with burglary of the church door and the space between the altar partition and certain walls of the church, which the villagers attribute to an attempt to penetrate into the space behind the altar, according to the legend of the hidden treasure.

Speaking of legends related to this religious building, the narrator claims that there are many more. From Jovan Kamenović, one of the workers, volunteers engaged to assist in arranging the area around the fountain, as well as a direct actor in the story that we report, we learn that a few decades ago the residents of Rsovci repeatedly attempted to "move" the church to the center of the village to make it more accessible to residents, especially those who are elderly. According to the legend, the church they started building in the village has never been constructed any further than the foundations. The walls made of large stone blocks collapsed "by themselves" after a short time. Thinking that the problem lies in the developers, they made a firmer foundation, and even an ossuary in which they intended to transfer the bones found in the church. The work on the building has still not progressed. The villagers tried to build a chapel in the village, but this project also ended with digging the foundations. Siniša Antonović remembers the words of his grandfather who said: "God does not allow building in this area". On the basis of these traditions one can identify a common place (*locus communis*), which is reflected in the attitude towards religious holy places. It is, in fact, the need to establish a clear boundary in space between the sacred and the profane, mostly through "hierophany, outpouring of the Holy", or when it is not present in the strict sense of the word, that it should be confirmed through "a sign from God" pointing to the sanctity of the place (Eliade 1986, 64, 65). In this sense, in the exposed threads of tradition we recognize the need to confirm the holiness of the "Cave Church" in Rsovci through a series of signs to make the area such a special experience and qualitatively different from the environment in which it is located.

Opposite to the church building, on a plateau on the other side of the Visočica river bank, there is the village cemetery. Our respondent, Siniša Antonović, said

that it has been “the eternal resting place” of the residents of Rsovci for a very long time, and most recently of the residents of other towns in Serbia originally coming from the Pirot District, and that it has been disordered and overgrown with weeds until recently. The respondent proudly announced that with the help of the residents, it is now in good condition, which is possible to witness from a plateau at the stairs, the so-called ramp leading to the church (Fig. 11). There is a natural rarity in the cemetery – a black pine about 300 years old, which dominates the landscape of the mentioned plateau; which is declared a natural monument.¹⁵

On the same bank of the river Visočica as the Church of St. Peter and Paul, after the river destroyed a part of its bank in 2005, there are human bones protruding from the earth, testifying to a burial of a few tens of centimeters below the level of the bank. The researchers had the opportunity witness the aforementioned scene, which was photographed (Fig. 12). The time of origin of this mass grave is not known. Closeness to the border and frequent wars are the causes that make the discovery does not seem strange. Rare and unreliable information from daily newspapers, which call on unnamed archaeologists, estimate that it is a very old site “from the 14th or 15th century, since it is believed that there was a settlement on this location in ancient times and in the late Middle Ages” (Petrović 6. 1. 2009), but they should not be easily believed. What we found is that the Municipality has no financial means to investigate the mentioned site and provide answers to the question of how and when this mass grave came to being.

We should not neglect another secret the place is hiding. Namely, during the excavation of land for a channel for a mini-hydropower plant on the river Visočica in 1963, the residents found human skeletons “of more than two meters”. The respondent claims in conclusion that the area where the village of Rsovci is located is full of interesting things, but there are not many people interested in exploring and exploiting it. In his conclusion, once again he highlighted the problems of a financial nature.

It is interesting that none of the locals mentioned the nearby monastery of St. Elijah from the nineteenth century,¹⁶ restored a few years ago, which is under the care of Sister Melanija. Thanks to her enormous efforts the temple survives. Staying alone in the temple, she tries to find ways to motivate the residents to come closer to God through solidarity in its maintenance.

Southeast Serbia, in this case the Pirot District, is abundant in cult spots,¹⁷ including those with a distinctive history, appearance and content. According to the beliefs of local people, many have a special place in communication with the holy. The cave Church of St. Peter and Paul in Rsovci near Pirot is considered to be such place. The overall appearance of the place of worship, the remaining material heritage, as well as the characteristics of the mobilier and the contents of its environment, lead to the conclusion that it possesses a certain uniqueness in all respects, “harmonized” with diverse wishes of the population that lives in its immediate environment.

From this point of view one should consider the fact that in recent years the residents of Rsovci, with the help of the Tourist organization of Pirot and the media, have woven the story of its excellence, leading many pilgrims to this location. Re-

¹⁵ The respondent recounts that three black pine trees were planted by a sister of the village priest Anton (distant ancestor of Siniša Antonović). Two trees that were on the priest’s family farm under Vidlič mountain were cut down. Only the one in the cemetery is left.

¹⁶ *Monasteries and churches*, http://issuu.com/brancco/docs/seoski_turizam_low

¹⁷ For a list of Christian holy sites in the Pirot area see the website of the Tourist organization of Pirot http://issuu.com/brancco/docs/manastiri_i_crkve_low.

searchers do not suspect that they will be back again, believing that the beauty of the nature of Stara Planina mountain will be responsible for their return. For, it is unlikely to expect that “Bald Jesus”, painted in the aforementioned church, and “Holy Virgin with Wings” and “Dog-Headed Saint” in a nearby monastery of Sukovo, which are mentioned in our text as a kind of counterpart to “Bald Jesus” (despite the fact that they are not discussed as a parts the whole cult place, i.e. religious building in which they are situated) will contribute to the overall prosperity of those under whose care and ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction they are, be it due to the facts communicated in our text.

What anyone in search of God and deification would wish is the evidence that the water that pours down the walls of the church in Rsovcu is really healing, because it would be, among other things, an impetus for the prosperity of not only Rsovcu and Pirot, and the Republic of Serbia. Under such circumstances, “Bald Jesus”, “Holy Virgin with Wings” and “Dog-Headed Saint”, i.e. “St. Christopher with a donkey head” would possibly gain historical, moral, didactic, educational and religious character. The realized economic well-being would be a proof that God is merciful to all, regardless of the fact that “God's punishment” is periodically affirmed in Serbian media, even by the highest religious authorities of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. The Church of St. Peter and Paul in Rsovci (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 2. Fresco "Bald Jesus" (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 3. Altar partition (iconostasis) in the Church of St. Peter and Paul (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 4. Icon showing St. Peter and Paul (a gift from the Tomić family) (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 5. The proskinitar with icons (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 6. The tetrapod with the "patron icon" and votives (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 7. Donations to the church in the form of handicrafts (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 8. Votive coins in the church wall (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 9. Wooden bell tower with bells, a gift from the residents of Rsovci (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 10. A corner for prayer with a stone cross of St. Peter and Paul (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 11. Eternal resting place of the residents of Rsovci, the view from the plateau of the stairs leading to the temple (J. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 12. Human remains from a mass grave near the Visočica river at the foot of the church (J. Petrović, 2014)

VOTIVE CROSSES OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF DIMITROVGRAD*

“While digging up these church relics, they found a votive cross in the ground: a cross-like antique monument of soft and delicate sandstone in which letters and other signs are chisel-engraved with such an ease as in flour and of the sort whose making came to an end here a long time ago... Having three half-apples on the upper arm of the cross and on its side arms which are chiseled in a daisy-chained manner and archly connected to each other, with narrow slots in-between, and with a short strong body part, a powerful head of the cross looked like leaning against as much powerful yet somewhat clumsy and heavy body. This votive cross laid with its face towards the heart of the earth; common people, rather than experts, interpreted it as being quite like some very ancient god of stone or earth (...) Having remembered all this... they lifted it and there, near the given ruins, they drove this votive cross into the ground. That is how it – with its ancient, thin and uniformly drawn and by now illegible letters, as if they were from Athos or Morea – still stands, to this day, there, in the field.”

Slobodan Džunić, *Votive cross (Obrok)*, 1982, 190-191.

ON THE TRADITION OF VOTIVE CROSSES

Dejan Krstić (2010, 130–133) is one of the rare ethnologists who has developed a complex cult sites typology of eight items: 1) *natural objects*, 2) *monuments with religious markers*, 3) *graves and places of death*, 4) *auxiliary objects for performing parts of the rites*, 5) *houses*, 6) *sacral edifices*, 7) *archeological remains* and 8) *small inventory*. The monuments with religious markers, according to the building material, are divided into *wooden monuments*, *stone monuments*, *metal crosses*, *brick monuments*, *concrete monuments* and *niches*. Further on, stone monuments can be divided, regarding their function, into *celebratory* and *tombstone* or *those at the places of death*. As for their form, they can be divided into *crosses* and *pillars* or *plaques*. Tombstones are common among Christians as well as Muslims, in the whole region of the Balkans, while the votive ones, as a rule in the form of a cross, are found only among Christians, most often in Central Balkans.

A varied and multivalent use of free standing stone crosses was a wide-spread and well-known custom in medieval Serbia. Serbian charters, hagiographies and other writings have systematically registered the instances in which they were used as *markers* for defining borders as well as on many other occasions in the social and religious life of the parish ((Бојанин 2008). Outstanding among them is the performance of a church rite near the cross as one of the basic characteristics of the parish religiosity in which all the community members participated regardless of their social position (Бојанин 2004). The writer consulted here states that such a

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use of crosses in the folk lore can be regarded as a “precursor” of so-called *votive crosses* whose religious and social element becomes especially prominent at the times of church celebrations (village patron saint celebration or *zavetina*) “when they had people gather round them for the sake of common celebration or were involved in a procession (*litije*) around the whole village community” (Бојанин 2008, 326).

On one hand, the celebratory crosses (votive crosses) represent a specific segment of sacral architecture and ethnological cultural legacy while, on the other, they are further carriers of the functions pertaining to previous, even much older cult sites. According to Tihomir Đorđević (1984, 406), upon the foundations of old churches and monasteries that people knew about or only believed they had existed in those places since times immemorial, new religious objects were erected. In the cases when restoration could not be carried out, the ruins had stone crosses – *obroci* or votive crosses – posited on them while the site was called *votive site (obročište)*.¹ The votive crosses were usually dedicated to some Christian saint (St. Elias, St. George, St. Savior, St. Prokopios, St. Petka or Paraskeva) or respective religious celebration (Whitsunday, Ascension Day); people treated them with respect and in fear of punishment from accidental or intentional desecration (Спасова 2013). The tradition of putting up votive crosses is characteristic for the terrain of Southeast Serbia and Northwest Bulgaria (Младеновић и Радовановић 1983; Енчев-Видю 1994; Живковић 1996; Любенова 1996; Беновска-Събкова 1998; Радовановић 1998; Петрунова, Григоров и Манолова-Николова 2001; Христов 2004; Крстановић и Радоњић Живков 2006; Драгићевић 2009; Јеременковић 2009; Маринковић 2009; Стајић 2012; Миљивојевић 2014) though they can also be found in southern Serbia and Macedonia.

“Serbian monuments show ritual (and, later on, obligatory) offering of food and drinks as a sacrifice in celebration as well as a ritual meal shared by people from one settlement on the village patron saint day’s celebration. The Bulgarian votive cross has many meanings: a) something promised or bequeathed to be done (as in the statement, „I’ve made them vow to go out on St. Elias’s Day“); b) a religious service (*slava*) for the patron (protector) saint; c) cross, inscription („I made a vow on St. Elias’s Day“); it can also mean making a vow to God or saint or keeping one’s promise (pledge). In western Bulgaria the votive sites are consecrated, usually marked with a stone cross (...) A votive site, Serbian and Bulgarian, is the one where the prayers are taking place or were taking place till recently, namely those in the springtime, devoted to God and saints or deities, to protect crops from bad weather. According to popular belief, a vow is a shadow while „votive“ means shadowy. The ancient belief has it that the votive stone comprises a shadow or spirit of a deity; it is the same as the belief in the existence of shadowy trees. After the reception of Christianity, votive crosses took on Christian features and were dedicated to Christian saints but polytheistic rituals were preserved (...). On the patron saint holidays, on votive sites, a cake is prepared and then broken on the votive cross, as a rule, in the evenings, before a burning candle. On St. George’s Day a lamb is killed and a cake is being made... In the villages around the Upper Nišava River the cross is the name of an enclosed space in the village having a stone cross in its center; around the cross there is a circle of stones and each family has, on these stones, its own sitting place during the meal (Кулишић, Петровић и Пантелић 1970, 229-230).”

¹ Petko Hristov (2001/2002) gives an example of two villages from Dimitrovgrad community, namely Visočki Odorovci i Dragovita that had no church till the thirties of the 20th century; that is why all the rituals such as baptisms, weddings, funeral services, were done in the open, before the village votive cross situated near the holy tree considered as a magical inscription (*zapis*).

It the village community it was usually possible to find several votive crosses posited on the places easily accessible to local people. They were driven into the ground for the sake of protecting people from evil forces and sickness as well as crops in the fields from hail and stormy clouds and animals' ravaging. They were set up by the whole village, clans and families or even individuals grateful for the performed good deeds or because of the vows made. The messages from the saints that crosses should be put up were received by some persons in their dreams. Not rarely were stone crosses dug in under the shadow of a tabooed holy trees (a centuries-old oak tree, elm, mulberry or pear tree) (Крстић 1998). Those of a more recent date were roofed over by *bowers* or extended square timber structures, on the pillars, wall-less and tile-covered which also served as a space for performing the ritual. By periodic visits during the agrarian season, from the mid-springtime till the early autumn, there were relations of affiliations renewed between individuals and groups within a given community (Бандић 1978).

Today there are two kinds of votive crosses prevailing:

1) those dedicated to the patron saint whose holiday is celebrated by the whole village, and,

2) those for whose maintenance and visits, on the days marked red in the religious calendar, are held responsible particular village families with the participation of other local people.

They are made of sandstone and mainly originate from the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. These are classically sculpted crosses, with upper vertical and horizontal arms clearly kept apart while the lower arm is connected to the supporting plaque and dug into the ground. Very often they are decorated with the representations of repeated crosses on the upper vertical arm, or with letters of Christ's monogram IC XC and inscription NI KA (victory, victor); other decorative elements are also possible. The majority of them has a contour line along the arm edges while only some of them have half-spherical projections – one, two or three “apples”. On the crosses of older date the inscriptions are in Old Slavic while those of later date carry the letters of Vuk's alphabet. Due to their age, it is very difficult to determine whether they had ever changed their original place. Though they are unavoidable parts of the annals' truth of the areas in which they are located, many of them are left to fade to oblivion and decay due to migrations and reductions of the population number as well as religious rituals abandonment and ideological impacts.

The religious ritual included endowing the votive cross with flowers, boiled wheat and wine, candle-lighting and cutting up of the ritual bread by the local priest. On the family's vow crosses, the host whose ancestors were ktitors (founders) in the ancient times, practiced “butchering of a prayer”, that is, offering of an animal sacrifice, usually a lamb or sheep, whose meat was later used for making a thin *chorba* (stew), *jahnija*, distributed to those present at the ceremony.

VOTIVE CROSSES IN DIMITROVGRAD

On the territory of Dimitrovgrad region (divided into five micro-entities: Visok, Zabrđe, Ponišavlje, Burel and Derekul) there is a systematic evidence of a great number of votive crosses, namely 226 in 45 villages (Игов 2013, 8; Иванов и др. 2013); about some of them there are preserved detailed ethnographic accounts (Христов 2001/2002, 2002; Попова и Манолова-Николова 2004; Николов 2009; Мирковић Марић и Марић 2011). Plenty of them are on the slopes of the Stara Mountains; a somewhat smaller number is in the Nišava River valley.

Motives for building crosses and legends about it. The basic motive for erecting crosses was to win personal, family and property protection of higher

powers or, later on, a concrete protector-saint, from implacable natural activities. Sometimes the most immediate stimulus was a certain prophesying dream; not rarely it was a great human misfortune (death of children or the closest kin or some sudden disease), dying of domestic animals or protection of crops and harvest from inrush of water, wind and fire.

“Protopopinci: My grandfather Dragija was for many years an envoy in the Monastery of St. Ćirik above the village of Smilovac. No children were born to him. He had a dream in which he was told to build a cross to St. Savior so that children would be born to him. He firstly adopted his nephew and then he became a father to a son. He took equal care of both of them as his true born ones. Grandfather built a votive cross on the Ascension Day, above the lake. It stands there to this day, beneath an old pear tree.

Baljev Dol: My great-grandfather Kira had a big family but, in his youth, he had children dying. Some old woman from the neighborhood dreamt that his children would stay alive if he built a votive cross and start bringing a ‘prayer’ to it. That’s how it was. The great-grandfather built a votive cross to St. Ćirik, as the old woman had told him, and started bringing him, every year on that day, „a prayer“ in addition to cake cutting. This practice was carried on by his descendents as well while the tradition is kept alive today by Ivan Gerov.

Vlkovija: There is a legend which is passed on from one generation to another. As a young man I heard it from the oldest people in the village. It says how people started to die suddenly in Vlkovija when plague attacked. To save themselves from evil, the people of Vlkovija chose twin brothers to harness a team of likewise twin oxen and take them before the sunrise to a rock on the western side of the village. When the sun rose up above the rock, they started plowing the soil thus making a furrow around the village in the form of an irregular closed circle. When they returned, just before the sunset, to the rock they had started from, they noticed that it had split into two. This was believed to be a sign that the disease would disappear (Игов 2013, 220–225).”

In addition to trying to placate the patrons, people used crosses as means of expressing gratitude for fulfilling their appeals (birth of children, healing, end of misfortune). In some places there were even several ones; in Radejna as many as fourteen. Like eternal guards – on mountain heights, next to old tree trunks, on the ruins of churches and monasteries, close to water springs or graveyards – they encircled a zone of protection around the village community.

The votive crosses were devoted to several Christian saints: St. George (Visočki Odorovci, Iskrovci, Radejna), St. Demetrius (Kamenica, Lukavica), St. Elias (Gornja Njevlja, Donji Krivodol, Peterlaš), St. Petka or Paraskeva (Brebevnica, Dragovita, Protopopinci), Holy Godmother (Bačevo, Mazgoš, Trnski Odorovci) and to great religious holidays: Ascension (Braćeveci, Gradinje, Gojin Dol, Prača, Smilovci) and Trinity (Banski Dol, Vlkovija, Grapa, Držina, Dimitrovgrad). A special celebration is reserved for St. George’s Day, him being protector of cattle; that is why every family puts a roasted lamb on its festive table.

Age and outlook of the crosses. Votive crosses in the region of Dimitrovgrad have an authentic historical and artistic value. The majority of them originate from the nineteenth century; the oldest pieces are from the late eighteenth century (Gulenovci, Braćeveci, Brabevnica, Gornji Krivodol); only a few of them were erected in the early twentieth century (Gojin Dol, Borovo, Prača), partly replacing the ruined but previously existing crosses, partly because of the lore saying that there had been, likewise, in the past, stone monuments at these very places. Those from the earliest period were made of sandstone, later on, of limestone and the least frequent are those of marble.

The prevailing ones are regular isosceles ones or crosses with arc-like bent arms up to the crosses with rounded edges with their arms connected in a garland form (Николов 2009, 305). The basic decorative element is a carved Christian cross of a simple form in the central part while the cross ends, at richly ornamented votive cross, are ornamented with rosettes. The lines in the form of a rope or braid, twice-interwoven or broken, can also be seen. As for motives, there are solar and floral ones as well as, here and there, a human figure.

“On the cross in the village of Gojin Dol, St. Onuphrius is represented as a full-size figure. In the same village, at the time of St. George’s Day celebration, on another votive cross there is a figure of St. George killing the dragon. On another votive cross dedicated to an unknown saint in the village of Petrlaš there are two carved-in representations, of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion and of Godmother. In the Monastery of St. Demetrius near Caribrod, on the front side of the votive cross, there is St. George on the horse represented while killing the dragon and so are, on the back side, St. Peter and St. Paul with the other apostles. In the village of Vlasi, on the votive cross dedicated to St. Trinity there are two unknown saints represented. On the votive cross dedicated to St. Peter in the village of Vlkovija there is an interesting form of the human head. A similar form of the stylized human figure can also be found on the votive cross of St. Elias in the village of Banski Do (Иров 2013, 18).”

On the majority of the nineteenth century crosses, on the sides of their arms and on the upper surface of the central arm, there are three to five half-spherical decorations or so-called apples. The inscription is, as a rule, on the western side of the cross and it comprises, in Old Slavic letters, data about the saint-protector as well as the names of those who erected it and the year of its building – around the central ornament there are abbreviations IS CH and NI-KA very often. The richest in relief are votive crosses in Visoko and Zabrdje; the simplest in their expression are those in the region of Derekul. The inscriptions and decorations on the crosses as well as, here and there, the crosses themselves are dramatically damaged by the ravages of time.

Votive rituals. Votive rituals can be somewhat different depending on whether the whole village or just particular families are assigned to perform them.

At great village celebrations, on the day devoted to the saint-patron such as, for instance, the celebration of St. George’s Day, the leading role was allotted to the “cake-maker” (*kolačar*) or host chosen to watch over the performance of all the religious rites. It has happened that the role of the „cake-maker“ has been carried out by the same person for a few years in a row. First of all, his task was to offer „a prayer“, a collective animal sacrifice dedicated to maintenance and progress of the livestock. It is usually a roast lamb and ritual bread.² The local parish priest would bless the offered blood sacrifice, keeping for himself a lower jaw of the lamb and part of its shoulder blade. Then he would cut and pour wine over the ritual cake made in the household of the „cake-maker“ and would later do the same with the cakes of other local people. And other village households used to offer, formerly to the pagan and now to the Christian saint, the identical gift, with the obligation to take a snack of meat and bread of the main ritual sacrifice. All ended with an abundant village table and a festivity with songs, music and dances.

To “go out to the cross”, according to the clan-family principle, is a matter of vow made by families-inheritors of the established custom. The obligation is passed

² In the first half of the twentieth century, the „prayer“ was prepared on the very cult site, behind the votive cross, under the tree; today the hosts prepare it in their household, put it in a dish and take it to the cross.

on from father to married son who are, in terms of their property, independent of each other.³ (Where it happens that this could not be done, because of disease or poverty, the sacrificial offering on the ritual cross was taken up by other non-kin families thus ensuring continuity to a many-centuries old practice). The main ritual was carried out at dawn: once they decorated the cross with flowers and lit candles, the representatives of one or many families killed, over it, a designated lamb or infertile sheep. The meat of the sacrificial animal was used for making “a prayer” on the spot, that is, for making, as it is called in the region, *jahnija* or lamb *stew* (in the days of fasting there was a fat-free sacrifice: a bean stew). All the family members, individually, as well as other guests, participants in the ceremony took, in their dishes, the *stew* they blessed and ate for lunch. The Orthodox priest would consecrate the very spot; he would cut and bless the ritual cake of the people who made a vow and, later, the cakes of the other village families. A special curiosity of these places is the existence of the special votive stones in a ellipsoid or rectangular sequence in front of the familiar votive cross. Without special markers, each stone belonged to a particular family that would put on it and around it its own “feast”: bread, boiled wheat,⁴ wine and lamb; then, it would have a meal together with its guests. The ritual sacrificial offering was exclusively done by men while women prepared a ritual table.

In the course of time important innovations have been introduced into the ritual: home-made bread is replaced by industrial ones; the priest takes money instead of the food offered to him; music follows the ritual with the young, children and men participating with drinks; the motives for the ritual are replaced by new ones (so that socializing takes place of religious drives) and the like.

THE VOTIVE CROSS DEDICATED TO SAINT GEORGE IN RADEJNA: AN EXAMPLE OF COLLECTIVE VILLAGE CELEBRATION

Radejna is a farming and cattle-breeding village of compact type, seven kilometers north-east from Dimitrovgrad, spread on both the sides of the asphalt road from Dimitrovgrad to Smilovci. It originates from the seventeenth century (as exactly testified by the remains of the stone crosses dating from 1617). St. George’s Day is celebrated as a local patron saint holiday (Владимиров 2001, 521). The population is mainly of Bulgarian nationality and Orthodox; it is in a constant demographic decline. The last Population Census registered 84 inhabitants of advanced age (Population Census 2014).

St. George’s Day celebration always takes place on May 6 and it marks the beginning of the summer vegetative cycle in the live of the village in the highlands of the Municipality of Dimitrovgrad. That is why St. George Day’s celebration is a specific tribute to nature and its powers, the time of making sacrifices and of prayers for a fertile season.

Location and outlook of the crosses. Two kilometers away from a hamlet, at a place called Selište, a well-trodden earth road leads to a single-nave and single-apse church of Saint George, with its gable roof, vaulted ceiling and a small canopy over the entrance door. The dimensions of the home of prayers are eight times six meters, with the walls of half a meter in thickness. The southern and the northern sides are made of carved stone while the western and the eastern ones are plastered and whitewashed. The church was renewed in 1997; an iconostas was set up but it is still without icons; neither is the church consecrated (Иванов and others, 2013, 57).⁵

³ Occasionally the right was to remain only for the son who opted to remain on his village household.

⁴ In some cases it is sugared while in others salted.

⁵ People from Radejna often refer to their church as a „monastery“ since it is believed to have been built on the former monastery of St. Kirik and Judith that was moved to some other place (Миланов 2002, 186).

In the churchyard, at a recently-added stone pedestal, there is a votive cross also dedicated to the same Christian saint (Fig. 1). The upper arm is trapezoid and it ends in a reflex angle; the lower one is rectangular. The rectangular form is also that of the left and the right arms, only smaller in dimensions. The body of the cross has the following inscription: “СТИ/ ГЕОРГЕ/ СПАСЬ/ СТАН/ КО/ ТРЕНА/ НОЦА/ СТОАН/ КОЛИА/ ПАВЛА”. At the base of the cross there are more of those illegible letters and symbols. The height of the cross without the pedestal is 80 cm (the pedestal being of the same height); its thickness is 16 cm while the arms are of 60 cm in width (Игов 2013, 174-175).

The pedestal is of more recent date; previously the cross was dug into the ground. Next to the cross there is a high tree – I have been told it is not a holy magical one (*zapis*). The cross is taken care of by the local people from Radejna. In fact, no special care is there at all: once a year, on St. George’s Day, local people gather together around the cross with their kin and friends; along with the priest’s service, they thus celebrate the village patron saint holiday.

Talks with local people.⁶ We have come to the home of Nikolajče Manov (1955), member of the National Council of the Bulgarian National Minority in Serbia. This respected dweller of Radejna, with his wife Rozica (1962), son Miša (1985) and daughter Katarina (1989) was all in a hurry to prepare a guest room of his family house built in the fifties of the last century. He was aided by another guest who had just arrived from Kosovska Mitrovica, his sister Zlatka (1960) with her husband Zvonko Pavličić (1960), full-time professor of the Faculty of Engineering Sciences of the University of Priština temporarily located in Kosovska Mitrovica.

I am asking Nikolajče whether he knows that in his village there are as many as 14 votive crosses. He answers he knows and adds that there is a rational explanation for this:

“The plague took the lives of whole families in this region. The reason for this lies in the fact that Radejna has no running water; all the water is obtained from numerous wells dug after a great drought that befell this region in 1954. This is standing water; it is not spring water or running one; it has a low level in the wells, just sufficient enough to fill in the jugs. The quality of this water is highly problematic. It is not a surprise that in the past many people died of bacterially impure water. Well, to placate gods and prevent further deaths, people have built crosses.”

No reliable data exists; neither is there any clear memory of the origin of this many-centuries old cross. Two or three oldest local people are no longer capable of clear articulation, thus, unable of answering the posed questions. Those belonging to the middle generation remember the stories told by their grandmothers and grandfathers; their memories of St. George’s happenings are still fresh. Zlatka is telling us:

“Vivid are the pictures I cherish from my childhood regarding St. George’s mores. Early in the morning we wove small garlands of field flowers and grass. We needed one for the bucket in which the sheep was milked, another for the sheep that brought forth a St. George’s lamb and another for the lamb sacrificed for the table. Early in the morning Father killed the lamb always at the same place, there, underneath the window facing the fence while I was sent to throw the garlands into the stream not faraway from the house. The stream went dry a long time ago.

⁶ We would like to thank Cvetko Ivanov (1949-) from Borovo, at present living in Željuša, an engineer technologist, high school teacher and devoted chronicler of Dimitrovgrad region for his helping us kindly to get in touch with good masters from Radejna and Gradinje.

Once upon a time these cross celebrations exclusively involved villagers from Radejna; the preparations were done in early morning hours while the roast lambs were laid on the table in the afternoon. The old and the young remained in the field; they socialized, talked and had food and drinks; there was music, there was singing; a general joy. The guests were to arrive on the following day.

Today many things have changed. Cattle-breeding died out; many have no lamb in their cattle pen but they buy it somewhere else; they even kill lambs in advance and keep them in the fridge so that they could have them roasted on that Day and bring them to the cross. People generally hurry to complete all the preparations by noon so that they could go back home for lunch with their guests. They ritually take a few snacks from the roast meat and rush to collect the served food. The place of our family is immediately to the cross, on the left, and since the priest is offering cakes in the opposite direction, it very often happens that when he gets to our cake, many have already, in large numbers, started to leave our collective party. Even not all of the people come to the cross as they used to.”

The people from Radejna have always celebrated the village patron saint holiday. Even in the days of the most oppressive communist opposition, the “coming to the cross” on Saint George’s Day was justified as being a cattle-breeding rather than a Christian holiday.

Ritual. An hour before noon the first cars start coming to a spacious field before the church and the cross. The atmosphere is festive; a joyous feeling shared by family members and guests. Greetings are exchanged between men and women who are meeting here after so much time. Children are cheerfully running around. People toast to each other with drinks; a few cigarettes are lit. The families have their photos taken before the extended dining table (*sofra*). I also notice a cameraman eager to register all the developments on the plateau. The incoming families firstly stay in the small church, lighting up candles and endowing St. George’s icon with paper money and coins of smaller value (ten, twenty, fifty and hundred *dinars*) (Fig. 2). The common custom gathers together, in the native region, several generations of offspring, otherwise spread (residentially and professionally) all over the country and abroad.

Dressed-up people stop at the marked places which every village household has taken around the cross (Fig. 3). In the past, there used to line up, one by one, the oldest representatives of the households thus forming an irregular circle; meanwhile, the multiplied households started to form parallel lines within the circle interior. At two places – close to the right side of the votive cross and diagonally in the corner – we spot walled-in stone tables; we are explained that some families wanted to specially mark their position on the holy spot thus emphasizing their reputation and wealth with regard to others. Yet, the sight is the same, regardless if it is a meal served at the stone table or on a clean cloth on the ground. Next to each other, there is a line of offerings: the roast lamb in a big metal casserole, a ritual cake, a bowl with boiled wheat, a cup of red wine and a small wax candle (Fig. 4). We have counted 23 ritual cakes and casseroles with roast meat as well as some hundred people on the plateau (our hosts testified later, at lunch, that last year and the year before that there were twice as many people).

The priest was waited upon. The first to appear is Father Aleksandar Đorđević, Father Aca as he is called by his parishioners (Petrović and Jovanović 2013). He says that he came to this region, a long time ago, in 1966 and that he has been officially retired since last year. Now he has come to give a hand to his colleague, Slobodan Ilić, who has recently been appointed to this place by the Bishop of Niš Jovan. A young priest is late for being held while giving a service in the neighboring village (a

price to pay for poor organization of assignments, says Father Aca with a smile on his face). He hastily puts – before the cross decorated with lilies and field flowers – a bowl with water, a bunch of basil, a metal cross and a censer with incense, thus starting the reading of prayers and parts from the Gospel from the Holy Scriptures (Fig. 5). The joyous parishioners show a little interest to participate in the liturgy in the open; they murmur and casually chat while the curious ones, in a tourist manner, record for good the ritual ceremony by photographing it. Still, behind the clergymen cassocks a queue is slowly forming; namely, the custom requires people to receive a blessing with holy water and to kiss the holy cross as well as to symbolically drop a few coins or a paper money before it – contribution remaining for the priest (Fig. 6).

Then the main part of the ceremony starts: cutting of the celebration cake. It is proper for the priest to stop before every cake, cut it with the host, spill red wine over it and give a blessing to the whole family (Fig. 7). Immediately after that, the family members would take a few snacks of the roast meat (Fig. 8). On that particular occasion, it happened that at that very moment it began to drizzle, a fine spring rain. In order to quicken the procedure and in fear of a greater shower, Father Aleksandar took to another ritual activity: he skillfully used his knife to cut off the shoulder blade of the roast lamb which he put down in a big canvas bag that one of the older villagers dutifully carried for him (Fig. 9).⁷ While some of the people were still waiting for their turn of cake-cutting, others started to collect the food and drinks laid out on the tables. No socializing was felt among the people (partly because of the rain); neither was any festive atmosphere felt; there was neither music nor dance: Everybody seemed to be in a hurry to go back to his home and take to their holiday meal. The field was soon empty; only here and there a village dog was sniffing the remains of the food.

THE VOTIVE CROSS DEDICATED TO THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD IN GRADINJE: AN EXAMPLE OF THE CLAN-FAMILY CELEBRATION

Gradinje is a farming and cattle-breeding village of compact type, four kilometers east of Dimitrovgrad, located close to the international highway and railroad Niš-Sofia. A settlement entity of Gornje (Upper) Gradinje belongs to the ancient settlements; it dates back to as early as the Roman period. It is at the sea level of 550 meters. Close to the traffic lines is Donje (Lower) Gradinje, formed after the Second World War and, as a whole, adopted to the functioning of the road customs office “Gradina” (a forwarding organization within the customs terminal, car depot of the Auto Moto Association of Serbia, tourist-catering objects, petrol station, private car services) (Владимиров 2001, 515). Of 161 inhabitants the prevailing ones are of Bulgarian nationality and Orthodox faith (Population Census 2014).

Location and outlook of the cross. A few hundred meters from the last houses of Gornje Gradinje, on the south-west side of the village, on a plain that a winding and pebble-covered road leads to, there is a single-nave and single-apse church of Saint Savior. It is built of carved stone and brick; its dimensions are 10,7 times 4,5m; it is covered with roofing tiles and paved with ceramic tiles. It is believed to have been built on the foundations of an older stone church destroyed in an earthquake in 1939. Next to it is a newly-built bell tower (Иванов и др. 2013, 74-75).

Thanks to the efforts and money donations by the local people, the present outlook of the Church was completed in 1998 while its iconostasis was painted in 2012. Around 2006 additional works were done of the space, namely, the ground around the Church was leveled; two water fountains from the 19th century were restored with the curbs around them; an effort was made to divert a small river flow by

⁷ I was suprised to see a boy triumphantly waving with a lamb blade taken from the canvas bag. Laughing, Nikolajče Manov told me how from the times immemorial there is a custom challenging people to „steal“ the lamb blade reserved for the priest and eat it secretly in a nearby bush. The idea is not to abuse the priest but it was believed that in this way the thunderous clouds would pass by the village.

concrete cascades (unsuccessfully, since the water undermined the concrete foundations) and a small artificial bridge was made over it.

These building endeavors have brought back the reputation to the centuries-old votive cross: it was taken from the nearby abundant vegetation where somebody had put it many years ago and placed on a supported concrete stand, opposite to the Church, under the shadow of the almond and poplar trees (Fig. 10).⁸ The upper arm has a smaller cross engraved in it, with triangles on its ends. The surface of the left and of the right arms, as well as the central part of the cross, is taken by the inscription “ПЕТРА/СПАСЬ”, while underneath the lower arm there is inscribed the year of its making: 1890. The arms are bordered with a contour line, each of them having two spherical protrusions or “apples”; the lower arm is separated from the cross body by a twice-interwoven line in the form of a braid. The cross is seventy centimeters high; the arms are thirty and six centimeters wide; its thickness is ten centimeters (Ирѡв 2013, 87). At its bottom, placed on the concrete stand, lay fragments of another cross: its upper arm, with an also improvised small cross with triangular ends as well as parts of its sides with the inscription “ПОСТОЛ/АНГЕЛКО/ЙОНКА.”

This does not complete the story about votive crosses in Gradinje. They can be found on several other locations in the immediate vicinity. They are dedicated to some particular dates in the religious calendar. Care about them is taken by one or, collectively, more families. The village has its patron saint celebration, St. John, but on St. George’s Day the cross some ten meters away from the village graveyard is attended collectively (Fig. 11). The spring vegetation hides a true picture: the human eye tends to skip over the white stones which, in an irregular circle, border the sacral space within which each family has its own particular place. The custom requires the butchering of a young and horny lamb; the gathering assumes ubiquitous celebration, with the whole day of singing, dancing and music. Such a practice gradually lost in intensity and it was completely abandoned in the second half of the twentieth century; a bitter fate, however, did not befall the Cross of St. Savior.⁹ Quite the contrary, the last decades have witnessed the renewed interest of the third generation of descendants in ancient customs that are being breathed some contemporary elements.

Talks with local people Our visit to Gradinje started in a family home, restored with love and building dexterity, of the retired construction engineer Grigor Stančev (1937) nicknamed Goša and his wife Ana Stančev (1943). The aged marriage partners of joyous spirit and of sound minds, are not typical representatives of the community. Goša was born in Sofia but the family returned to its household hearth in 1948, after Father’s retirement and a pressing desire to take care of his own parents. The professional duties took him at quite an early age to faraway Slovenia where he remained till his retirement. Now he customarily spends every spring and every summer at his ancestral estate. With a smile on his face he answers to our questions about the customs related to the cross on one of the greatest religious holidays in the Christian world; yet, he also discloses to us that the village has collectively attended another cross, also on St. George’s Day:

⁸ Local people confirm that the cross has never changed its location unlike the objects in its vicinity. Firstly in its background there was a modest church mansion (*madarnica* or the place where people find a shelter from rough weather; also eat and drink for the souls of the dead); it was destroyed in order to make space for building a primary four-classes school with a hall for cultural and artistic activities and a playground for children. With the building of a new village school, the old one was extinct and later on torn down to its foundations in 1963.

⁹ By shrugging in doubt when asked why something like that happened, the villagers find the main reason, firstly, in former fear of sanctions because of disrespecting the proclaimed atheist agitation. In the border area much more care was taken about the party discipline; in a moment one could lose a state employment if charged for flirting with so-called retrograde religious practice. Collective mores were abandoned, such as, for instance, a common celebration of St. George’s Day unlike deeply rooted habits of individual families, especially of their oldest members.

“Even from my early childhood days I have preserved the memory of going to the cross on every St. Savior’s Day and that the cross had existed for decades before that. Firstly the whole village went to another stone which was located immediately above the graveyard; it is there even now but the field is overgrown with grass and shrubs. I remember well, people went there on St. George’s Day. As a child, the whole thing pleased my heart since every family brought there a roasted male lamb, with horns, in addition to thick yogurt and cheese. Priest Ilija came up the slope on a horse and he put, with the help of the envoy, in his saddle bag, a lower jaw of each lamb, a shoulder blade and part of the cake. Now the priests have taken to modern habits; they only take money.

I do not know the reason why this practice was abandoned. As a young man I went to work in Slovenia; when I was back, the custom existed no more. Probably this was done under the impact of police prohibitions since this is a border area and people were much scared of losing their hard-won state employment because of religious rites. Another thing surely has contributed to all this: with people’s departure from these regions, cattle-breeding has died out; no more people were there to tend sheep.

The hosts of the St. Savior’s Cross are the families coming from three village lineages: the Božins, the Džurins and the Badins.¹⁰ All of them together prepare a „prayer“, jahnija; they bring it all to the cross and distribute it to the people present at the celebration. Together with jahnija, they obligatory bring a cake, wheat, wine and a candle as well. The priest first incenses jahnija on the cross and cuts the cake of the host family; then he takes turns in cutting the cakes of the other village families pouring, at the same time, wine over it. All people approach to take a sip of stew and a piece of cake and then a collective lunch starts. All that has been brought here (sweets, pies) people offer to each other.

The attendance of the cross has never been interrupted – nor even in the communist times – only the number of people was smaller, usually only old wives. Surely someone on behalf of the families who made a vow was obligatory present.”

Ana Stančev joins the conversation:

“There used to be Vasil the Confectioner who brought sweet colorful sticks and lollipops, candy roosters; now no such a thing is done; now they are bringing the sweets bought in a store.... Previously we all sat on the ground (in Zabrdje and Burel there are stones for each family unlike in our place; but we know what family is assigned what particular place around the cross); a few years ago these blocs were used for making dining tables. Firstly, each one enters the church, lights up a candle (I light up candles for good health of the living; as for the dead ones, I light them up in the graveyard), says a prayer, leave some smaller gift or coins.”

Goša is taking up:

“Other invited guests can also participate. Partying lasts for two hours (unless some rainy cloud disperses us like it did last year). Some people come earlier, others later and stay longer; some people, by God, take to drinking, on this very spot, in front of the cross.

There used to be music all the time. There were many self-educated accordion players in Dimitrovgrad. We were regularly visited by Pera with a Roma, Slavko Kolev; they both died in the meantime. The last time, two years ago, there came accordion-player Boba, with my namesake Goša who played a goblet drum. Last year no musicians came; I do not know what is going to be like this year on St. Savior’s Day.”

We all get in the car and around ten o’clock we set out to the village church.

¹⁰ In fact there were five of them (the Lilaš family and the Pckov family along with the above-mentioned ones) but in the case of two families their family line was extinct, meaning there were no living descendants to carry on the family tradition.

Family-clan principle of the celebration. Today the cross is taken care of by three family lines from Gradinje, the Božins, the Džurins and the Badins (Fig. 12). The oldest representatives of each of these families are no longer alive. Nikola, on behalf of the Božins, left behind his son Aleksandar Dimitrov and daughter Finika; the tradition has been taken up by Finika, married Georgiev, with her husband Vasil; they have grown-up children, a son and a daughter. Petar and Lila are from the Badins; they have left a son and a daughter; the carrier of the tradition is Asen Petrov who, together with his wife Divna, has two daughters, Lila and Nataša. Finally, the Džurins were represented by Milan and Pavlina Stančev; they left behind a son and a daughter; by the male line, care about the cross was taken over by Ivan with his wife Snežana; they have a daughter to inherit them.

In preparing a sacrifice, that is, cooking a lamb *stew*, the families take turns every year; last year this was Finika's duty while this year is Ivan's; the next year is Asen's. Still, they emphasize that all of them together share expenses for the lamb. Ivan reveals to us that their elders used to carry a special cauldron to the cross; they started preparing ritual food very early in the morning. Even today the *stew* is being cooked in early morning but this is done in the family home, on the electric stove; thus, it is easier and faster. The day before is reserved for butchering a lamb, cleaning its meat and, together with other sauces, the chopped meat is ready for further cooking.

Asen Petrov tells us that his Grandfather Kola has decided "to go out" to the cross because of the cattle dying out, i. e., the moment they buy a sheep or some bigger cattle, it dies of some disease. Ivan Stančev explains that in their case the health care is of decisive importance for making a vow, only this time human health; i. e., Grandmother Milja could not walk; taking out a "prayer" to the cross was meant to make her feel better. The skeleton of the evidence is kept in the memories of the postwar generations; the details have got lost somewhere together with the deceased who knew more about them.

All of them are proud to say that the custom has never been broken. One could always find a few head-covered old women who lit up candles and observe the tradition even at the times when the practitioners of these ancient customs were looked upon depreciatingly or even pay a strict penalty. The young people, questioned by party commissioners, helplessly shrugged while explaining they could not have any impact on their elders. It was more important that this was not done by those having a membership card of the Communist Union; somehow the defiant and obstinate practice observed by old men and women was somehow passed over in silence. When in the nineties of the twentieth century this Balkan historical episode ended, firstly somewhat shyly and then more and more with a sense of obligation towards the still alive tradition, the grey-headed fifty-year old people, those who returned from urban centers and of a well-off social standing, got organized in order to renew the "prayer" as well as links with Orthodoxy. Slightly as a fashionable deed or rather with a not-so-developed feeling for religious things, the collected money was used for renewing the Church and its accompanying objects in its immediate vicinity; the cross overgrown with grass (or maybe pulled out from its original position by force and by some hard-headed Communist) was cleaned and, with pride, its original function was restored to it. A message reached them from their parents what to do and how to do it as the memories dictated and St. Savior's Day again became an important date in the annual celebration cycle of Gradinje.

Religious rites. We are early; no one there to keep us a company. We notice how the grass on the plateau before the cross is tidily mowed. Goša and Ana take their seat defined in advance. They have brought with them folding chairs and a table; after covering it with a clean cloth they put on it a cake, a bowl with wheat, a bo-

ttle of wine and some bread for the ritual.¹¹ Half an hour before noon, the number of cars before the renewed water fountain is multiplied; people begin to exchange greetings and the youngest make noise. Each group of celebrants stops right before its place, near a small improvised two-row wall of hollow blocs. The first thing to do is to pay a short visit to the small church along with lighting of candles and giving gifts to the icons: paper money of smaller value (Fig. 13). Then, on the covered tables, people hastily lay down bowls with food and ritual bread. Few candles also burn at the bottom of the cross while its arms are decorated with field and garden flowers (Fig. 14). For this year's "prayer" the obliged is Dr Ivan Stančev's family; their arrival is waited for with impatience. Finally, the representatives of the Džurin clan do come bringing a lamb *stew* in two metal casseroles to the cross at whose edges thin wax candles are arranged (Fig. 15). The ceremony is launched by the retired priest Aca, who has, for many decades, followed ebbs and tides in the religious life of Dimitrovgrad villages. Saying a short prayer in one breath, he blesses, with holy water, the cross and the dishes with *jahnija* as well as all those present who leave, on the concrete pedestal, coins (Fig. 16). He starts cutting the cake of the three vowed families and then of all the present; the cake-maker usually puts in his hand a bill of hundred or two hundred *dinars*. We have counted 11 village families and some fifty people; there are babies in the prams but no representatives of older generations who are the most deserving ones for keeping the custom alive in the hard times; they are either already dead or their health is seriously damaged so that they have passed on the entire celebration of St. Savior's to their sons, daughters, grandchildren and their guests (Fig. 17). The next thing to do is to start pouring the "prayer" into metal and plastic dishes and to distribute pieces of one of the three main cakes to all the holiday celebrants (Fig. 18); the stew is consumed at the very spot, along with the rest of an abundant meal (Fig. 19). On the sun-lit clearance before the cross, the lunch lasts for almost two hours in the spirit of nice talks, laughter and jokes and mutual offerings of the displayed food (Fig. 20).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The desire to placate powerful natural forces and to suppress their negative consequences for agricultural production and sheer physical existence of villagers has made the traditional village community develop, in the days of old, a system of collective *ritual* or *cult* practice.¹² The magical-religious procedures were to satisfy general village needs as well as those of a separate village household or, in its turn, the very individual (manifest function of the ritual). At the same time, it has intensified the awareness of the members about their belonging to the community as well as inner cohesion of the collective under the difficult living conditions (latent function of the ritual).

Collective village rituals are considered to be all those different forms of the ritual practice which involve all the village community members as their participants (formal aspect), thus becoming an important component of the traditional popular culture (Бандић 1978, 112). These celebrations include village holidays, church and village patron saint holidays, dancing and singing processions dedicated to the goddess of rain (*dodole*), maidens' processions for Lazarus Saturday (*lazarice*) as well as visiting votive crosses on great religious holidays.

¹¹ The tradition which is abandoned is to take out food and put it on the ground. Except for two cases, all the village families have brought, as disciplined to do, in cars or tractors, handy tables and chairs. The newly built concrete blocs, on the left and right sides of the cross, also serve for the people to sit in.

¹² Much later, these collective rituals were fit in into the Christian holiday calendar.

The continuance, for many centuries or millennium, of Orthodox Christianity has been enabled by adopting ancient spiritual legacy, that is, by gradually modifying the achievements of popular religiosity. Any other substance of the new model of faith has not, however, taken deeper roots in people's souls; original beliefs and authentic ideas are wearing a Christian cape but they have not turned into expected ecclesiastic piety (Петровић 2013); even more so in the unfavorable periods faced by the Orthodox Christian faith at the Balkans such as, for instance, five centuries of enslavement by the Turks and half a century of atheization and secularization after the Second World War.

The revitalization of the religious-ecclesiastic complex in Serbia initiated in the late eighties of the last century launched anew a debate about citizens' attitude towards religion in terms of its being either "devotion to faith" or just "coming closer to religion and church." The research projects have shown that the declarative statement in religious terms has not been accompanied by respective religious awareness and practice; salvation is counted upon though neither religious duties were carried out nor a set of ecclesiastic ritual activities were observed (Blagojević 2009, 2011; Đorđević 2009; Радуловић 2012; Тодоровић 2013). Contrary to the expectations of ecclesiastic hierarchs, the greatest number of "Orthodox" believers has remained within the limits of the ritualistic folk religiosity. What has been renewed is, in fact, "people's Orthodoxy" (Bandić 2010), a simplified and unconventional version of ecclesiastic Orthodoxy which, in socialism, was additionally reduced to the level of cultural tradition observance. Or, as some domestic sociologists of religion have defined it: "the Serbs, in the early twentieth-first century are religious in the traditional way – without believing" (Đorđević 2009, 62).

Among the most consistent manifestations of people's religiosity from the spring-summer celebration cycles of the village households in Dimitrovgrad region are all-village or family-clan rituals around a *stone celebration/votive cross*.¹³ These rituals have deep mythological and pagan roots; they are related to the cult worship of nature. In the process of Christianization they more or less adopted the form of worship of a particular chosen saint or made vows. As a sign of worship of the patron-protector a blood animal sacrifice is offered either as a roast lamb (village celebration) or ritual food of lamb meat such as Kurban Chorba, "prayer" (family celebration). No one in particular is invited to the celebration around the cross though, as an unwritten rule, the collective gathering involves all the living descendents otherwise dispersed all over the country and abroad. The prepared ritual food is served to all those present at the celebration regardless of their kin relations with the family under a vow. The custom is inherited by the patrilineal principle, that is, a straight male-line. With their faces turned to the east, members of particular families, together with their guests, take a strictly defined place before the cross; they perform previously-defined ritual activities in the presence of an Orthodox priest: they cut and pour wine over a ritual cake; then they endow the present with pieces of bread, a snack of boiled wheat and a peace of meat or a ladle of ritual dish (the priest preserves for himself a lamb shoulder blade and gifts in money).

To the centuries-old efforts of the official Orthodox to completely Christianize them, the masses of village people in Serbia have responded by constructing a specific "people's religion", that is "people's Orthodoxy"; by accepting ecclesiastic rituals but interpreting them in an un-Christian magical way. St. George is, for instance, celebra-

¹³ Unlike the majority Serbian nation, the Bulgarian population in Serbia does not celebrate their cross holiday though they actively participate in the rituals related to the village holidays or going out to family votive crosses.

ted as one of the most favored saints but the rites for St. George's Day include, without exception, milking of sheep through small garlands of interwoven plants as well as ritual butchering of a lamb exactly on the votive cross dedicated to St. George.

Similarly to other instances of people's religiosity, (Bandić 1997; Ивановић Баришић 2007; Тодоровић И. 2007), the first change of contextual concept related to the votive cross was done under socialist secularization when the prevailing *magical-religious* festivities gave way to the *social* character of feasting. In order not to lose the holiday itself in the orchestrated marginalization of Orthodoxy, the villagers turned into a universal ranchers' celebration. The participation of privileged household members – usually family heads, familiar with the meaning, power and force of particular ritual activities – was given a festive atmosphere (with music, singing and dancing). By participating in the rituals, the other family members got to know their formal side though their religious essence eluded them. The sacred deeds were made profane; their primary magical content was diluted; the place of old celebratory content which was familiar to people's memory was taken over by entirely new ones.

Faith in efficiency of the supernatural protectors of people and property started to additionally lose its vitality under the changed circumstances of life, i. e., decline of the volume of agricultural production in the villages. Younger generations started to base their fundamental values and future life goals upon the achievements of industrialization and urbanization. The village stopped being an autarchic community, dependent on the vicissitudes of nature and oriented towards strict practice of the routine habits. The oblivion of the attitudes taken by their fathers and grandfathers occurred under the impact of the official atheist upbringing in educational institutions. In emptied villages, with the last old men and women, there died also the remembrance of the ancient habituated practice from the annual calendar cycle. The next reversal in the concept of ritual practice came with the ubiquitous Orthodoxization of Serbia which started in the late twentieth century. It aroused the contemporary dwellers in Dimitrovgrad villages to “revive” – relying on their own fading memories and interpretations of the eldest household folks – the holiday customs around votive crosses. As the main performers, the present generations, in their adult age, from Radejna and Gradinje, have taken to celebrating important dates from the church calendars. Yet, they do it more as a habit and less from the conviction in the efficiency of the undertaken activities, as well as with many *distortions* of the habituated practice.

Persistent manifest function of the ritual unlike its latent one. The needs of an individual village household are still met (a material welfare of some families proved by building stone support under the holy spot around the cross; gathering of otherwise dispersed members of a narrow and extended family on – state-approved – non-business days and school holidays: or simple observance of tradition and folklore) but the gathering, on a village holiday, with “going out to” the cross is not, by any means, what it used to be - a factor of uniting and integrating the village community.

Reduced participation of village households. In the years when the village community collectively was at the mercy of natural disasters there was an obligation to participate in ritual activities of all the households while today particular families do not participate in the village festivities due to their physical weakness, or poor material state or a drastic decline of the household members.

Changed structure of holiday participants. Once the celebration organization included almost exclusively people of a village, together with neighbors and close cousins; today guests include friends, acquaintances and business colleagues.

Change of duration and place of celebration. Socializing of villagers before the votive cross in the second half of the twentieth century lasted for the who-

le afternoon of St. George's Day (Radejna), along with mutual exchange of food and drinks as well as rejoicing and festivities; the next day was reserved for guests. At present, efforts are being made to perform all the rites before "small-scale sacred objects" before the end of the first afternoon hour while the central event is lunch with guests in individual households.

Reduction of some pagan motives. Lack of livestock in the villages has caused people to abandon the customs for ensuring cattle fertility and abundant yields in cattle-derived products (no garlands are made of grass; neither are they used to decorate lambs and milking buckets with). In the first half of the twentieth century the "prayer" (ritual dish) was made in the cauldrons at the very cult site, behind the votive cross, under the tree; today it is prepared in the household and then taken in big casseroles to the cross. Likewise, the butchering of a sacrificial animal used to be done before the cross along with indispensable sprinkling of the cross with the lamb blood; with the introduction of the Orthodox customs, this was replaced by offering sacrifice in the village household.

Simplification, shortening or introduction of new Orthodox customs. The participation in the church liturgy and gift-giving to the Orthodox priest in natural products (ritual bread, a lamb's shoulder blade and a lower lamb's jaw) are replaced by ritual candle lighting in the church, a shortened address by the priest and blessing people before the cross as well as endowing the priest with modest monetary contributions.

Introducing innovations into the ritual. Walking along an earth road to the cross has been replaced by car drives; ritual sacrifice preparation is now done by modern appliances (instead of a skewer and hearth there are electric stoves and big metal casseroles); food is not put on the ground but on folding tables; wooden and plastic chairs are used for sitting; home-made wine and brandy (*rakia*) are replaced by industrial brands while lollipops and sugar sticks of the former confectioner are now replaced by industrial sweets.

On the wave of retraditionalization of the public role of religion and religious feelings in the Serbian society, the official church doctrine openly tries to impose itself again on three generations of the people from Dimitrovgrad villages: an ever-declining number of the *eldest family members* who have forgotten so many things about the original forms of the holiday ritual proceedings, the *middle generation* that has not accepted a sufficient amount of systematic knowledge about practicing popular customs and the *young* one that, even if it wanted to, has no one to teach it about folk legacy. Therefore, regarding the third change of the collective pre-Christian and para-Christian conceptions – more precisely, the prevalence of the Orthodox-Christian semantic context in people's belief and practice – the newly-appointed priest Slobodan Ilić will have to make the most of all his knowledge and patience since an undeveloped religious conscience is ruling over his flock. From a long-term perspective, the results might be the most fruitful in the theological shaping of a village offspring.

That is why the renewed interest in worshipping votive crosses in the villages of Dimitrovgrad, from the last two decades, could be considered as a traditional popular religion rather than an expression of Orthodox churchization.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig. 1. The Church of Saint George and Saint George's Votive Cross in Radejna



Fig. 2. Candle Lighting and Endowment of Saint George's Icon



Fig. 3. People from Radejna before the Votive Cross



Fig. 4. Roast Lamb, Candle, Boiled Wheat and Red Wine – Indispensable on the Ritual Dining Table



Fig. 5. Young and Old Priests Reading a Prayer before the Votive Cross



Fig. 6. Participants of Village Celebration Receiving Holy Water Blessing



Fig. 7. Priest Cutting a Ritual Cake



Fig. 8. People Taking a Snack of the Sacrificial Roast Meat



Fig. 9. Priest Cutting the Meat and Preserving a Lamb Shoulder Blade



Fig. 10. St. Savior's Votive Cross in Gradinje



Fig. 11. Decaying St. George's Cross in Gradinje



Fig. 12. Father Aleksandar with Representatives of the Celebrating Families (Božins, Badins and Džurins)



Fig. 13. Candle Lighting in the Church of Saint Savior



Fig. 14. Decorated Votive Cross in Gradinje



Fig. 15. "Prayer" – Ritual Stew of Young Lamb's Meat



Fig. 16. Blessing of the Votive Cross and Ritual Meal



Fig. 17. Cutting the Ritual Cake



Fig. 18. Distributing the "Prayer"



Fig. 19. Dining-table before the Votive Cross



Fig. 20. People from Gradinje in a Relaxed Atmosphere before the Votive Cross

Neven Obradović
Marija Jovanović

CHURCH OF SAINT PETKA: THE FAMOUS PLACE IN BOSILEGRAD*

ABOUT BOSILEGRAD AND VILLAGE OF RIBARCI

On the junction of three borders: Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria, with very modest natural, material and infrastructure resources, and with large demographic depletion, in the far southeast part of Serbia, you can find the town of Bosilegrad, popularly known as Krajište.

Bosilegrad covers an area of 571 km² and extends from the top of the mountain Vardenik (Mali Strešer) in the north, to the border with the Republic of Macedonia in the south, and from Besna Kobila in the west to the mountain Milevska at the Bulgarian border to the east.

In the valley where the Božička and Ljubatska rivers merge and flow as Dragovištica you can find the city of Bosilegrad as the municipal and urban centre of this area. In addition to the urban area, the municipality of Bosilegrad includes another 36 rural settlements (<http://www.bosilegrad.org/sr/OBosilegradu.aspx>).

According to the census from 2011, municipality of Bosilegrad has 7979 inhabitants, 31.7% of which (2530) live in urban areas of Bosilegrad, and 68.3% (5449) of the population live in other rural areas. The total population of the municipality of Bosilegrad consist of: 71.83% Bulgarians (5839), 11% Serbs (895) and 2% Roma (162). Less than 1% are other minorities (Albanians, Macedonians, Slovaks, etc.) (http://media.popis2011.stat.rs/2011/prvi_rezultati.pdf).

ON THE TERRITORY OF THE PARISH OF BOSILEGRAD

There are 37 Orthodox churches, part of the archdiocese Bosilegrad. The largest number of the facilities have been brought in a functional state in the last twenty years which is required for church services, to the delight of the believing people. Church Community of Bosilegrad in cooperation with the Diocese Vranje, the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments from Niš and the relevant state bodies of the Republic of Serbia are all making efforts to preserve from decay and further ruining certain facilities of great importance for the Serbian Orthodox Church and society in general (<http://www.cobosilegrad.org/2010-02-01-10-31-12.html>). One of the churches, popularly known as the Miracle Worker Church, the Church of St. Petka, is located in the village Ribarci.

Ribarci village is located at an altitude of 815 meters and covers a total area of 626.14 hectares, 12 km southeast of Bosilegrad. With an average density of only 3.93 inhabitants per km², Ribarci village borders with villages Mlekominci, Resen and Brankovci. One part of Ribarci village borders with the Republic of Bulgaria. Sections of Ribarci village are: Padinje, Gremagenje, Gelovci, Rido and Trnici.

Similarly as throughout the entire border region of South East Serbia, the number of residents in this village is dropping drastically. In the postwar years the

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population of this village was expressed in hundreds while now it is being counted in dozens. The village of Ribarci experienced the largest decline in the number of inhabitants in the period between the sixties and the eighties of the twentieth century when the population was almost reduced by half.

According to the 2002 Census, the village of Ribarci had 39 residents whose average age was 59.8 years (59.4 for men and 60.3 for women). Data from 2011 indicate that Ribarci village had 23 inhabitants (<http://www.bosilegrad.org/sr/Ribarci.aspx>).

The ethnic composition of the population, established by the census from 2011 shows that over 70% of population of Ribarci are Bulgarians. However, it should be noted that the village Ribarci, and the whole municipality of Bosilegrad is “inhabited by people with a distinctive name of Sops – who are a bit Bulgarians, a bit Serbs, a bit Macedonians. They also use a distinctive language which is the combination of the three languages the three people mentioned use“ (Todorović, Đorđević and Obradović 2013, 203). According to their religion, they are Orthodox Christians. Today Ribarci village has a population of 15 residents.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE CULT PLACE

As a place where people ritually communicate with the divine and where they express their respect and affection towards the divinity, but also with respect to the customary content and importance to the local community, the Church of St. Petka in the village Ribarci has the characteristics of a cult place.

According to its characteristics, this famous place belongs to the type of Christian religious buildings – it is a church made of brick and concrete (Krstić 2010, 136). Church of St. Petka in the village Ribarci represents an active, alive cult site that is visited by members of different religious denominations and religions. Among the visitors the prevailing majority are Bulgarian people with the surrounding minority groups, then, the Serbs from the territory of the entire Serbia, but also the people from the wider region, that is, from the territory of the former Yugoslav republics.

This church is very often visited by the residents of the bordering municipalities of Bulgaria as well as their fellow countrymen from the entire territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. Since this church belongs to the Serbian Orthodox Church, it means that they are the ones who are taking care of it, that is, the parish of Bosilegrad. The gifts that people leave as a sign of gratitude to St Petka are a significant help for the maintenance of this church.

The church of St Petka was built in 1886. Although there is no historical evidence, there is the belief that this church was built in the place where earlier there used to be a church that was burned by the Turks. In the close vicinity of the church, there is a regional road Bosilegrad – Djustendil, and an intermunicipal road Bistar – Gornje and Donje Tlamino. Not far from the church there is the monastery of the Holy Prophet Ilija in the village Bresnica, and St. Haralampije church in the village of Brankovci. Near the church there is the village cemetery and the border crossing Ribarci (between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria). The facility has the entire infrastructure, paved road access, water, electricity, lighting inside and outside.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH

According to the architectural features of the church, this church belongs to the modest churches. The church itself “has some rarities, because, inside the church, at the roof top, you can see four evangelists, apostles Mark, Matthew, John and Luke drawn by Christ’s side, and this can rarely be seen. Due to the poor technique, the frescoes are badly deteriorated and faded” (Zupanc 2011). Since the church was

built in 1886 and there still have not been smajor investments and renovations, there is noticeable damage to the facade and outer frescoes at the entrance (Fig. 1). The church itself is a low building, with three arches and three pillars one of which was significantly damaged so this shows that it was built of wood and mud. To the left and right side of the entrance to the church there are the stands for the lighting of candles. On the left side, and around the entrance there are frescoes which are preserved, since they are located under the arch. The front wooden door is low and you need to duck when entering the church.

The floor is made of stone slabs with a path down the middle. At the center of the church, there is a stand with an icon painting of St. Petka and Resurrection of Christ. The walls inside the church are not completely covered with frescoes, but there are four frescoes- three on the left and one on the right side.

„This church is one of the few churches with many many icons inside the church. Although the icons are reproductions, their spiritual value to the people is great (Zupanc, 2011).“

Two very old icons of St. Petka are especially significant to the people, because there are believed to have healing properties (Fig. 2).

„In the morning, when the Church opens, what is felt is that pleasant fragrance and we have utmost respect for these icons.“

Respect and faith in these icons is testified by the gifts in the form of money and flowers that people leave on the icon. Large number of icons were donated to the church by believers and visitors.

There are two thrones in the church – one on the left and one on the right, and the wooden iconostasis of modest size. The altar is a fresco painted and decorated with icons and equipped with all necessary items for church services. The church has five windows, two on the outside walls and one on the altar of the church. The priest, Zoran Stojanov, says the following about his church:

“It can be said that this is a modest church in scope and in size, without the dome, except that the narthex has an icon painting of Jesus and the four evangelists. What is important on the narthex itself, on the north side, is written in Church-Slavonic language.

Woe unto them who go to fortune-tellers and soothsayers.

What is important is that the church is full of icons, mostly of recent date. These icons were verified. There are some paintings that have been removed and are now located in a nearby school, which was renewed together with the Municipality for the needs of the school and church. A few of the donated icons are located in the school. There are two thrones, one is episcopal and it is located on the south side of the church, the other is on the north side of the church. This shows that one was intended for the episcopate, which is normal for all the Orthodox Churches, and the other is for the Abbot who used to come from the village Bresnica. They show us the relationship between the Church of St. Petka, and the monastery of the Holy Prophet Ilija in the village Bresnica. The church is completely surrounded by paving stone (churchyard). We have two entrances-one on the western and one on eastern side. In the church itself, there is an entrance on the west side. What is even more specific is that the throne is rather low, it comes a little bit higher than the knee height, so when the priest serves,he literally has to duck.”

The church is surrounded by a fence that is made of mud, stone, and roof tiles on top. Two short wooden gates are the entrance to the churchyard.

On the northwest side of the church there is a separate bell tower of modest size, which is rare for churches from this period (Fig. 3). In the yard, on the west side there is a covered area with benches and tables that is intended for the visitors (Fig. 4).

It is interesting to point out that the school building, which was built at the same time as the church was, is located outside the fence, that is, outside the churchyard. However, Zoran the priest emphasises that:

“The entire land around the church as well as the school belongs to the church; when you exit the school you are still on the church land. That facility was a part of the St Petka church, and it has served various purposes – monastery, lodgings, guest house. It happened that the school was taken from us, and although we submitted a request to ask for 10 facilities to be returned for us, we will not ask for this church, since, together with the elementary school ‘Georgi Dimitrov’ we have renovated the school so we use it, the school uses it, and probably the City when some guests visit them.”

The church contains all the required small church inventory: candle holders, oil lamps, censers, small crosses, icons, church banners, pots, books etc. (Fig. 5).

“There are two special icons, one is located by the throne and it is intended for the episcopate; there is the belief that these two icons have healing properties. In the morning, when the Church opens, what is felt is that pleasant fragrance and we have utmost respect for these icons.”

People bring gifts for the church very often, and this can be seen in the church. People bring a wide variety of gifts. The most frequent gifts are money, towels, candles, cooking oil, flowers, bread with Easter eggs, etc.

VISITS TO ST. PETKA CHURCH – SPECIFICS AND DYNAMICS

When it comes to the dynamics of visiting this church, it is important to say that it is open every day and people visit it daily. In its long history, this sacred temple has been visited by different people from different areas of the former Yugoslavia and beyond. Today it is frequented by all the nations from this region and the peoples from the surrounding countries. There have been cases that Muslims used to come to this church seeking solace and salvation. Although there is no rule regarding to age of visitors to this legendary place, based on the telling of the priest Zoran Stojanov it can be concluded that nowadays there is a tendency that young people visit the Church. Moreover, this church is equally visited by men and women. They come either as a family or individually.

People show respect for the Church of St. Petka in the village Ribarci in various ways. The most common ways are: burning paraffin candles, flowers, donating items and supplies (towels, oil, flour, crocheted handicrafts, jewelery), and donating money. What makes this church different from others is that some people donated some valuable real estate to the church as a sign of respect and gratitude.

“The church owns property in the form of the forest, the forest was given to the church, and all that the church has was received from the people.”

Given the time of its foundation, it can be said that churches in the municipality of Bosilegrad arise from the great desire of the Balkan peoples to free them-

selves from centuries of reign of the Turks (uprisings) and the need for a spiritual renewal of life. However, since there is the belief that this church in Ribarci village is “the healer church”, one of the reasons mentioned for its foundation is that it was founded for healing and medical reasons. It is believed that this church was founded for medical reasons:

“... according to some sources and stories which circulate among the local population in Bosilegrad, a piece of the girdle of Saint Petka was taken and incorporated into the foundations of the Church. That is why it has healing properties. From personal experience I can tell you that St Petka in the village Ribarci indeed is a healer and we have plenty of examples of healing. We have even had examples of healing of uterus cancer, etc. These are the facts, those people are alive and well. I personally like a priest read some prayers a dozen of times; the most striking example was a woman from Paris who literally could not stand on her feet, I was reading the prayer for her on the day of Holy King Milutin. She had no orientation where she was; the woman had persecution mania, could not orient herself in space and could not act as she wanted. In three days, she was better, she now lives normally, without any problems.”

Along with the emphasis on folk medicine as a reason for the establishment and visits to the Church of St. Petka, priest Stojanov points out another fact which might be another reason for people to build, visit and respect the church, especially the Bulgarian people.

“With the blessing of the episcope of Vranje Pahomije I will tell you this but I cannot and must not go into any detail – in the close vicinity of St Petka church there is a grave that me and episcope Pahomije are familiar with and this is the grave of St Pajsije Hilandarac, who is highly respected by Bulgarian church and who is highly respected in this area. Stories that I have heard, and I am not sure if these are true, say that there is the stamp of St Pojsije Hilendarski that was found 20 years ago and it is now kept in Belgrade, in the Historical museum. I cannot confirm if this is true or not. But the grave of St Pojsije Hilendarski is located close to St Petka church and I personally confirm that. The location is a secret for now, simply because we have not established good relations with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and we do not have enough confidence in them. The church was probably just renovated in 1886 since during the Turkish invasion all Orthodox churches along the Dragovištica were destroyed, so most probably there was a temple in this place even before.”

There are many cases that speak of the miraculous power of prayer to St. Petka in the village of Ribarci. Mrs. Olivera Stančeva from Bosilegrad quoted for us the words of Ivan (Dragan) Stoimenov from the village of Rajcilovci, to whom father Ljuben Sotirov (now retired priest) read a prayer many years ago in this church:

“I was completely paralyzed. I was taken in the car on the stretcher. I was taken in the church in Ribarci on a stretcher. The priest from Ribarci was reading prayers asking for me to heal. When the priest finished with the prayer, I said to my mother: 'I can walk. Take me off from the stretcher.' They did not want to because they didn't believe me. After I insisted, they took me off from the stretcher. I started walking. Since then, everything has been fine.”

The visitors to the Church of Saint Petka emphasise that this church is especially significant for healing the diseases and achieving inner peace. You often see

people who sit barefoot on the benches, at the table, which is located on the west side of the churchyard. Talking about this custom, the priest adds:

“after talking to the people, I learned that they feel very good when they take their shoes off and sit in that place.”

People always knew and recognized the miraculous power of St. Petka and came to the church on different occasions, seeking solace and healing. Believing in the power of St Petka, people constantly come to the church in Ribarci seeking refuge in prayer. However, the church is the most visited on October 27 when it celebrates its patroness before the Lord (Fig. 6).

Traditionally, in a wonderful prayerful mood, on this day, the church and churchyard are filled many believers. (Fig. 7). In order to participate in the prayer to this great saint. People come to the church from the surrounding villages, but also from more distant parts of Serbia and the border areas of the Republic of Bulgaria.

After the Holy Liturgy is done religious procession around the temple follows (Fig. 8). After that, the holy bread is cut and the godfather for the next year is elected (Fig. 9). The following information from priest Zoran Stojanov speaks about respect, gratitude and faith in this famous place:

“We already have the godfather for 2016. Godfathers are not strictly from the village but also from Bosilegrad or even from some other places. There is a meal of love that takes place on the very patron saint's day. Procession around the church is also held, and then traditional holy bread cutting.”

The church filled with people and service that is performed on the day of St. Petka in the village church in the village of Ribarci are the example is sincere faith in Christ regardless of nationality (http://www.spc.rs/sr/proslava_praznika_prepodobne_mati_paraskeve_u_eparhiji_vranjskoj). In prayer and with spiritual pleasure and delight, the people who have visited this temple in Ribarci for more than a hundred and twenty years, testify about the importance of this place. The importance of this legendary is proven by the fact that there were no examples of its destruction or desecration. The only damage that the church has suffered is the actual physical damage as a result of time and non-renewal.

INSTEAD OF THE CONCLUSION

Just along the state border, in the far southeast of Serbia, in the municipality of Bosilegrad, is located now almost deserted village Ribarci. What makes this village that has only 15 residents not to be left to oblivion is the church of St. Petka. Widely known as a miracle worker, this church is frequently visited by many people. Believing in the miraculous power of prayer to St Petka, people come to this church everyday. By reading prayers for healing, comfort and peace of mind, by sitting in the churchyard barefoot or by participating in the Holy Liturgy and Processions around the temple on the day of St. Petka (27th October), a large number of people come every year to this place, and have done this for 128 years to communicate with otherworldly, divine. By keeping many secrets and experiences of people who faithfully visit it, the church of St. Petka in the village Ribarci defies time and remains a place where earthly and otherworldly have communicated between each other for more than a century.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig. 1. The Church of St. Petka, exterior frescoes



Fig. 2. The icons of St Petka



Fig. 3. The bell tower in the church yard



Fig. 4. Table and benches in the churchyard



Fig. 5. A number of icons



Fig. 6. Many visitors to the church of St. Petka



Fig. 7. Serving the Holy Liturgy



Fig. 8. Procession around the Church of St Petka



Fig. 9. The table just before cutting the holy bread

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CULT SITES OF LOPARDINCE MONASTERY (BUJANOVAC)*

INTRODUCTION

Cult sites, as holy places where communication with otherworldly takes place, are related to official and popular religion and beliefs (churches and monasteries, mosques, tekkes, vestiges of old temples, holy trees, holy wells, cult stones, stone and wooden crosses, and the like). In popular religion they are defined as places with a special power of influence since they are regarded as able to affect, in a variety of ways, human life; for this reason, they are shown special respect expressed in prescribed forms of conduct (Bandić 1980, 7-22). On the one hand, they represent archaic remains surviving from the deep past but, on the other hand, they are a contemporary phenomenon with an important role to play in the lives of present population. Whether in the form of a natural phenomenon or expressed in architecture, whether active or extinct, cult sites are insufficiently known places of identity and tradition of the people from the region.¹

In the border area of East and Southeast Serbia cult sites represent important artifacts of *material cultural inheritance* and testimonies of intensity and quality of *the religious life* of majority and minority peoples. By exploring cult sites, both those that are still functioning as well as extinct ones, we can obtain a quantity of information about confessional and religious identity of the ethnicities that visit them besides taking care about their maintenance. Sociologists of religion find of special interest *common* cult sites as a specific form of encounter of the two most spread religions in our country – Christianity and Islam.

The exploration of special places, those defined as cults, represents the topic of this paper. The decision to visit and explore the space around the Monastery Complex of Lopardince with the Church of Saint. Archangels Gabriel and Michael, in the north of the Municipality of Bujanovac, close to four-kilometers away Serbian village of Lopardince² is an out-of-the-ordinary challenge, even more so since the given objects are of special importance, in terms of religion and mores, for a local and wider community.

The name of the monastery is, as a rule, associated with the place closest to it, whether it is a village, town or region. In our case, it is the village of Lopardince that the whole complex (with its temple and other objects) is, in domestic referential literature, named after, namely, the *Monastery of Lopardince*. In accordance with the Serbian Orthodox tradition which states that the churches should be named after two saints as well as the fact that above the entrance door to the temple under study there is indeed confirmation that it is consecrated to Saint Michael, the monastery church is dedicated to the great martyrs, Gabriel and Michael, though the local people, in their

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¹ More about Roma cult sites, see in Đorđević 2010, 281-329.

² Village of Lopardince is described in detail in: Živković i Kostić 2012, 395-416.

everyday speech, refer to it only as the Church of Saint Archangel Gabriel.³ The edifice has not been explored in a more systematic way though it is a) evident that the Church is built on the foundations of some previous architectural structure (Rakocija 2013, 50), b) very interesting in terms of its style and structural size, c) interesting in terms of the themes it represents on its multi-layered frescoes,⁴ and d) of indubitable value not only in the context of ecclesiastical art and historiographic art legacy but also of that of early Byzantine spiritual basis as a matrix of Medieval Serbian state on the territory of present South Serbia (if we accept the lore about the way and time of its building as we were told about by local people).

Around the very monastic complex there are following objects with cult meaning: 1) near the *Church*, whose history and survival as a special sacral edifice is a matter of several traditional tales, 2) there is a *hollow stone* through which infertile women and those with spine disorders wriggle through, 3) and a *water spring* used for washing in order to heal eye diseases, and 4) as well as, some fifty meters from it, *Maiden Rock* or a rock that people used to choose to fall down from rather than to live without the rules, moral and customs of the community that they originate from and unquestioningly belong to. All the given objects are significant in terms of people's occasional visits to them as well as the fact that, with their ancestral messages, they seem to be reviving a mythical base of the order observed not only by the majority Christian Orthodox population in the north of the Municipality of Bujanovac but also some members of other nations and religious confessions.

The authors of the paper were welcome in the village center by a team of local people ready to share with them the knowledge acquired so far about the lore, construction and function of the Church of Saint Archangels Gabriel and Michael and the monastic cult sites. An active participation in the conversations was taken by Mile Milanović-Džema (1949), former president of the Local Community of the village of Lopardince, Goran Janjić (1973), former president of the Local Community and member of the village Church Board, Blagoje Janjić (1940), present tutor of the Monastery of Lopardince, Stanko Veličković (1943), inhabitant of the village of Lopardince, Sonja Veličković (1964)⁵, teacher and inhabitant of Bujanovac and Dragan Veličković (1960)⁶, born in Lopardince while now a lawyer and inhabitant of Bujanovac (Fig.1).

Before making a round of the cult sites, we paid a visit, in the center of the village, to a newly-built Church of St. Great Martyr George that testifies about particular commitment of the villagers to elevation of their religious life to a higher level.⁷ In three years of investment, the ecclesiastical edifice has obtained its outside

³ The given explanation of the name of the Monastery of Lopardince and its church is accepted as suggested by Dr Miša Rakocija, expert adviser of the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments in Niš, even more so since Dr Rakocija, as archeologist and art historian, had visited the same object before doing an expert study of it in a separate monograph (Rakocija 2013).

⁴ As for this issue, Miša Rakocija also clearly states that „the art of painting of the Church of the Monastery of Lopardince is unexplored and unknown“, that is, that it represents „an important representative of the post-Byzantine art of Serbian people“ (Rakocija 2013, 51).

⁵ Sonja Veličković is co-author of the paper about customs in Bujanovac – an account of the rites for celebration the holiday of Karaveštice (White Sunday), see Živković and Veličković 2012, 193-200.

⁶ Lawyer Dragan Veličković was a special participants in the talks about life and work in the border area, that is, in Bujanovac. More about it in Živković and Tasić 2014, 35-52.

⁷ The outlook of the Church of Saint Great Martyr George from the times when its foundations were laid out was written about and documented in Živković and Kostić 2012, 395-416. In the mentioned paper as well as in a recent text (Todorović and Živković 2014), it is emphasized that the local people do not show the same commitment and responsibility in the restoration of the dilapidated Cultural Center in which, up to the seventies of the last century, all kinds of village manifestations had taken place. Likewise, the village authorities are said to permit teachers to take care about the old elementary school building (comprising a kindergarten) and its equipment and to obtain modern technical equipment from

outlook of an Orthodox temple; the next step to take is interior decoration: setting up an iconostasis, diakonikon and altar as well as a cathedra for address and a gallery for choir. Also, the next thing to do is to arrange for the access as well as auxiliary objects (for selling candles and other relics), that is, of the whole churchyard in which there is a memorial plaque with a carved bidding by Saint George to build a church in the village.

MONASTERY COMPLEX OF LOPARDINCE

A winding road, with frequent acclivities, from the village of Lopardince⁸ to the monastery, follows the Skok River⁹ for two kilometers; the whole monastic complex is located on the slope of Kozarnik Hill, beneath the rock known as the Big Rock. Since at least twice a year, the villagers visit, in an organized way, the monastery and other places in its surroundings – on St. George's Day, on May 6, and on the day of the Church's Patron Saint Day, St. Archangel Gabriel, June 26 – they themselves, with their own means and voluntary work, broke through the rocks and thus expanded a former goat path to its present form of a wide and passable road. Firstly around 1985 and once again after 1990, joining forces with the Yugoslav Army, they made the road took on its present outlook.

Despite a difficult access to it, the Monastery of Lopardince lies on an artificially made plain and represents a pleasant oasis for rest.¹⁰ Between the road and the temple the riverbed of the Skok River is knowingly set in order and bridged by two accessible small bridges while the space in front of the ecclesiastical edifice itself is entirely paved with natural stone (Fig. 2). Along the border of the forest, as befits the whole ambience, there are some ten tables with benches; a fountain with potable water is also set up. West of the Church of Saint Archangels Gabriel and Michael there is an old mansion dating 19th century while a new one is built on the eastern side. In the northeast direction beyond the Church, some twenty meters away, there is so-called *Hollow Stone* while diagonally from the Church, close to the steep mountain slope, there is a cult healing water spring.

Monastery Church of Saint Archangels Gabriel and Michael. The cult characters of the Monastery Church, as emphasized by the local people, is pointed out by the details concerning a) its way of coming into being, b) time of building and c) later maintenance. Along with an account of its history and lore, there are also written d) accounts of congregational customs on the day of the village patron holiday as well as e) experts' accounts of the importance of the given religious complex.

(a) The original location of the Church is believed to have been planned at the place called Vrđovla, at the bottom of Konjarnik Hill, but the masons' intentions were opposed by the supernatural powers that kept on devastating the erected stone walls. The agreement was reached by choosing a new, that is, present location of the Church. A centuries-long existence of the temple has supported people's belief about its special place on the basis of the previously established agreement with the otherworldly divine authority. It might as well be possible that the given object, at some historical moment, faced its destruction since the present edifice lies on the foundations of an ancient one.

humanitarian organizations; likewise, they point out that the school has a separate and distant privy instead of sanitary and water supply facilities inside the house.

⁸ Local people insisted that they knew for sure that their village had been mentioned for the first time in the eighth century; yet, no written evidence did they point out.

⁹ Skok River is formed beyond the monastery by two tributaries – streams, Šišmanac and Papret. It, for a large part, passes through the village and it is usually of a smaller flow; it can considerably swell in the springtime while, in the summer heats, it, as a rule, goes dry.

¹⁰ Monastery Lopardince has at its disposal, in toto, 1,5 hectare of land including monastery forest.

(b) Of considerable importance is a narrative about *the time of the Church erection*. It is a firm belief of all we have talked to is that it dates from the 11th century despite the official church explanations about its 13th century origin. They repeat almost like a choir: “They don’t want to admit it dates from the 11th century since it would not be agreeable to them to admit that it is even older than the church in the Monastery of Venerable Prohor of Pčinja.”¹¹ Though the outlook, the building style and the existing frescoes on the Church walls suggest a more profound historical continuity, the rhetoric of the ecclesiastical authorities does not jeopardize the compromise-established priority of one over the other sacral object.

(c) The cult lore of the Church of Saint Archangels of Gabriel and Michael is also related to the tales about deaths of some people who wanted to *maintain the Church*, that is, to somewhat change its original outlook.

In the early nineties of the last century it was evident that the Church edifice was in the need of restoration. For this purpose the master builders led by an Arsen (most probable, migrant workers from Bosilegrad or Vlasotince) removed the roof and put a concrete bloc underneath it. The work lasted for two or three days; once it was completed the above mentioned Arsen died. The same fate was, only a few years later, experienced by the local man named Buda who fell off from the church roof while replacing the old stone blocs in order to fix the leaks in the roof. These and a few other similar examples – with no tragic outcome only by pure chance – namely, all these unfortunate happenings were sufficient enough for local people to conclude that the otherworld powers, related to the church, do not allow for any change of its original outlook. The lore is also at our disposal in order to testify that no estrangement of any part of the monastery complex is good: an Albanian stole some wood from the nearby forest but then he rushed, the faster the better, because of pangs of conscience and fear of punishment, the very next day, to bring all of it back. The people also stress that the Albanian neighbors from the neighboring village, Veliko Trnovce, have never desecrated any single part of the Monastery property.

(d) Older people mention three or four baptisms but the main *customs and rites* in the Monastery of Lopardince are related to the congregational gatherings on the Day of Saint Archangel Gabriel on June, 26. The lore about the Maiden Rock, that will be discussed in more details later, excludes music; that’s why no single wedding has ever taken at this very spot.¹²

The day before the main village celebration a blood sacrifice is given; if the patron saint holiday is fat-wise, an infertile cow is sacrificed at a special spot behind the new mansion while in the fasting days a fat-free bean is cooked. On the main day more than 300 hundred people swarm in at the monastery plateau, including not only the local people from Lopardince and their guests, but also visitors from the neighboring villages and cities. The guests bring gifts with them¹³ in return for which

¹¹ Monastery of Venerable Prohor of Pčinja is located on the slopes of Kozjak Mountain, on the left bank of Pčinja River, in the neighborhood of Klenika Village, at 30 kilometers south of Vranje. According to the lore, it was built in the 11th century by the Byzantine Emperor Romanos Diogenes as a sign of his gratitude to the Venerable Prohor of Pčinja who had prophesied to him that he would become Emperor.

¹² Baptisms and weddings of the villagers from Lopardince used to be carried out in a nearby village of Rakovac while today they are done in Bujanovac. People expect this to change, namely, that weddings, baptisms, cutting up of the celebration cakes, obsequies and other religious rites will be carried out in a newly-built village church once its interior decoration is completed.

¹³ As for the character of the gifts, it is not defined beforehand; gifts are given as befits personal choice and feeling. Most often these are towels, bed sheets, provisions for domestic use (oil, sugar, beans), drinks (fruit juices, wine, brandy) as well as clothes or parts of furniture (tables, chairs, beds, mattresses and blankets). The surplus of the gifts, namely, those not needed for daily functioning of the Monastery, is sold at auctions in the church shop in the village. The buyers are people from Lopardince themselves and other

they participate in serving drinks and food (Kurban Chorba, meat and beans) prepared by, for this occasion, a specially selected host with the help of the whole village. The celebration rites also require the host to prepare and has the *Slava* (celebration) cake blessed. The boiled wheat is not served since Saint Archangel (Arhanđel or Randel in Serbian) is regarded as a living saint as it was explained to the authors by the people they had talked to. As for religious ceremonies, the responsible ones for it are priests from the Diocese of Vranje: in 2012, the Bishop of Vranje Pahomije himself led a liturgy, blessing and cutting up of the celebration cake, monastery procession (*litije*) and did the naming of a new host for the following year.¹⁴

Along with the yielding to secular delights such as socializing, telling jokes and exchanges of news about relatives and other information, all along with eating and drinking, the congregation visitors do not miss to make a round of the Church praying and lighting candles for the dead and the living (Figs. 3 and 4) and then of the other above-mentioned places in close environment. The congregational gathering, taken as a whole, is a ritual of the highest cult importance since it promotes the role and importance of congregationalism, both for the community as a whole and for the individuals who believe they are taking over a small part of the otherworldly power by their co-participation in the religious rites and by paying visits to the above-listed cult sites.¹⁵ Not so often the monastery Church is also visited by members of other nations and religions (Orthodox Macedonians, Albanians and Roma of Islam faith) observing all the prescribed rites (candle-lighting in the Church, prayers, gift-giving in things and money). The most frequent motive is placing their hopes in its healing powers.

The Church in the Monastery of Lopardince, its accompanying objects (two mansions not inhabited over the year) and other parts of the complex (fountains, water supply, road, forest, etc.) are taken care of by the chosen tutor,¹⁶ members of the village Church Board and the Local Community of Lopardince. The restoration and other works in the Monastery are covered by the money collected from the visitors on the congregation day and by individual visits,¹⁷ auction sales of the surplus of the donated goods (see reference 13) and donations.¹⁸

(e) *Referential expert literature* tells that the Church of Saint Archangels Gabriel and Michael was “built on the old cult site in the 16th century (before 1570 since, in this context, it was mentioned for the first time in the historical sources) when it was also painted; it was restored in the second half of the 17th century and

interested parties; the practice is that the real value of the offered goods is overpriced. It is a very specific form of solidary aid to the Monastery; the money collected in this way is used for paying for other Monastery needs, including a modest monthly compensation to the tutor.

¹⁴ See official site of the Serbian Orthodox Church: www.spc.rs/sr/proslavljen_sabor_svetog_arhangel_gavrila_u_lopardincu

¹⁵ More about importance of cult sites in Pavićević 1980, 191-192

¹⁶ Present tutor of the Monastery of Lopardince is Blagoje Janjić (1940), by the resolution brought about by the village Church Board. This practice was set up as early as 19th century – as far as people remember. There was a practice that the Monastery administrating was inherited by descendents of one single family: as far as historic memory reaches, the people we talked to mentioned, with no precise sequence, descendants from the Mladenović family line (Janja, Jovan, Dobri and their son who died too prematurely, the parish priest of Vrtogoš, Mladen). Afterwards, the tradition was taken up by a pensioner, Blagoje Janjić.

¹⁷ The people we talked to confirmed that the help in the building of a new mansion on the northern side was given by an Albanian family which had donated building material.

¹⁸ Regarding the importance of the donations, a special place is taken by the public company „Airport 'Nikola Tesla'“ that, in 2011, helped with paving the plateau in front of the Church, with regularizing the riverbed of the Skok River as it passes through the monastic complex as well as small stone bridges connecting the Church with the mansion and the fountain. More details in Public Company „Airport 'Nikola Tesla'“ site: www.beg.aero/mediji/saopstenja_aero-droma.223.html?newsId=188

again painted. It was added paintings and painted over also during the 19th and 20th centuries. It was made of broken stone with sometimes plastered facades” (Rakocija 2013, 50-51).

It is a rather modest single-nave edifice with a narthex of 10 times 5 meters in size. Its interior is composed of three niches with the northern semicircular one is for Prothesis (table of oblation) while the southern one is square for Diaconicon. The middle part is taken by “alter apse designed as a bigger extended niche with a semi-spherical vault and raised from the church floor” while on the outside it is “marked with a shallow, rough arched recess clumsily drawn from the wall mass” (Rakocija 2013, 50).

The Church entrance is on the south side. Taking into account the size of the object that, on the village celebration day cannot take a great number of believers, there is an exit later broken through on the north side but, in this way, “the oldest fresco decoration of the narthex was damaged” as reported on by Miša Rakocija in his monograph. The villagers related the above described building intervention to the troubles from the Ottoman times when it was necessary for the believers to quickly flee from the Church, especially women, in the cases of unexpected Ottoman intrusion.

Without going deeper into the disputes about the age of the art legacy of the Church complex, we cannot skip over the expert’s opinion that “on the inner side of the west wall, the naos over the entrance, there is a marble plaque with a relief-sculpted vine with grape clusters, in way it was done in early Byzantine period” (Rakocija 2013, 50).

That is why are stressing that more detailed archeological studies should be done of it in order to establish its right age as well as to date the beginnings of the religious worship and Serbian Orthodox Church in the regions of South Serbia.

Mansions of the Monastery of Lopradince. As for the mansions of the Monastery of Lopradince, they can be said to perform the basic function of the mansion, namely to serve as a dwelling-place for monks and other clergy. No one dwells there for good since it is without a congregation of monks in permanent residence. As we have already stated, the tasks of the Monastery administration as well as care about its maintenance were taken over by the tutor, the Church Board and the village local community.

The older mansion was built on the west side and it dates 19th century as local people say. It was renovated prior to 1990 and it now performs the function of a big dining room in the days of the village celebration (Fig. 5). The mansion on the east side used to be only a tile-covered summer house before, between 2000 and 2002, having a one-storey house built in the same spot (Fig.6). On the ground floor there is a somewhat small dining room in addition to the office premises and a kitchen with three built-in cauldrons for food preparation and a cupboard with dishes and other provisions. On the floor there are sleeping rooms with bunk beds for guests and two more separate rooms for a clergyman and celebration host.¹⁹

THE HOLLOW STONE

The worship of the *Hollow Stone*, some twenty meters above the Monastery of Lopradince is not new in the popular tradition.²⁰ A natural complex consists of

¹⁹ All the things therein, namely, beds, mattresses, bed sheets, blankets, furniture in the room designed for the celebration host, in addition to tables, benches, kitchenware, including the cauldrons for cooking food, are donated to the Monastery by better-off donors, mostly from abroad.

²⁰ As for man’s attitude to stone as a cult object in the animistic sense, S. Petrović states its various modalities: „Between the soul and the stone there is a close relationship (...). A rough stone is taken down from heavens (...). The stone is living and life-giving (...). In a pierced stone a coin is thrown in or a hand, head

two big unpolished stones: one is, in all its length, laying on the ground while the other is, with one of its ends, leaning against it thus making a circular orifice sufficient enough for the human body to pass through it (Fig.7). This action is undertaken by infertile women and people with spine troubles. The size and strength of these two stones do not allow for any other people's intervention which only confirms the belief that this is an instance of the "standing stone"²¹ whose variety of beneficial effects on man are told and retold in numerous popular legends. They are, in their turn, based on "an assumption or belief that the stone is powerful if a soul or spirit resides in it" (Bandić 1991, 67). The otherworldly aspect is related to the transfer of its life power to man since it is considered „alive“, as stated by Bandić, i.e., some higher and more powerful being having the ability to revive and regenerate sick organs resides in it. Adding to it is another cult element which refers to the very passage through a hole or circle, as a symbol of the sun, which fosters up the belief in the power of „regeneration by means of a female cosmic principle“ (S. Petrović). The people we talked to have not confirmed that, after the passage through is completed, the stone is given gifts in the form of money or some other material things (bandanas, handkerchiefs, towels, stockings, diapers, children's blouses, etc.).

THE HEALING WATER SPRING

In all popular religions, including the Serbian one, water has always had a supernatural power ascribed to it. The power of the otherworldly or miraculous in water comes from its depths so that the caves and surface sources that water is springing from have always had a special importance. The base of the meaning as existing in the lore implies that water "possesses a living principle that can be conditionally regarded as equal to the concept of the soul. Therefore, it was imagined as some sort of a creature so that people behaved towards it in that way" (Bandić 1991, 62).

Since water can also be "living"²² or "healthy", then it can have a healing power. That is exactly how the people from Lopardince see their water spring some ten meters away from the new mansion and on a gentle but easy accessible slope thanks to an improvised wicker staircase (Fig. 8). Even at times other than one-day gatherings, people having problems with sight do come and wash over the spring. It is very shallow of not more than half a meter in diameter; until recently it has never gone dry. There are no special washing rituals; no towels or handkerchiefs are left near it²³; water is three times taken by hand and used for dabbling the eyes before waiting to get dry naturally on the face. This ritual gesture (three-times washing as part of a magic act) by a visitor from this world establishes a link with the otherworldly good power thus trying to change the most immediate reality.

or the whole body is drawn into it; they are considered as protective from curses and possessing the capacity of fertilizer. Some ethnologists think that a ritual act of passing through a hole in the stone assumes the belief in regeneration through the mediation of a female cosmic principle" (Gebrant-Chevalier) (www.svevlad.org.rs/knjige_files/petrovic_mitologija.html, Chapter „Impersonal Demons of Divinity“)

²¹ For this approach Bandić finds support in Vuk Stefanović Karadžić's *Dictionary* saying that „in Vuk's *Dictionary*, a stranger is mentioned as a stone „that grew out of the ground so that he cannot move.' In other words, this is a stone that is firmly, steadily standing“ (Bandić 1991, 67).

²² Water can also be „dead“ but it is, due to its death-relatedness, impure and it is not used.

²³ The cases of wiping away water from eyes or faces – for the purpose of which there are towels and similar cloths hanging near the spring, are related to „the belief that by some magic their 'sickness' is transmitted to them and as such it is left near the spring where it now gets into contact with benevolent demons of Vid. Such towels, handkerchiefs are to be seen everywhere near 'healing water springs.' They are a taboo, not to be touched – since they are considered as religiously 'impure' since, according to the contagious magic (magic by touch), they are sickness-infected“ (according to www.svevlad.org.rs/knjige_files/petrovic_mitologija.html, Chapter „Impersonal Demons of Divinity“)

THE MAIDEN ROCK

The popular lore about the tragedy of an abducted Serbian maiden has given shape to a cult nature of the rock at the very entrance to the Monastery of Lopardince (Fig. 9). A story has remained about the intruding Turkish company that, on the occasion of a congregational gathering under the Ottoman rule, broke into the feast and, before the eyes of all the people, abducted the most beautiful girl. After putting her on the horse before him, the satisfied Turk, with his attendants, start galloping along a goat pathway back to the village. Aware of the misfortune that befell her and wishing to spare herself and the village of a great shame, the courageous girl, making the most of the riders' carelessness, spurred a horse in the vicinity of a hill slope. The horse, unable to stop on a rough terrain, went down the slope, taking both the girl and the rider to death. The ethos of a sacrifice on the part of an individual or a wider community is deeply rooted in the Serbian people; it testifies about a continuous resistance to the invader. About a highly moral and honorable conduct of men and women as well as their refusal to take up a way of life that is not in accordance with the rules and customs of their affiliated community, there are numerous examples in the Serbian folk poetry and prose.²⁴ With lot of confidence did Mile Milanović show us alleged traces of the horse's hoofs (Fig. 10) while it had pranced before going down to the abyss as well as an imprint of a Turkish sword (Fig. 11), captured in stone for good. Since that day, as a remembrance of the girl's tragic fate, neither music nor gaiety are there in the Monastery; no weddings are taking place, either.

The present outlook of the *Maiden Rock*, as the popular name persevered, does not correspond to its original appearance from the above-mentioned legend nor to its state from two decades ago. Originally this was a massive rock that extended on both the sides of the present road with a small winding pathway close to it which was wide enough for the passage of a beast of burden and man. In the nineties of the last century, during war campaigns around the Kosovo border, the former Yugoslav Army took steps to make an easier access for people and mechanization to strategic positions by building a new road network. The miners, careful in their work, had the massive rock divided in such a way as to preserve, in total, the part with the alleged traces of the events kept in people's memory. Now it is a wide earthen road by which, in half an hour, one can get from the village to the Monastery along with indispensable stopping at the Maiden Rock which is usually endowed with coins (Fig. 12).

CONCLUSION

Thanks to many decades of the local people's commitment, the Monastery complex of Lopardince, with its cult sites discussed in this paper, is in a perfect state. With the announcement and approval of the Church Municipality, it is all the time open to benevolent visitors. The Serbian community in the village cherishes religious rites, especially those at the time of St. George's Day and the patron saint holiday of Saint Archangel Gabriel. It should not be forgotten that its everyday life is taking place in the immediate vicinity of Albanian majority: Albanian extremists were, till recently, a disturbing factor in the area but the situation calmed down once the war developments had come to an end. At only a kilometer and a half in air distance there is an Albanian village of Veliki Trnovac which is publicly known as the main distribution center in the Balkan drug trafficking. All this does not disturb the industri-

²⁴ Milojković (1985, 384) retells a legend about beautiful Rumenka from Suvi Do near Žagubica who obeyed her mother's advice to kill herself rather than to fall into the hands of a Turkish knave: „Rumenka, my sorrow, jump rather than let them catch you alive.' The daughter took her advice: she jumped down from the rocks and hitting one stone after another she finally ended up in the abyss.“

ous villagers in their care about their own ethnic and religious identity and many centuries of cherishing the Orthodox temple close to the village. Regardless of the disagreements about the date of the Monastery Church construction with the experts' interpretations, people from Lopardince are eager to show their destined alliance with this locality.²⁵

By celebrating St. George's Day and St. Archangel Gabriel the local people are keeping up the centuries-old connections with the pagan faith, later incorporated in the Orthodox-Christian matrix. They respect church authorities but, conscious of the specific circumstances in which they live and act, acknowledge only the autonomy of the local Church Board which consists of faith-devoted individuals from their own ranks. They have never abandoned rituals related to the village's patron saint celebration; neither have they neglected the maintenance of their ancient church which they experience – and refer to in casual talks – as their monastery. By choosing the Church tutor and the celebration host at the annual level, by offering an animal-blood sacrifice as well as by the common organization of the village congregation, they confirm how much they care to cherish, as they do in their own families, a domestic management of the village's sacred object. Even more so knowing that: what the vigil lamp and the icon of the celebrated patron saint posited at a special place in the house are for a family, so is the Monastery for the village community of Lopardince. By paying respect to their ancestors and preserving the memory of the tragic fate of one of their own, the maiden from the old times, they believe they will be able to, in the years to come, count on unbroken ties with the otherworldly powers that are benevolent to the village as a collective, that have protected it magically and saved it from misfortunes in the turbulent historical periods. This feeling is even stronger than any uncritical subjection to the authority of the official hierarchical Serbian Orthodox Church.

²⁵ In the late nineties of the past century, the Diocese of Vranje intended to include the restored Monastery of Lopardince in an active religious-monastic life by sending a certain number of monks to serve and live under the present circumstances. This proposal, however, was not approved by the village Church Board; for this reason, five of its members were excommunicated from religious life by the Diocese Church Court of the Orthodox Diocese of Vranje in the city of Vranje. After the sentence had been issued, the village got very upset; on November 10, 1998, the meeting took place of the Local Community members and those of the local Church Board at which the church actions were condemned since – as it says in their exposition (the authors of this paper were enabled to see the meeting minutiae) – the village knew nothing about „that the monks should come to the Monastery“, „that the local people take sides with the five excommunicated men“, so that their dissatisfaction is not „for personal interests but we are leading (the whole procedure) in the interests of our village and our Church of Saint Archangel Gabriel that Pahomije wants to take away from us.“ The villagers understood the suggested coming of the monks as a sort of abduction of their Church which they had taken care of as best as they knew and could a long time before it had „caught the eye of“ the Bishop of Vranje. The village representatives including a member of the Assembly of the Municipality of Bujanovac considered „this (excommunication sentence) is an act of suppressing the religious rights so that we ask Pahomije to withdraw the sentence and that the appeals should be sent to Vranje and Belgrade...since we think it is not the time to divide Serbian people under the circumstances...“. That the reaction of the local population was justified can be clearly seen on the basis of two facts: first of all, the Church and the mansion were built by the local people of Lopardince, and that the money was not given by the big companies such as „Simp“, „Heba“ or Orthodox clergy of the Diocese of Vranje that was asked for it but they were straightforward in rejecting it saying „build what you want, we don't have the money for it“. Also, later on, „Mr. Pahomije offended the village calling the Church of Saint Archangel a 'den'“ for which he should have been charged. In addition to a few more reports about the themes discussed at the meeting regarding the clergymen's discriminatory attitude towards the villagers, the meeting ended with all the conclusions adopted unanimously.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. Authors Talking to the People from Lopardince



Fig. 2. A View of the Monastery Complex of Lopardince



Fig. 3. Exterior of the Church of the Saint Archangels Gabriel and Michael



Fig. 4. Interior of the Church of the Saint Archangels Gabriel and Michael



Fig. 5. Old Mansion (now serving as a dining room for the guests on the day of the village patron saints' holiday)



Fig. 6 New Mansion



Fig. 7 Hollow Stone



Fig. 8 Healing Water Spring



Fig. 9 Maiden Rock



Fig. 10 Alleged Trace of the Horse's Hoof on the Maiden Rock



Fig. 11 Alleged Imprint of the Sword on the Maiden Rock



Fig. 12 Gift-giving in Coins to the Maiden Rock

Danijela Zdravković

THE CHURCH OF HOLY THEOTOKOS ON THE DEVIL'S STONE IN DONJA TRNICA (TRGOVIŠTE)*

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Numerous and diverse problems that follow the social development of border municipalities of the East and South-Eastern Serbia today cannot be completely perceived only through the prism of its contemporary circumstances, but also through its relationship towards the cultural tradition. The authentic tradition and the differences in the examined cultural border area based on them offer a significant contribution to sociological researches related to the directing and intensifying of the revitalization process of cultural tradition. Cultural heritage, historical symbols and architecture represent the dominant component of ethno heritage (Јовановић и Миљковић 2013, 288) – a significant factor in the sustainability of the identity of Serbs and national minorities in the border municipalities of the East and South-Eastern Serbia.

Every religion has its rituals and cults that are related to certain places of cult, different in many aspects, the most conspicuous difference being based on the conditions in which they were created, revitalized and respected by the wide social community.

No matter how diverse places of cult are, they always carry the connotation of the historical, architectural, mythical, esthetic, scenic, verbal and nonverbal marks, since people were creating and cherishing them with a great dose of emotional and cultural charge. By defining the place of cult as a cultural area of identity, we attach to it the needs of a community thus emphasizing its social-integrative function and the frequency of visits in the period regulated by the religious calendar (pilgrimage). The customs related to the visits of the cult places are experience based habits, conduct, way of life and work of a people that, after a while, by entering the constant use, adjust to them by following the processes of restoration or renovation of the place of cult. The observation of Tihomir Đorđević (1984), our remarkable ethnologist and cultural anthropologist, interested in the folk life, social relationships, folk art and attitude towards the folk customs, is a valid illustration of the previous claim: "Our people were rather gentle towards their customs, particularly women, who were generally perceived as more conservative than men, were rather conservative related to the customs (Zdravković 2004). They have maintained lots of old customs related to the relationships among men, attitudes towards health, work, religion, etc." The restoration of the places of cult today testifies to the marginal relevance of cults and cult places for the social organization as a whole, as well as global social movements. The reasons and background of creation, visits and restoration of cult places are not sufficiently known, in spite of the fact that from the second half of the 20th century a widely spread definition of culture is based on the model of material and spiritual adaptation, which the society accepted as the traditional way of solving problems, as well as the idea that the being acquainted with the customs of other people and mutual exchange of rich folk

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tradition is generally perceived as an advantage and desirability on the way of connecting people in the globalization era.

In the last couple of years, the municipality of Trgovište, under the influence of the wave of spiritual adaptation, has been attracting great attention with its cultural and natural heritage. The municipality is on the border with the municipalities of Bujanovac, Vranje, Bosilegrad and the neighbouring country Macedonia in the length of 47 km. This geographical position enabled it to, by studying the past of relevant sacral localities, recognize the uniqueness of the Serbian cultural identity in the context of the Balkan cultural mosaic (language, customs, history, religion, art, etc.). This paper deals with one of the oldest medieval monuments of the Pčinja region dating from 14th century, the Church of Holy Theotokos. It represents a historical heritage built by the Serbian aristocratic family Dejanović in the second half of the 14th century. Dejanović brothers ruled the area on the border between Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia and have been known as the most renowned founders of the cultural heritage of this area (23 medieval churches existed in this area before, today they are known only as toponyms). The founder of this family was Dejan, who got married to the sister of Emperor Dušan, Teodora, and ruled in the shires of Žegligovo and Preševo.

In the document that legally nominated the areas under the rule of Dejanović family, personally confirmed by Emperor Dušan in 1355, this stone church was called Prosečnik and it represented the border. Today, this is the only cultural-historical heritage saved and revitalized from the medieval period in Donja Trnica. It represents one out of 35 settlements and belongs to the already mentioned border municipalities. It is located in the Pčinja region in the South-Eastern part of Serbia. According to the last inventory of population, if we compare the period after the World War Two and today, it is evident that the population of Donja Trnica has been lessened for half the figure. To be precise, according to the 2011 inventory, there were 171 inhabitants, while according to the 1948 inventory, there used to be 453 inhabitants. The Orthodox Serbs represent the dominant population.

ON THE METHODOLOGY AND GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE CULT PLACE IN DONJA TRNICA

The object of the research is the monographic treatment of a cult place in the South-Eastern Serbia, in the border area, located on the territory of the municipality of Trgovište, which satisfies all the necessary requirements for the scientific research of the place of cult, that is, it represents a classic example of cult places in a particular region in its description, ritual content and significance for the local community. The aim of this paper is to select and sociologically examine interesting characteristics of the concrete place of cult in the municipality of Trgovište – the medieval Church of Holy Theotokos (CHT) dating from the 14th century. This place of cult is among the Pčinja people widely known as the most significant and most vivid cultural locality of the archaic Pčinja region. Bearing in mind generally accepted methodological difficulties concerning field research in the mountainous areas, we also included the problem of locating this site. However, it was relatively easy to find it, since it is located not far away from the road leading towards the centre of Trgovište. Right after the exit from the tunnel in Prosečnik (Fig. 1), where the river Pčinja separated Donja (Lower) and Gornja (Upper) Pčinja in the past, there is a wooden road sign stating the location of the Church of Holy Theotokos, 14th century, with the pointer, in red and blue colour. Following the road sign, we stopped and parked our car, and there was literally a flood of people coming from Trgovište, Vranje, Bujanovac...

The gathering of data was conducted on the basis of the field research according to the directions of *Procedure DBDJ/DT/DK 2014 for Gathering Data on Places*

of Cult in the Border Areas of the East and South-Eastern Serbia, devised as a useful tool for the requirements of the project *Sustainability of the Identity of Serbs and National Minorities in the Border Areas of the East and South-Eastern Serbia (179013)*. The protocol required information on the place of cult's official as well as its folk name, time and place of its visits, type of the cult place, general data and description of the cult place, reasons and background information on the foundation of the cult place, dynamics of visits and taboos (prohibitions) regarding the cult place. Some details, relevant for the description of this place of cult are given in an overview in the following chart (Chart 1).

Chart 1 – Basic data on the place of cult

Subject heading	Church of Holy Theotokos
Place	Donja Trnica, Devil's Stone
Municipality	Trgovište
Period	from the reign of King Milutin till the end of the Empire
Building period	1350-1380
Category	Cultural heritage of great importance
Working number in the central register	SK 227
Date of registering	21 June 1982
Serial number in the local register	50
Date of registering	22 March 1982
Institute in charge of the local register	Institute for the Protection and Research in Cultural Heritage Niš
Registering basis	Decree of Institute for the Protection and Research in Cultural Heritage NRS, n.573, 14 May 1958
Number and date of the official messenger's decree on category	Official Messenger SRS 28/83

Source: Monument Heritage of Serbia, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, RS, 2007.

According to the type of cult place, CHT is a sacral temple, under the protection of the Republic of Serbia today as a cultural monument of great importance, belonging to the type of cult place that the dominant people visit with the surrounding peoples (Macedonians, Bulgarians, Greeks, the Goranci and Roma population). It is an active place of cult, frequently visited, the most massive pilgrimages being important dates from the Orthodox Church calendar and the following rituals: Good Friday (this year the pilgrimage took place on 18th April), Transfiguration of the Lord and Nativity.

The official name of the cult place is the Church of Holy Theotokos, and, additionally, the people of these areas call it: the Church of Virgin Mary, Church on the Devil's Stone and Church on Prosečnik. The church was built in the area of the Devil's Stone, famous for its numerous legends. Located less than two kilometers downstream from Trgovište, on the right coast of the river Pčinja, powerful conical rocks, that the people from Pčinja call the Devil's Stone, are hoisted, approximately 100 million years old (Fig. 2). Above the road leading from Trgovište to Vranje, on the top of one of the stone cones, there is a small church dedicated to the Nativity of Holy Theotokos (Fig. 3). There is a narrow path leading towards the church, the view from the top of the Devil's Stone to the river Pčinja is extraordinary, but also terrifying, since this is the place in the stone with approximately twenty cones that are 50-80 meters high. No one lives here and the church is not open regularly. The religious community that takes care of this church is the Eparchy of Vranje.

Every year on Good Friday, thousands of visitors from Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria and other countries come to this monastery. Although the church is dedicated to the Nativity of Virgin Mary, the visitors also cherish the cult of St. Petka. Among the visitors, the most numerous are the Serbs, the local population and population from the nearby areas and border areas in Bulgaria and Macedonia, the people that believe in its miraculous powers. Among the visitors, the most numerous are young girls and sterile women. There are also older men and women who offer gifts and donations, light their candles and kiss the icons and hope that through prayers they could find their peace. The church is also looked after by the representatives of the Orthodox religious community (priest Radovan B. Milošević from Trgovište, the head of this place of cult) (Fig. 4), and it is also worth mentioning that the object itself was classified as the cultural monument under the protection of the state in 1958. In 1983, it was categorized as the cultural monument of great national importance on the part of professional institutions. In these parts, 23 medieval churches used to exist, and today only their toponyms remained.

The medieval name of this church was Prosečnik, because the river Pčinja cut the rock with its riverbed so that it formed the natural border between Donja (Lower) and Gornja (Upper) Pčinja. Based on the preserved frescos and historical data on its founders' time of rule, it is deduced that the church dates from the 14th century. Its roof is made of stone plates. From the architectural perspective, it is a nave rectangular building of small size that from the outside has a semicircular apse (Fig. 5).

CULT PLACE IN THE BORDER AREA OF THE SOUTH-EASTERN SERBIA: STONE CHURCH ON THE DEVIL'S STONE

The field research itself was related to a religious holiday – Good Friday, during the Easter holidays in 2014, so that we were capable of watching and photographing this place of cult, its surroundings and main ritual, as well as other religious procedures related to the sacred place and sacred time. Namely, we visited it on 18th April 2014 in the morning. It was raining all the time during our journey, and on the top of the Devil's Stone we were even surprised with rare snowflakes. The church opened two doors on that sacred day, loyally serving its pilgrims. In the second half of April, the nature in this area had just started obtaining its green colour. On a part of the hill you could notice the differences in the same forest that turned green in its lower region, while in the upper region it was still leafless. It is rather difficult to pass here in winter due to the snow drifts and wild animals, but it is manageable according to the experienced pilgrims we met on a narrow path leading to the church. Nature here is intact. Finally, we reached the church and immediately noticed the stone that was used for building it and the stone that naturally surrounded the area.

It is known that the church itself was, during the last couple of years, renovated; defensive fence was also built, because the church is located on the mere edge of impressive rocks.

Visitors come to this church constantly: believers enjoy the ritual of worship and prayer; tourists use this special occasion to see one of few sacred sites of the South-Eastern Serbia. On the way used for circling around the church, we spotted and made photos of the places for leaving the cult gifts (flowers, money) in front of the cult place (Fig. 6). Everywhere around it, even on the threshold, above the door, among the stones, pilgrims leave money: coins and banknotes, and this is how they absolve themselves from the sins they previously committed. We tried to get in touch with the head of this temple, priest Radovan B. Milošević, but the visitors in the church told us that he had been serving in the village church in Surlica that day, and the only representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) was a young priest in front of the south

wall of the church, waiting for the believers with holy water and basil. The young priest could not answer our questions, since he had been serving here for a short period of time. However, great help was provided by the informants that we met on the Devil's Stone that day. A few informants told us that young people were not supposed to get married here and that children were not supposed to be baptized. The reason for not getting married here was conveyed to us by Sunčica Jodanović, a mother of three children, from Trgovište:

“A long time ago, a boy and girl fell in love in Donja Trnica. He was the only child coming the richest house in the village, and she was the most beautiful and poorest girl in Pčinja, so their families did not reach an agreement about their wedding. In spite of that, the young people loved each other and their parents finally agreed on their wedding. The wedding took place in the Church on the Devil's Stone. When they left the church, the bride and groom mounted their decorated horses. His horse got scared due to noise and music, so it stepped backwards and fell into abyss. As soon as the bride saw it, she climbed down her horse, ran towards the edge of the rock and jumped over the dead groom. A noisy festivity turned into a gloomy sorrow. From then onwards, no one got married in the church, it is not a place for dancing and singing, no cult meal is offered here, just the gifts, flowers, money, candles are lit and prayers for fertility and health are spoken.”

The informant Dragana Jovanović from Vranje told us that the inhabitants of Upper Pčinja spread the belief in the church's power to cure sterility with women and that this story had been spread far away:

“It's not a rare case, I even know some women that after coming here got pregnant; perhaps it's a coincidence, but I still believe in the miraculous power of this place. It is true that young women and women with sterility issues come here when there is no one at the church and they take some powder from frescos and drink it at home, believing that they will get an heir afterwards. Just enter the church and pay attention to the damaged frescos, it's the visitors' who did that.”

After the conversation with our informants, we passed by a stand that represented elements of a fair and commerce shop (silk candies, chaplets, icons and post-cards) under the parasol. Although it was raining, all the activities were performed as usual. By entering the church, built in a picturesque stone style, we came across a dark, nave temple in which only the light of candles enlightened the faces of visitors and believers. The modest altar space was divided by a massive iconostasis, and through a narrow small window you could see a “flood” of believers and visitors – a pilgrimage worthy of respect (Fig. 7). The entrance on the west side took us to a rather dim interior and a tiny ray of light entered through another narrow window on the east wall. First we left our gifts, then lit our candles and made pictures of the gifts in money, flowers, cloths, oil and candles. The muddy floor of the church was spread with coins, e.g. the wishes of believers and visitors. There was a side table in the church, filled with flowers and banknotes, as well as a wooden cross and the icon of Virgin Mary. All visitors kissed it, especially young women. By watching the interior of this cult place, you could also notice the way it had been built. The building was done by random layering of stone and bricks. The regular layers of bricks contributed to a better connection and leveled the stone walls that were necessary due to the specificity of the terrain. It is quite rare to see old altar partitions, two meters high. Only old temples possessed this kind of iconostasis. The iconostasis points to an extraordinary artistic and historical value

of the church. By gazing at the damaged iconostasis, for a moment we felt as if time travel had been possible.

The artistic pieces in the church are partly preserved and they include the zone of standing figures and a cycle of significant religious holidays extended with the chosen scenes from the life of Virgin Mary, the patroness of the temple. The central painting dedicated to Virgin Mary (Fig. 8) is located in the wall above the altar. Stylistic differences point to two painters, one of whom was more inclined towards classicist solutions, while the other was keen on expressionism. According to its architectural and artistic characteristics, it can be said that this church was created in the period between 1350 and 1380. It was not before the 19th century that the narthex was built, adjusted to the church by its width and height. There is also a discrepancy among the parts of the church that were conserved and restored, the sanded barrel vault, the addition of the narthex so that the church was placed into a gabled roof covered with stone plates, while the preservation procedure was conducted on the artistic pieces. During 2005, repair works were done. Only the remnants of frescos testify about the passage of time of the previous six centuries.

The gifts of spring in flowers, the gifts in oil – with the meaning of healing, the gifts in cloths – with the meaning of absolving oneself from sins and the gifts in money as the signs of redemption are placed on the mere exit from the church. These gifts in the interior of the church (Fig. 9) symbolize the vitality of the ritual ceremony. The non-existence of taboos is confirmed by peeling the frescos for the sake of curing sterility. A huge crowd detained us from staying there for a longer period. We went outside and noticed that above the south entrance three niches were placed, while the decorative rotation of the materials used for building was especially seen on the apse, on whose wall the bricks formed a zigzag pattern. By getting down the path, we also noticed and made photos of the remnants of ancillary facilities of this place of cult (demolished stone walls, broken joists).

According to the stories of the people from Pčinja, this is the most frequently visited cult place in the municipality of Trgovište, and lately, the visit to this church has represented a challenge that many people are willing to take. We also noticed that a great number of young people (students as well) had decided to go on a pilgrimage during the Easter holidays.

The informants and particularities of this place of cult only confirm that the South-Eastern Serbia is an authentic part of Serbia. Serbia is a treasury of rich history and cultural heritage from the Roman, Byzantine, medieval and modern age. It is strategically a valuable part of the Balkans, with a rich cultural tradition and preserved natural and cultural heritage.

RELIGION, MEDICINE AND PLACE OF CULT (FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INFORMANTS)

Religion represents a special experience, contained in man's need to design his own existence, and a special part of religious experience is man's emotional response towards encountering God or saints in times of trouble. A special aspect of this experience is the crossing ritual that is based on the feeling of guilt and its reversal into the feeling of belonging and belief into the meaning of existence of man and nature. It is based on one's personal will and decision to come closer to the laws of God and nature. The rituals are also important for the Orthodox Christianity, representing ties between man and his religion, as well as ties among the people that take part in them. The most significant rituals in Christianity are pilgrimage, baptism, weddings, funerals, godfather ties, etc. Ritual and cult represent separate types of rite. Ritual represents a set of rites practiced in accordance with the religious feeling in particular situati-

ons according to a specified order, with the sole goal of the believers to express and preserve their religious tradition and beliefs. A place of cult is here understood as a meeting point between the ritual and the other side, the divine, whereby respect to the latter is conveyed.

The representative of the religious organization that looks after the examined cult place is a priest Radovan B. Milošević, born in 1955 in Donji Kozji Dol, who serves in six churches in the Municipality of Trgovište, whereas his parochial home is located in the centre of Trgovište. Out of respect for him (he only has three more years before being retired) and the readiness he showed to be included into our story on the place of cult by providing us with his hand-written letter (Vesna Trajković, a teacher from Trgovište, informed him about our futile attempts to get in touch with him, so he contacted us by sending a letter just before the conclusion of the final version of this article), we will quote his saying here:

“In the region of what is nowadays known as Donja Trnica, there is a part called the Devil's Stone. The rocks itself remind us of Devil's Town. On this stone you can also find the Church of Holy Theotokos – that is, the church dedicated to the religious holiday of Nativity (September 21st). This temple dates from the 14th century. The people believe that this place and rocks represent a cult place from the distant past of this area. It used to be a monastery called Prosečnik and was a sort of a branch to the monastery „St. Prohor Pčinjski", and also is an appendage to the monastery „St. Father Prohor" and the church in Zladovac. In the region of Upper Pčinja there used to be at least ten monasteries, but all of them are not protected. This church was placed under the state protection for cultural monuments in Belgrade in 1957, and today it is under the protection of Cultural Heritage Institute in Niš. It was built in the period of brothers Dejanović. According to the claims of The Institute for Cultural Heritage in Niš, there are only two temples of this size in Serbia, and they are rather special since they have a stone partition instead of a wooden iconostasis, that is, a stone wall with frescos. According to the claims of Nikola Petrović, a teacher from Trgovište, the church was built at the waterfront, and it is quite possible that a lake existed there in the past. The River Pčinja has been entrenched in its riverbed for centuries, so that it was moved further away from the temple or the aforementioned lake Prosek has been flown away.

The temple is dedicated to Nativity and helps people in times of trouble. From the moment the bride and groom lost their lives here (the groom fell into the abyss and the bride came after him), there have been no more weddings here. Lately, a slight renovation of the church has been conducted, during the service of a parson Radovan Milošević, born in Kozji Dol. The roof has been replaced and restored, new doors have been fixed (the old ones were ruined in the fire), and the frescos have been protected from the further decay (repair works were performed by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Niš). This church is on the list of 300 most relevant monasteries and churches in Serbia. I, Radovan Milošević, the main priest here, have been writing to the Institute from Niš and proposed that this sacred place should be renovated, new lodgings of 100 square meters should be built and water, electricity and new road should also be included in this list.

During the Turk occupation, this place was famous for its healing properties. The people believed that the parts of frescos possessed healing properties so they literally took 'healing samples' by digging holes in frescos depending on the part of the body caught by the illness (eyes, ears, head, etc). They made a tea out of them and it was being drunk with a belief that it could cure various illnesses. The people unconsciously destroyed frescos, and I can testify myself that before the restoration, certain parts of frescos were missing, for example, eyes or head.

I will be delighted to tell you a legend from this region that tells about how the first church was built on the Devil's Stone. When the son of the Greek Emperor Constantine, the next one in line to inherit the throne, used to be here, he went hunting in the Pčinja region and he wounded a roe deer. The deer entered the cave close to the church on the Devil's Stone. When the hunter came closer to the cave, he saw an old man – an ascetic with the wounded deer in his lap. The hunter made a sign of cross and said quietly: 'I committed a sin against God and people.' The old man, experienced in the life of the spirit, suggested to the son of the Emperor Constantine that he should build a church in this place for the sake of absolution of his sins. All this happened after the death of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine.

The rituals of baptism, wedding or requiem do not take place in this church. It is known among people as a 'female' church. Three times a year women with sterility issues come here – on the days of Good Friday, Transfiguration and Nativity. In the last couple of years, people come to this church every Friday. The Upper Pčinja region is filled with the antique temples and it is high time that this part, as we call it 'St. Corner' of Serbia, was archeologically and sociologically examined so that its value could be shown to the world and our people!"

In Trgovište, May 16, Radovan B. Milošević, a priest

Our intention also was to have a medical worker among the informants since this place of cult possesses ethnomedicinal qualities. The next informant told us that this cult place was visited by different people disregarding their level of education and professional activities. Biljana Popović, a nurse from Vranje, describes the significance and use of visit to this cult place, as well as several rites that she witnessed in the crossing ritual on the foothill of the Devil's Stone, in the following manner:

"I visited this place with my family and my relatives from the village Vrtogoš and Belgrade. My sister was married for a while and did not have any children. Our intention to come here was totally different, we wanted to find a nice spot for making a barbecue for the Labour Day in 2009. We were enchanted with scenery here, the suspension bridge over the river and huge stone rocks, so that we did not even pay attention to the top of the hill where a small church was situated. While we were enjoying the countryside, a friend of mine, a geography teacher from Vranjska Spa called me and told me that we were on a very powerful place, where Gods presented people with children. She told us by phone what we were supposed to do. Maja wriggled through the rock and left some money there. She was in a childless marriage for seven years, and we were touching her sore spot by coincidence. We went to the church at the top of the rock and left money and lit candles there. A miracle really happened, whether it was God's will or natural course, we were not sure, but Maja gave birth to a girl, Lena, that is now five."

Thus presented sociological picture of this cult place gives us an insight into the structure of its folk and religious background. In the ritual, according to the legend, a young man and girl get married, and then their celebration turns into a general sorrow when the groom and his horse fall into abyss. After him, his bride follows and falls on a rock, and nearby you can find the river Pčinja. Water symbolizes baptism, that is, Christianization. After that, with its rituals of giving gifts, spring, fertility, birth, love, beauty and welfare, visitors and believers pray for forgiveness and absolution from sins. The legend says that, although the weddings are prohibited here, this church helps women with sterility issues. Young women are wriggled through a stone that we made a photo of, not even knowing that it was the ritual stone (Fig. 10), and the ritual itself is known only to few old women from Trgovište. Dragana

Jovanović, our informant, by watching our photos recognized the place where the sister of her friend conducted her ritual and by the help of the ritual stone solved the sterility problem.

It is a particularly significant ritual in this area, performed out of ethnomedicinal reasons by initiating the desired actions through dramatic movements. Its actors attach a likeable magic character to it and believe that the ritual itself would be transmitted from this act to real life. The power of this ritual lies in the belief that it possesses the strength of homeopathic imitative magic.

CONCLUSION

Finally, in the light of everything written so far – this text for the forthcoming YSSSR Conference is intended to have the review character. Our idea was to describe the complexity of the examined problems in a reduced form so that the attention should be paid to the fact that there is an aspect of the border area of the East and South-Eastern Serbia rarely spoken of in public, and that is the relationship between religious tourism and cultural and ethnoheritage. The border Municipality of Trgovište – a deeply devastated area inhabited mostly by the old people's households – is defined by its connection between tradition and modernity. The examined cult place offers a unique chance to a visitor to enter the time in which the codes of various civilizations were crossed and divergent cultural and religious influences were intertwined which formed the cultural identity of the South-Eastern border area of Serbia. This contribution is directed towards the representation of the Serbian cultural identity in the form of the cult place's description, knowledge and use of ritual conduct and it is significant from the scientific perspective since it offers the context of sustainability and national identity within the Balkan cultural mosaic (architecture, customs, history, religion, art, etc.).

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Fig. 1. Access to the cult place –
Natural border between Upper and Lower Pčinja (D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)



Fig. 2. Devil's Stone (D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)



Fig. 3. Medieval Church of Holy Theotokos from 14th century
– *The Church of Holy Theotokos* (D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)



Fig. 4. The author of the text with the priest in front of the south wall of the Church of Holy Theotokos, Good Friday, 2014 (D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)



Fig. 5. Apse of the *Church of Holy Theotokos* (D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)



Fig. 6. Cult gifts (money) in front of the cult place (D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)



Fig. 7. Pilgrimage – visitors of the cult place on Good Friday
(D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)



Fig. 8. The interior of the cult place – Central fresco of Holy Theotokos
(D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)



Fig. 9. Gifts in the interior of the church (D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)



Fig. 10. Knowledge and use of the ritual place in Prosečnik (D. Zdravković, April 18, 2014)

Dragoljub B. Đorđević
Ibrahim Osmani

A PARTIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROMANI CULT PLACE: THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP IN PREŠEVO*

ROMANI CULT PLACES

“Rare are those cult places which have lost their importance or have been completely abandoned for a certain faith and people.”

We have been researching the Romani cult places continuously in the last few years. Thus far we have examined a dozen cult places and published the material in three books (Đorđević 2005, 2010; Đorđević and Todorović 2009) and several articles in scientific journals (Ђорђевић и Тодоровић 2001/2002, Османи 2005а, Османи 2005б).

We have paid attention to the fact that the majority of processed places are those which are still in function, but we have also studied a few inactive ones, holding on to the idea that the sanctity of a place for a believing people, including the Roma, is eternal. Rare are those cult places which have lost their importance or have been completely abandoned for a certain faith and people.

The following preliminary typology of cult places has been the starting point of our research:

- IA cult places visited exclusively by the Roma;
 - IB cult places visited by the Roma along with the other peoples; and
 - IC sacred temples, as cult places where the Roma gather.
- Our second typology divides the Romani cult places into:
- IIA inactive, extinct cult places; and
 - IIB active (alive), functioning cult places.

For this occasion we have examined *the blacksmith's shop* as a Romani cult place in the Roma from Preševo, beginning from the initial information that this is the case of a still alive, active cult place. However, before all that, it is necessary to provide some basic data on the Roma from Preševo.

THE ROMA FROM PREŠEVO

It has not been determined when the Roma first appeared in Preševo, but it is certain that they have lived since the olden times in that pretty southern Serbian town, dominantly populated by the Albanians. Serbs and Roma, sharing the same fate and migrating, each amount to approximately a half of the remaining population. There are more than thousand Roma, out of which over 600 are the Đorgovci and around 400 of those who speak the Romani language and are Muslims.

* Prepared as a part of the project *Sustainability of the Identity of Serbs and National Minorities in the Border Municipalities of East and Southeast Serbia* (179013), carried out at the University of Niš – Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, and supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

Brothers Tomislav and Svetislav Petrović (2009, 2010), rather amateur chroniclers of Preševo and the surroundings, write about the Roma there being of Orthodox and Muslim confession: “The Orthodox Gypsies are known as the Đorđovci, i.e. Karađorđevci, and they hide their ethnic belonging and declare as Serbs. They are divided into families: the Gugins, the Jovanovića, etc. Their mother tongue is Serbian. The second group is comprised of the Muslim Gypsies – the Aškalije, whose mother tongue is Romani, i.e. Albanian or Serbian (19).” The Petrovića are wrong: there are no Aškalije in Preševo, who previously lived predominantly in Kosovo and Metohija, and are now displaced all over Serbia and recognized by the state as a separate national minority: they denounce the Romani ethnic belonging.

The Roma from Preševo have been good ritualists and worshipers of several cult places, among which the most prominent are Tekiya, Hanik, and Krkovca (a Saint George’s Day custom). Hanik – a Romani word, which translated to English means a spring – is theoretically the most interesting one since it can be classified as a (IB) cult place visited by the Roman together with other peoples and as a (IIB) active (alive), functioning cult place. What is even more important is the fact that Hanik is visited by both Orthodox and Muslim Roma, which corroborates our hypothesis that, contrary to the widespread opinion, the pluralism of the religious-confessional being of the Roma does not damage their ethnic and cultural integration:

“And further than that, one should encourage the raising of the awareness in the Roma on the fact that the diversity of religious life should be used for fruitful purposes, for cultural enrichment – since, it is indeed a wealth on its own (Ђорђевић 2010, 284).”

However, the complexity of the religious culture of the Roma from Preševo is under the influence of two conflicting processes. The one, under pressure from misunderstood Islam, demands of them to renounce the celebration of centuries-old holidays – Vasilica (Đorđević 2013) and Saint George’s Day – and stop acknowledging the traditional cult places, while the other as an expression of their intercultural being allows the participation in religious ceremonies and rites at the cult places of the surrounding peoples. It is not all the same which one of the two prevails.

We will try to show that in the short “story” on the Sirovari.¹

THE ROMANI SIROVARI

Ibrahim Osmani claims the following concerning the sirovarstvo in the Roma from Preševo: “As far as the sirovari are concerned, there have always been some, usually the Serbs. The Roma have never taken part in the sirovari, but as of lately, there is a group of boys who participate out of curiosity, even though their parents will not let them go.” On another occasion he tries to provide an answer to the posed question: “Why do children want to be the sirovari, and their parents will not let them?”; and he says:

“Lately, there are fewer and fewer sirovari among the Serbian people. For the old custom to still go on, the boys gather round out of curiosity: how will they be accepted and what will they receive as a present? Sometimes the groups get into a conflict between themselves and a fistfight ensues, and that is the

¹ The sirovarstvo takes place on January 13 and according to the ethnological literature in some places people take part in the sirovari in order to cast out demons, in other places they participate in the celebration of the New Year and the wishing for a period of abundance, while elsewhere it represents the coming of age.

reason why parents are afraid of letting their children participate in the sirovvari. Today, every Romani group of sirovvari is usually accompanied by an adult. And all of that out of fear from something unexpected happening to them because of the other groups, dogs or passers-by... (Ђорђевић 2012, 72).”

The following question seems common sense: why do the Roma take part in the sirovarstvo? The answer is a complex one and we would like to take this opportunity to offer different groups of possible reasons. There could be a plethora of incentives – and they should be noted – yet the sociological task is to single out the most crucial ones and explain them. It cannot be said that the Romani sirovarstvo is founded on the “curiosity of children” or a direct “interest” – what and how many presents one will receive – although they should not be overlooked. One of the reasons is also the dying out of one’s own holidays, the example of Vasuljica, under pressure from Islamization; Osmani claims the same:

“The Romani evenings were traditionally organized from January 14 onwards, but now this occurs very rarely, since Islam has taken its toll on the Roma. In that sense, Islam is extreme and it blames the Roma who celebrate Vasuljica; one might have observed this recently in Preševo, but more so in Bujanovac, since the moment when their own mosque was built (Ђорђевић and Petrović 2012, 233).”

The Roma national instinct reacts unerringly: alright, you can ban Vasuljica, but since it takes place at the same time as the Serbian sirovarština, we will practice the latter, and you cannot prohibit it as well!

The sirovvari from the Preševo village of Cakanovac confirm Osmani’s statements (Ђорђевић, Узуновић и Петровић, 2014). To the question posed by D. B. Ђорђевић whether the Roma take part in the sirovvari, the first answer was no. But upon his insisting that the Ђorgovci, the Orthodox Roma, do take part, they replied: “Well, yes, the Ђorgovci go, the Ђorgovci go... They have been taking part in it in recent years, we know, we’ve been there.”² Thus we confirm that the Romani sirovvari are both Orthodox and Muslim.

The sirovarština in Preševars, “urban” Serbs, is fading out, even though Preševo is only slightly removed from a rural settlement, slowly adopting the properties of a town. The Roma have taken on, for who knows which time, the disappearing Serbian ritual, since they are the careful keepers of customs and they have preserved for themselves, for example, Lazarice (Ђорђевић 1984b, 79) and Zasevka (Златановић 2002, 194-202). The Roma are practical interculturalists, willing to participate in a creative exchange of gifts, and that is why they endure (Ђорђевић 2010).

THE BLACKSMITH’S CRAFT

The learned people know that the Roma were present on the today’s territory of Serbia and the Balkans even back in the Byzantine times, but that they came here in more substantial numbers with the Turkish conquerors: “The Turkish advance on the Balkans with very accurate military targets was also characterized by specific tolerance toward the strangers who joined them, meaning the Roma as well. Even though they were not well known, they were welcomed as people skilled in crafts needed by the military (blacksmiths, farriers, and music entertainers). The Roma

² This was previously hinted to Ђorђевић, in a personal meeting, on December 15, 2011, in Preševo, by Dušan Ristić, principal of the “Vuk Karadžić” elementary school, a great connoisseur of the region.

would become useful by offering services that did not cost much along the path of conquest” (Митровић 2000, 8). Wandering throughout the world, they mastered a number of crafts: “They were good blacksmiths, and they engaged in other crafts as well: knife making, nail making, cart making, basket making, tinsmithing, horseshoe making, trough making, spindle making, horse trading” (Јовановић 2012, 107).

And so, only a couple of decades ago there were no small towns or villages without a Romani blacksmith’s and farrier’s shop, while the same crafts were practised by the nomad Roma as well.³ Today, only few blacksmith’s shops remain here and there, for example, like the one owned by Siniša Agičević in the centre of Pirot,⁴ which has been recorded and saved from oblivion (Ђорђевић 2008, 85-111), or the last two shops in Preševo, in the Save Kovačevića street (Fig. 1), which housed more than fifty of them at some point in the past.

This craft was so characteristic of their historical destiny, that entire tribes were named after it, thus even today, for example, in Novi Pazar and the whole area of Raška the Roma are called *Kovači* (blacksmiths).⁵ The Roma in that region, mostly Muslim, are openly trying to be greater Muslims than the genuine Muslims (= Bosniaks), i.e. they want to get “Bosnianized”, while the surrounding dominant national minority refuses them, one could even say despises.

THE BLACKSMITH’S SHOP AS A CULT PLACE

The blacksmith’s shop is a sacred place for the Roma. How can it not be, when to the question concerning what separates them as a people from the surroundings, the scholars always reply by saying that it is their vocation and the “special way of life” that comes with it.⁶ And the blacksmith’s craft occupies the first spot among them. The majority of the Roma in Serbia used to be blacksmiths.

The blacksmith’s shop is the cult space which was treated with awe, where ritual activities were performed and “religious” attention was paid. Let us see what the available reports can tell us on this topic.

In the Serbian Romology, to the best of our knowledge, Tihomir Ђorđević (1984б, 18) was the first to emphasize the fact, in the first decades of the previous century, that the blacksmith’s shop was a cult place:

“The blacksmith’s craft is very loved and respected by the Gypsies. The forge is a sacred object for them. The Muslim Gypsies who make nails and pins, in Aleksinac, on every eve before Friday tidy up the area around the forge and the anvil, rearrange their tools, and then light a tallow candle, just as the Serbs light the icon candle in their homes before the holidays. A Gypsy blacksmith in Aleksinac told me how the anvil, the plough and the gospel are the same thing. No Gypsy would ever sit down on the anvil nor disturb the forge with anything. How sacred the forge and the anvil are can best be understood by the fact that the vow made upon it is the most solemn one. When the Gypsies argue with each other, then they make their vows upon

³ Ђorđević remembers the 1960s and a moustached and strong Roma, who used to settle down every summer with his small camp near grandfather’s estate, performed blacksmith’s and tinsmith’s tasks from the villagers and, at the beginning of the autumn, went away who knows where.

⁴ Borisav Jovanović (2012:107-112), a diligent chronicler of the Roma from Pirot, enumerates no fewer than 40 blacksmiths in Pirot, among which some were very wealthy thanks to the hard-working craftsmanship.

⁵ Such name-giving of others and oneself has long been present in many Serbian regions, as recorded by Tihomir Ђorđević (1984б, 7-12).

⁶ This kind of standpoint is taken up by T. Ђorđević (1984б, 7): “I think, to put it straight, that the Gypsies are still singled out from other peoples and preserved as a separate people only by their vocation and a specific way of life that they lead because of it.” And on page 9 in the same book: “I, too, think that the Gypsy vocation is what has conditioned their being and ensured their existence as the Gypsies.”

the anvil. The one making the vow kisses the anvil and says: *Tamere!ma akova muni, ako sinjum bango!* (I hope this anvil kills me if I am wrong). Women also make their vows upon the anvil... – A Gypsy would never make a false vow upon the anvil, since such a dishonesty would be severely punished: the hammer would kill him, the fire in the forge would extinguish, or some other evil would chance upon him.”

Nedeljko Bogdanović offers a newer interpretation of the blacksmith's shop as a Romani cult place in two articles (Богдановић 2003а, 2003б). Due to the fact that he based his research on the literature (Ристески, 1991), and not on the field-work, he was surprised to discover that the blacksmith's shop occupied an important place in the Romani culture:

“I was astonished by the ordered relationship, spiritual and practical, that dominates the blacksmith's shop: after the work is done it needs to be cleaned up out of the belief that the road for the happiness which enters the blacksmith's shop has to be clean; the eldest craftsman takes care of that (as the bearer of most responsibility for the offspring, almost as an ancestor in the cult of the dead!), who sprinkles the shop and the space in front of it every morning (as a blessing), out of a full jug, so that the working day is full, fruitful; the customer is welcomed cordially, without any discrimination concerning their faith, gender, wealth, social status; in the evening everything is put back in its own place, so that the forces which dwell in the tools do not get into a conflict with each other; on the eve before Friday a candle is lit on the anvil in the honour of god Dawud/David; the anvil is the altar, upon which the most terrible vows and oaths are made and it must not be harmed in any way, not with a word, nor with a gesture, nor by sitting upon it. From this croquis, certainly insufficient and here reduced by necessity, it is still possible to, at least, peek into the genuine, real and active religion of a professionally determined community of Roma (Богдановић 2003б, 88).”

Borisav Jovanović (2012, 109-110) “peeked” into “the genuine, real and active religion of a professionally determined community of the Roma” from Pirot and reported on Saint Anthony (January 31), the guild saint's day of blacksmiths, farriers, cauldron makers, tanners and gunsmiths:

“Upon Saint Anthony craftsmen would go to the church, taking wine and brandy with them. When the church service was done, they would gather in the church inn where they would treat each other to a drink. After that everyone would return to their own shops, which had already been cleaned up meticulously, burn some frankincense, and light wax candles on the bigger tools. In larger shops, up to 20 candles would burn at the same time. Finally, the master craftsman would, in the light of the wax candles, gather up his apprentices and journeymen, as the helping staff, and they would all have a treat.”

Lastly, here is the latest, from 2014, testimony by Ibrahim Osmani:

“In the blacksmith's shop people always tidy things up and it has to be neat every day, the shop being cleaned particularly after the end of the working day, with tools replaced in their spots, while the water is left untouched, not even a drop taken or used. It is, so to say, cult and it is believed that such water cures sterility in women, that it can be used to conjure magic, if someone has on a crush on a girl, and she does not want him, then the girl is sprayed with that water and she falls in love with the young man. Thirdly, it is believed that if someone takes a little of that water and carries it to another black-

smith's shop, then he will lose customers and they will go to that other blacksmith. Every Thursday evening a tallow candle is lit and placed on the anvil. No dirty business can be done in the blacksmith's shop and every shop has its own *Sajbija* – a snake master, who guards it, and that snake must not be killed even if someone sees it.

Before Saint George's Day the shop is cleaned carefully, and not even powder can be seen lying somewhere. Also, on the day before Saint George's Day a candle is lit, and women make every tool that is used out of dough and leave them to spend the night in the shop.

That would be it as far as the shop is concerned, and some people even believe that the blacksmith's water from the trough can heal, I am not really sure what it cures, but I suppose, if someone "has lost their mind", they should drink that water from the master craftsman's hands three times."

THE INACTIVE CULT PLACE

On April 10, 2014, we visited two blacksmith's shops in Preševo and tried to collect the information on whether this custom was still present and whether the above rituals were still performed. In one of the shops the owner turned us down immediately and did not want to talk to us about it, he did not even let us take photographs of him and his shop, despite the fact that he was urged to do so by Ibrahim Osmani, the most renowned and respected of all the Roma from Preševo.

In the other shop as well, "Baškimi" (Fig. 2), we were not greeted in the most welcoming fashion. The owner Avdula Duraković, a young Roma with completed secondary economic school, did not want to tell us about the customs related to the blacksmith's shop, offering an excuse in the form of some current problem and complaining incessantly about the state and the society, the authorities and the bureaucracy, yet insisting on all of us taking a picture together in the end (Fig. 3). – It was a great shame that his father Skender Duraković, a great connoisseur of the Romani antiquity, was absent.

The blacksmith's shop "Baškimi", in the "blacksmith's" Save Kovačevića street, is the member of the association of craft shops in Preševo (Fig. 4). (The community of the Romani blacksmiths and other craftsmen has a century-old tradition in Serbia, and thus there are, for example, the records of the first Blacksmith-cauldron maker-gunsmith-locksmith-tinsmith guild established in 1883 in Pirot, with 21 blacksmiths as members in 1900.) Apart from the owner, the shop employs Ilijaz Fejzulović, whose late father Osman knew a great deal, maybe even more than any other resident of Preševo, on the Romani myths and legends. The coy and quiet Ilijaz barely accepted, unwillingly, to tell us something about the rites that were ritually performed in the blacksmith's shop. And he knew a thing or two about it, which can be deduced from the interview transcript:

Osmani: What does the shop, in fact, mean to the family?

Fejzulović: What it means is that I can feed my family, that I can feed my children!

Osmani: Do you treat the shop as a sacred place, what does this trough and the water in it represent (Fig. 5)?

Fejzulović: That's where the iron is tempered, but it has some sort of a meaning. If we give the water from the trough to anyone, then we're going to lose our customers, lose the work. Holy water (Fig. 6), for example, if a child is cursed, we bring it here, wash it up a bit, give it a drop of water to drink, and the curse is lifted.

Osmani: What else is sacred?

Fejzulović: Some people use it for magic, they take the water from the trough and, who knows, visit a hodja, a priest. If this water leaves the shop,

and is used for something else which is not good, then you lose your customers, you lose everything. And if you give the water for something good, to cure children, then it's not bad. This water has helped a lot of people.

Osmani: How old is this blacksmith's shop?

Fejzulović: Very old, a 100 years, even 150, over five generations have worked here. There are not many customers nowadays, but there used to be when our parents worked here, there was more money and more work. Everything was made from iron, everything for agriculture: ploughs, axes, hoes, spades, diggers.

Osmani: Are candles lit every Thursday evening?

Fejzulović: I haven't heard of that, I don't know, you're older than me, you tell me, you know better!

Dorđević: Haven't you been told?

Fejzulović: A candle was lit every Thursday for well-being, so that you can have more, better; then the old, the dead, would come looking if everything was clean, to see the shop, the place, not to put a spell on you. It's not done anymore today.

Osmani: Is the candle lit for Saint George's Day?

Fejzulović: The day before Saint George's Day everything would be cleaned up in the shop, a general cleaning, everything needed to be tidy; every tool would be cleaned, washed and put in its own place (Fig. 7), and the candle would always be lit on the anvil, the candle would be placed on the anvil (Fig. 8) – but that's not the case anymore, it's the way it used to be.

Osmani: What about the ashes, do they have a miraculous power?

Fejzulović: This rubbish that is collected, the ashes (Fig. 9)⁷, can be taken and thrown into the river, so that the owner's job would flow like the river flows.

Dorđević: So, the sacred things are the water, trough, anvil, candle and ashes (Fig. 10)?

Fejzulović: Yes, but rarely anyone does these things today.

There is no doubt: for the Roma from Preševo and the blacksmiths themselves the blacksmith's shop has stopped being a cult place, a sacred spot which was respected and celebrated by a series of ritual actions. Only a vague memory of it remains in the younger generation passed down from the oldest Roma, most of them already deceased.⁸

Even though we have managed to only partially reconstruct the blacksmith's shops in Preševo as the Romani cult places, nonetheless, this leaves us with the opportunity to classify them according to our typology as the (IA) cult places visited exclusively by the Roma and the (IIA) inactive, extinct cult places.

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⁷ That the "sacredness", as well as the elementary respect for the ashes, has been lost is shown in the photograph of the ashes together with cigarette butts.

⁸ N. Bogdanović has already warned against this (2003б:89): "To know the entirety of the Romani culture, we must turn to the credible detail, and a lot of the details have already been lost in the whirlwind of social changes, both in the world and in our country. This is what makes our responsibility toward the research subject even greater."

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig. 1. “Blacksmith’s” Save Kovačevića street (V. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 2. Blacksmith's shop "Baškimi" (V. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 3. Roma blacksmiths and researchers (V. Petrović, 2014)⁹



Fig. 4. "Baškimi" in the guild (V. Petrović, 2014)

⁹ Ilijaz Fejzulović, Avdula Duraković, Ibrahim Osmani and Dragoljub B. Đorđević.



Fig. 5. Cult blacksmith's trough (V. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 6. Sacred blacksmith's water (V. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 7. Part of blacksmith's tools (V. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 8. Cult blacksmith's anvil (V. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 9. Cult blacksmith's ashes (V. Petrović, 2014)



Fig. 10. Cult ashes and anvil, trough and water (V. Petrović, 2014)

ABSTRACTS

Barna Gabor

PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE AND PILGRIMAGE ROUTES AS COMMUNITY-CREATING PLACES

Summary

The pilgrimage, a characteristic institution of Catholic and Orthodox religious culture, thus creates communities and strengthens the personality. It is a special occasion for encounters, with myself, with others and with nature, for reconciliation with God, and for the creation of harmony. Visiting shrines builds connections and a network in the traditional community (parish, settlement, school, order) or in the community of experience of a travel office. The revival of the pilgrimage districts and the festive occasions at shrines can offer the opportunity to sing and pray in the mother tongue. The world of pilgrimages and shrines can be revived with a carefully considered pastoral programme, with attention to the pastoral needs of different groups, the revival of pilgrimages on foot, and the spread of information on the cultural history, natural history and church history of the pilgrimage routes. In this way they can play an important role for all national communities in preserving the national identity. But these are just possibilities: we can take advantage of them or reject them.

Key Words: pilgrimage, places of pilgrimage, religious, culture, traditional community.

SVETA MESTA I HODOČASNIČKE RUTE KAO MESTA STVARANJA ZAJEDNICA

Rezime

Hodočašće, institucija tipična za katoličku i pravoslavnu religioznu kulturu, stvara posebne zajednice i ojačava individualnu ličnost. Ono predstavlja poseban vid komunikacije sa samim sobom, drugima i prirodom, vid pomirenja i usklađivanja sa Bogom. Posećivanje svetih mesta omogućava da se ostvari mreža povezanosti u tradicionalnoj zajednici (parohije, naselja, škole, javne institucije) ili u novim zajednicama koje stvaraju posetioči. Ponovno interesovanje za sveta mesta, kao i prikladne svečane prilike na svetištima, nude mogućnost da se peva i moli na maternjem jeziku. Svet hodočašća i svetišta može da se obnovi pažljivo osmišljenim parohijskim programima, pri čemu posebnu pažnju treba obratiti na potrebe različitih grupa, hodočašća koja je moguće izvesti pešice, kao i širenje informacija o kulturnoj, prirodnoj i crkvenoj istoriji hodočasničkih ruta. Na ovaj način, hodočašće igra važnu ulogu u očuvanju nacionalnog identiteta svih nacionalnih zajednica. Sve ovo su samo mogućnosti: možemo da ih iskoristimo, ali i da ih odbacimo.

Ključne reči: hodočašće, sveta mesta, religijska, kuturna, tradicionalna zajednica.

Ivan Markešić

OUR LADY OF MERCY:

A UNIQUE CULT IN TWO PLACES, TWO COUNTRIES, ON TWO DATES

Summary

The author in this paper explores the historical, military, political and religious conditions in which, at the end of the 17th and the beginning of 18th century, after establishing the border between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman Empire, in two different places, on two different dates, with two different names, a unique pilgrimage cult has been formed – the cult of honoring the Mother of Mercy- the cult of The Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven: 1. at Šćit in Rama (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Our Lady of Rama, on September 8th and 2. in Sinj (Republic of Croatia), Our Lady of Sinj, on August 15th.

From those believers' pilgrimage devoutness originated, also at the border, a folklore-but religiously driven – national celebration – Sinjska Alka. Lately, the realization of the cross-border cooperation on the project named "Our Lady of Sinj Route" has been going on, and its construction is financed by the European Union.

Key Words: pilgrimage, Mother of Mercy, Our Lady of Rama, Our Lady of Sinj, pilgrimage, Sinjska Alka, Our Lady of Sinj Route.

MAJKA OD MILOSTI:

JEDINSTVEN KULT U DVA MJESTA, U DVIJE DRŽAVE, U DVA TERMINA

Rezime

Autor u ovome radu istražuje povijesne, vojne, političke i religijske uvjete u kojima se krajem 17. i početkom 18. stoljeća nakon uspostave granice između Mletačke Republike i Otomanskoga Carstva formirao u dva različita mjesta, u dva različita vremenska termina, s dva različita imena jedinstven hodočasnički kult – kult čašćenja *Majke od milosti* – kult *Uznesenja Blažene Djevice*

Marije na nebo: 1. na Šćitu u Rami (Bosna i Hercegovina), *Gospa Ramska*, 8. rujna i 2. u Sinju (Republika Hrvatska), *Gospa Sinjska*, 15. kolovoza.

Iz tih vjernih hodočasničkih pobožnosti nastala je, također na granici, i jedna narodna, ali religijski legitimirana nacionalna proslava – *Sinjska alka*. U posljednje vrijeme u tijeku je realizacija projekta međugranične suradnja *Staza Gospi Sinjskoj* čiju izgradnju financira Europska unija.

Ključne riječi: hodočašće, Majka od milosti, Gospa Ramska, Gospa Sinjska, hodočašće, Sinjska alka, Staza Gospi Sinjskoj.

Ivan Cvitković
Jasmin Peco

BLAGAJ TEKKE (TEKIJA)

Summary

Sacred place. The size and function of the sacred place. What is the definition of the sacred place? Sacred places important for several religious traditions. When does the desecration of the sacred place happen? The universal code on sacred places. The sacred place in Islam. Ajvatovica or Blagaj dilemma? Blagaj Tekke – atypical of Islam. The Tekke in the natural environment. The structure of population and religious communities' objects in this region. The history and myth of Tekke. Who visits Tekke and when? Facilities and infrastructure. The importance of abdesthana. Legends about Tekke.

Key Words: Blagaj, Tekke, sacred place, legenda about Tekke.

TEKIJA U BLAGAJU

Rezime

Sveto mjesto. Veličina i uloga svetog mjesta. Što može biti sveto mjesto? Sveta mjesta koja su važna za više religijskih tradicija. Kad dolazi do oskvrnuća svetog prostora. Univerzalni kodeksi o svetim mjestima. Sveto mjesto u islamu. Dilema Ajvatovica ili Blagaj? Ipak, tekija u Blagaju – atipična za islam. Tekija u prirodnom okruženju. Struktura stanovništva lokalnog mjesta i objekti religijskih zajednica na tom lokalitetu. Povijest i mit o tekiji. Tko sve, i kada, posjećuje tekiju? Prateći objekti i infrastruktura. Značaj abdesthane. Legende o tekiji.

Ključne reči: Blagaj, tekija, sveto mesto, legende o tekiji.

Vladimir Bakrač

CHURCH OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN IN THE MONASTERY OF OSTROG: CULT, CUSTOM, LIFE

Summary

Guided by the determinant of a cult place as a space with special power of acting, which in various ways affects human life and because of what the respect is shown within different ways of behaviour (Bandić), we chose the church of the Presentation of the Virgin in the monastery Ostrog for the subject of our paper. Therefore, we can conditionally divide the paper into theoretical and practical part. In the theoretical part of the paper we tried to chronologically overview the emergence and development of this cult place and to learn about the life and cult of St. Vasilije. In the practical part of the paper we tried to determine the dynamics of visiting, rituals and rules of behaviour that are performed in this cult place by image and method of interviewing the pilgrims.

Key Words: Saint Vasilije Ostroski, church of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, pilgrimage, cult place, paying homage, ritual, sacred place.

CRKVA VAVEDENJA BOGORODICE U MANASTIRU OSTROG: KULT, OBIČAJ, ŽIVOT

Rezime

Vođeni odrednicom kulturnog mjesta kao prostora s posebnom moći djelovanja, koji na različite načine utiče na ljudski život i zbog čega im se, kroz propisane načine ponašanja, ukazuje poštovanje (Bandić), za predmet našeg rada odabrali smo crkvu Vavedenja presvete Bogorodice u manastiru Ostrog. Otuda, rad uslovno možemo podijeliti na teorijski i praktični dio. U teorijskom dijelu rada, nastojali smo da hronološki osvrnemo na nastanak i razvoj ovog kulturnog mjesta i da se upoznamo s žitijem i kultom sv. Vasilija. U praktičnom dijelu rada smo nastojali da sli-

kom i metodom intervjuisanja hodočasnika utvrdimo dinamiku posjećivanja, rituale i pravila ponašanja koja se sprovode na ovom kulturnom mjestu.

Ključne riječi: Sveti Vasilije Ostroški, crkva Vavedenja presvete Bogorodice, hodočašće, kulturno mjesto, poklonjenje, ritual, sveto mjesto.

Petko Hristov

**FAMILY RITUAL PROCESS AND THE SACRED PLACES
(The celebration of 'svetac' in the Bulgarian-Serbian borderlands)**

Summary

This article deals with family ideology and family ritual process in the Central part of the Balkans, in the mountainous part of Bulgarian-Serbian border areas, during the 20th century and the beginning of new Millenium. Celebration rituals, dedicated to the patron saints of family-kin households (Serbian *slava* and Bulgarian *služba*), have been described as an "ideology of patriarchalism" in ethnological and historical literature, based on the cult of predecessors.

Ethnographical research in this region has substantiated the prominent social functions of the ritual cycle that built cohesion in the family-kin community, rather than archaism. Based on historical and ethnological data, and on ethnographic fieldwork in Western Bulgaria and Eastern Serbia, the research shows how the Orthodox cycle of celebrations and rituals was practiced in a family-kin environment during the first half of the 20th century. The family ritual process deals with an archaic agrarian idea – the analysis demonstrates a sacred ritual connection between the patrilineal *family* and its *home* and *land*, marked by the stone crosses in the field. The analysis focuses on how family rituals built patrilineal family ideology, which kept its integrative functions even during the decades of socialism and in the first decade of new Millenium.

Key Words: family ideology, saint-patron feast, *svetac*, *slava*, *služba*, family cult place, Bulgarian-Serbian borderland.

**PROCESI PORODIČNIH RITUALA I SVETA MESTA
(Proslava 'svetaca' u bugarsko-srpskim pograničnim područjima)**

Rezime

U ovom radu biće reči o porodičnoj ideologiji i porodičnim ritualnim procesima na području centralnog Balkana, u planinskim delovima bugarsko-srpskih pograničnih područja tokom XX veka i na početku novog milenijuma. Rituali proslava, posvećeni svecima pokroviteljima porodičnih domaćinstava (srpska *slava* i bugarska *služba*), često su u etnološkoj i istorijskoj literaturi opisivani kao „patrijarhalna ideologija“, zasnovana na kultu predaka.

Etnografsko istraživanje sprovedeno u ovoj oblasti potvrđuje istaknute društvene funkcije ritualnog ciklusa koji, ne samo da ne spada u arhaizme, već i doprinosi koheziji porodičnih zajednica. Na osnovu istorijskih i etnoloških podataka, kao i na etnografskom terenskom radu po zapadnoj Bugarskoj i istočnoj Srbiji, istraživanje pokazuje kako se pravoslavni ciklus proslava i rituala praktikovao u porodičnim okruženjima tokom prve polovine XX veka. Porodični ritualni procesi zasnivaju se na arhaičnoj agrarnoj ideji – analiza pokazuje ritualnu povezanost između porodica po očevoj liniji i njihovog *doma* i *zemlje*, simbolično označenu kamenim krstovima u polju. Analiza se takođe zasniva na ideji građenja porodične ideologije po očevoj liniji uz pomoć porodičnih rituala, čija se integrativna funkcija održala čak i tokom socijalističkih decenija i u prvoj deceniji novog milenijuma.

Ključne reči: porodična ideologija, proslava sveca, *svetac*, *slava*, *služba*, kulturno mesto porodice, bugarsko-srpska pogranična područja.

Ivaylo Markov

**TRANSFORMATION OF A RELIGIOUS SITE:
THE ROCK CHURCH "SAINT PETKA" OF TRAN
BETWEEN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP AND TOURIST ATTRACTION**

Summary

A focus of research interest is the rock church "Saint Petka" located in the Bulgarian town of Tran, close to the Bulgarian-Serbian border. This religious site is connected to a strong and vigorous local worship toward the known in a wide Balkan perspective Saint Paraskeva/Petka. The cult is maintained by an interesting local legend according to which St. Petka has lived in the same small cave in which today the church is situated. Because of this St. Petka is considered as a saint-patron of Tran and its inhabitants. This worship site and the specific cult to St. Petka in the past, as well as nowadays, have an important role in the structuring of religious life and the

constructing of identity of the local community. Proceeding from the historical preposition and formation of the St. Petka's cult in the region the aim of the article is to examine some today's characteristics of development and functioning of the rock church "St. Petka" as worship site, as well as to study the changes occurred during the last two decades when this religious site were identified as cultural heritage and resource for development of the local touristic product in a wide context of local sustainable development.

Key Words: local cult, worship site, rock church, tourist attraction.

**ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ НА ЕДИН РЕЛИГИОЗЕН ОБЕКТ:
СКАЛНАТА ЦЪРКВА "СВЕТА ПЕТКА" В ТРЪН МЕЖДУ РЕЛИГИОЗНИЯ КУЛТ
И ТУРИСТИЧЕСКАТА АТРАКЦИЯ**

Резюме

Фокус на изследователския интерес в статията е скалната църква „Света Петка“, намираща се в западнобългарския крайграничен град Трън. Този религиозен обект е свързан със силен и устойчив локален култ към познатата в широк балкански контекст светица, подсилен от интересна местна легенда, според която Св. Петка е живяла в малката пещера, в която днес се намира църквата. Затова тя е считана за светец-покровител на град Трън и неговите жители. Това култово място и култът към светицата имат важна роля за организацията на религиозния живот и конструирането на местната идентичност на населението, както в миналото, така и днес. Изхождайки от исторически предпоставки за формирането на култа, статията има за цел да разгледа някои съвременни особености на функционирането на скалната църква „Св. Петка“ като място на култ, както и да проследи настъпилите през последните две десетилетия промени, в резултат от които този религиозен обект е идентифициран от общинската администрация като „културно наследство“ и ресурс за развитие на местния туристически продукт в контекста на политиките за устойчиво местно развитие.

Ключови думи: локален култ, култово място, скална църква, туристическа атракция.

Violeta Periklieva

**PLACES OF CULT IN THE BORDER REGION OF PETRICH, BULGARIA, AND
STRUMICA, MACEDONIA – RELIGIOUS INVESTMENTS, SOCIAL AND
SYMBOLIC CAPITAL, IDENTITY**

Summary

The paper studies the relation places of cult–religious investments–social/symbolic capital–identity. By means of examples from the border region of Petrich, Bulgaria, and Strumica, Macedonia, the places of cult are presented as targets of religious investments of individuals and institutions. These investments are part of strategies for gaining social capital and prestige for the investors themselves as well as for the community. The understanding of social capital as a force binding groups together allow studying the religious investments and the strategies for gaining social capital and prestige as forms of attesting identity. All of this presents one aspect of the social role of religion (in the form of places of cult and devices for the appearance of new) and of the bidirectional relation between religion and society.

Key Words: places of cult, religious investments, social capital, symbolic capital, identity.

**КУЛТОВИ МЕСТА В ПОГРАНИЧНИЯ РЕГИОН НА ПЕТРИЧ, БЪЛГАРИЯ, И
СТРУМИЦА, МАКЕДОНИЯ – РЕЛИГИОЗНИ ИНВЕСТИЦИИ, СОЦИАЛЕН И
СИМВОЛЕН КАПИТАЛ, ИДЕНТИЧНОСТ**

Резюме

Статията разглежда отношението култови места-религиозни инвестиции-социален/символен капитал-идентичност. Чрез примери от пограничния регион на Петрич, България, и Струмица, Македония, култовите места са представени като обекти на религиозни инвестиции на отделни хора или институции. Тези инвестиции са част от стратегии за набавяне на социален капитал и престиж както за самите инвеститори, така и за общността. Разбирането за социалния капитал като сила, която свързва хората, позволява религиозните инвестиции и стратегиите за печелене на социален капитал и престиж да бъдат разглеждани като форми на засвидетелстване на идентичност. Всичко това представя един аспект от социалната роля на религията (под формата на култови места и механизми за поява на нови) и на двупосочната връзка, която съществува между нея и обществото.

Ключови думи: култови места, религиозни инвестиции, социален капитал, символен капитал, идентичност.

Ružica Cacanaska
Maja Angelovska-Panova
SAINT JOVAN BIGORSKI – CULT PLACE

Summary

The subject matter of this paper is the socio-historical analysis of the cult life of the Saint Jovan Bigorski monastery. This subject matter will be elaborated through developing a historical frame wherewith the sociological research element will be merged; this element will specifically emphasize the impact of the miraculous icon on the promotion and the cult life of the Bigorski monastery at all.

Key Words: Saint Jovan Bigorski monastery, cult place, miraculous icon, prayer, gift.

СВЕТИ ЈОВАН БИГОРСКИ – КУЛТНО МЕСТО

Апстракт

Предмет на овој труд претставува социолошко-историската анализа на култниот живот на манастирот Свети Јован Бигорски. Предметот ќе се елаборира преку развивање на историската рамка, врз којашто ќе се надоврзе социолошкиот истражувачки сегмент во којшто посебно ќе се нагласи влијанието на чудотворната икона врз промоцијата и воопшто култниот живот на манастирот Свети Јован Бигорски.

Клучни зборови: манастир Свети Јован Бигорски, култно место, чудотворна икона, молитва, дарување.

Ivan Blaževski
Ružica Cacanaska
**THE MIRACULOUS ICON OF THE VIRGIN MARY
FROM THE MONASTERY KALISTA**

Summary

The main purpose of this thesis is a review of the cult life of the monastery "Nativity of the Virgin Mary" known as Monastery Kalista. This thesis is based on the historical frame of the creation and the meaning of this monastery and its saints. The theological review of the hesychasm and the iconological study of the miraculous dimension of the Orthodox iconography are added on the historical part, in order to form sociological review of the cult life and the meaning of the monastery.

The paper separately considers the role of the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary in the foundation and the development of the cult life of the Monastery Kalista.

Key Words: Monastery Kalista, cult life, miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary, prayer, gift.

**ЧУДОТВОРНАТА ИКОНА НА ПРЕСВЕТА БОГОРОДИЦА
ОД МАНАСТИРОТ КАЛИШТА**

Резиме

Главни циљ овог рада је приказ култног живота у Манастиру Рождество Пресвете Богородице, познатији као Манастир Калишта. Рад се заснива на историјском делу о стварању и значају Манастира и његових светија. После историјског дела следи теолошки приказ исихазма и иконолошке студије о чудотворној димензији православне иконографије, са циљем да се обликује социолошки приказ култног живота и значаја који има Манастир.

У раду се посебно обрађује улога чудотворне иконе Пресвете Богородице приликом фундарања и етаблирања култног живота Манастира Калишта.

Кључне речи: манастир Калишта, култни живот, чудотворна икона, молитва, даривање.

Rozália Raj
István Nagy
SHRINES, PILGRIMS IN VOJVODINA

Summary

Our script is a reviewer of the several years' collection on the popular piety subject, started in 1990. The rural pilgrimage sites, such as Tekia (Tekija) Szerémség (Srem), Töröktopolya, Versec (Vršac) Bánát (Banat), Doroszló, Szabadka (Subotica) Bácska has been continually visited by us. These places, due to surrounding areas were beloved and significant once to the Hungarians living here. We are mentioning their origins and their history, but rather we are attempting to present the changes of the pilgrimage habits, to find out how popular and visited these places are today by the Hungarians and to show where and in what masses are the Catholic Hungarians still present.

Key Words: Vojvodina, pilgrims, Catholic Hungarians.

SVETILIŠTA I HODOČASNICI U VOJVODINI

Rezime

Ovaj pregledni rad se zasniva na dugogodišnjem proučavanju popularne teme pobožnosti, koju smo započeli 1990. god. U ovom periodu stalno smo posećivali mesta ruralnih hodočašća poput Tekije, Srema, Vršca, Banata i Subotice. Zahvaljujući činjenici da su ovde nekada živeli Mađari, ova mesta nose njihov pečat. U radu ćemo pomenuti mađarske korene i istoriju, ali ćemo se pre svega pozabaviti promenama navika hodočasnika kako bismo ustanovili uolikoj meri su ova mesta danas popularna među Mađarima, kao i da pokažemo uolikoj su meri Mađari katoličke veroispovesti ovde zastupljeni.

Ključne reči: Vojvodina, hodočasnici, Mađari katoličke veroispovesti.

Raško Ramadanski

SERBIAN CROSS MONUMENTS IN SENTA

Summary

Senta is a town and municipal seat in the north of the Republic of Serbia, in the north-east Bačka region, on the banks of the river Tisa. The settlement exists since the medieval period and during its long history it faced the influences different cultures and confessions. On this occasion our attention is set on Serbian cross monuments. The oldest known Serbian sacred place in Senta is linked with "Nicholas Cross", also known as "Vlajko's Grave". This place is located in the fields south of town, along the road to the old ferry. It is likely that the monument existed since before the XVIII century. Due to the proximity of the ferry, it was used for making donations and expressing respect to St. Nicholas, protector of sea farers and shipwrights. On the other hand this place is also a martyrdom since it is the grave of the local Serb Vlajko which was killed by the Turks in the late XVII century and was considered a martyr. The second oldest cross monument in Senta is the so called "Cemetery Cross" which is located in the Eastern Orthodox cemetery and regarding which we have little data. According to some signs this cross was once located outside the cemetery and was devoted to St. Christopher, patron of travelers. In the year 1809 the monumental "Cross of the Orthodox" was built on the middle of the Grain Market, across the churchyard of the Eastern Orthodox church of St. Archangel Michael, as a landmark of where the first Serbian "Frontiermen" church in Senta once stood and as an expression of piety of local Serbs. This cross monument was moved and is located in the church yard of the Serbian Orthodox church today. Another cross monument is located in the church yard of the Orthodox church and is known by the name "The Serbian Cross", built in 1840. The original location of this cross monument was on the Fowl Market, in the broader centre of town, while the very monument was of a votive nature, devote to the Holy Trinity. On this occasion a thorough technical description of all four cross monument along with an analysis of the historical circumstances in which they were made as well as a gathered corpus of customs, known from literature and lore, is provided.

Key Words: Senta, sacred places, cross monuments, customs.

СРПСКИ СПОМЕНИЧКИ КРСТОВИ У СЕНТИ

Резиме

Сента је град и седиште општине на северу Републике Србије, у североисточној Бачкој, на обали реке Тисе. Насеље постоји још од средњег века и током своје дуге историје доживело је утицај разних култура и конфесија. Овом приликом пажњу усмеравамо на српске споменичке крстове. Најстарије познато српско свето место у Сенти везује се за „Николин крст“, познат још и под називом „Влајков гроб“. Ово место налази се у атару јужно од града, на путу за стару скелу. Споменик је по свој прилици постојао још у времену пре XVIII века. Служио је с једне стране, с обзиром на близину скеле, као вотивни споменик за давање прилога и одавање почести св. Николи, заштитнику морепловаца и бродара. С друге стране ради се и о мартирјуму јер је то гробно место овдашњег Србина Влајка који је страдао од Турака крајем XVII века. Други најстарији споменички крст у Сенти је такозвани „Гробљански крст“ који се налази на православном гробљу и о којем нема много забележних података. Према неким показатељима овај крст некада се налазио ван гробља и био је посвећен св. Христофору, заштитнику путника. Године 1809. подигнут је монументални „Крст Православних“ на Житној пијаци, наспрам порте православне цркве Св. Арх. Михаила као споменобележје места прве српске граничарске цркве у Сенти и израз пoboжности Срба мештана. Исти овај споменички крст премештен је и данас се налази у порти српске православне цркве у Сенти. Још један споменички крст налази се у порти правос-

лавне цркве и познат је под називом „Српски крст” а подигнут је 1840. године. Првобитна локација овог споменичког крста била је Живинска пијаца, у ширем центру града, а сам споменик је био вотивне природе у част Светог Тројства. Овом приликом дат је подробен технички опис сва четири споменичка крста, размотрене су историјске околности њиховог настанка и окупљен је обичајни корпус, доступан из литературе и предања.

Кључне речи: Сента, света места, споменички крстови, обреди.

Dragana Radisavljević Ćiparizović

SANCTUARY OF MOTHER OF GOD OF TEKIJE AS A CULT (PILGRIMAGE) PLACE

Summary

In this paper we present Sanctuary of Mother of God of Tekije near Petrovaradin in Vojvodina belonging to roman-catholic confession. In addition to its appearance, it is known for a fact that it is visited by people regardless of their religion and confession. It is best proved by the Romani, Muslims, who visit this church in masses on Central feast of the sanctuary, on August 5th. Our Lady of the Snows Day (4/5th August). Motifs of pilgrim Romani is no different from other pilgrims. These are: health, happiness, family progress, plea, pledge and gratitude to Mother of God. They perform their ceremonies separate from Christian groups. *Communitas* is not established, but also there are no conflicts. Deterioration of ethno-religious relations by all means affects ecumenical mix character of pilgrimage, and sanctuaries become a place of ethno-political and religious competition. It turned out that antagonistic tolerance (Hayden 2002) latently appear in Tekije. During the renovation of the church 1977 two side altars, which were symbolically intended Orthodox and Protestants, were removed. The Romani were „elegantly“ suppressed to the field where the fair takes places, with remark of the recent head of sanctuary M. Kljajic that they are „supposed to be evangelized“. Nevertheless mix cult (pilgrimage) places are stronger than confessional affiliation. In addition to tradition, it is maintained by pilgrims' belief in God, miraculous saints and healing places.

Key Words: church, cult place, pilgrims, Tekije, Petrovaradin.

ЦРКВА МАЈКЕ БОЖЈЕ ТЕКИЈСКЕ КАО КУЛТНО (ХОДОЧАСНИЧКО) МЕСТО

Резиме

У овом раду представљамо цркву Мајке Божје Текијске код Петроварадина у Војводини које припада римокатоличкој конфесији. Карактеристична је, осим по свом изгледу, и по томе што је посећују људи без обзира на веру и конфесију. То најбоље доказују Роми, муслимани, који масовно ходочасте у ову цркву на дан централног празника Снежне Госпе (4/5. августа). Мотиви ходочасника Рома се не разликују од мотива других ходочасника. То су: здравље, срећа, напредак породице, молба, завет, и захвала Богородици. Они своје обреде врше одвојено од хришћанских група, не остварује се комунитас, али најчешће нема ни сукоба. Погоршање етно-религијских односа сигурно утиче на „екуменски“ мешовит карактер ходочасића, па светилишта постају попришта етно-политичког и верског надметања. Испоставило се да се антагонистичка толеранција (Hayden 2002) на прикривен начин појављује на Текијама. Приликом реновирања цркве 1977. године два бочна олтара, који су симболично били намењени православцима и протестантима, су уклоњена. Роми су „елегантно“ потиснути на пољану где је вашариште, уз примедбу доскорашњег управитеља светилишта М. Кљајића да „их треба евангелизирати“. Ипак, мешовита култна (ходочасничка) места су јача од конфесионалне припадности. Њих поред традиције, одржава вера ходочасника у Бога, свеце чудотворце и исцелитељска места.

Кључне речи: црква, култно место, ходочасници, Текије, Петроварадин.

Žikica Simić

THE CULT SOURCE OF "HOLY WATER" DEDICATED TO LIFE-GIVING CROSS AT THE MONASTERY BUKOVO IN NEGOTIN

Summary

This article dealing with cult place of the "holy water" at the monastery Bukovo in Negotin. The source is, at first, was dedicated to the Cover of Holy Virgin and was under an old linden tree on which were hung relics related to the source. Source was subject of religious honor and people are attributed to it healing effects. Afterwards, the building of dormitory dedicated to Cover of the Holy Virgin, linden tree is cut down and the source was conducted outside the yard of the monastery, where is built a fountain. The current fountain and source are dedicated to the Life-Giving Cross, and the water from the spring is retained their sacred status and the status of healing waters.

Key Words: Cult, holly spring, source, holy water, monastery, Orthodox, Holy Mother of God.

**KULTNI IZVOR "SVETE VODE" POSVEĆEN ŽIVOTVORNOM KRSTU
PRI MANASTIRU BUKOVO U NEGOTINU**

Rezime

Ovaj rad se bavi istraživanjem kulturnog izvora „svete vode“ pri manastiru Bukovo kod Negotina. Izvor je, u početku, bio posvećen pokrovu Presvete Bogorodice i nalazio se ispod starog drveta lipe na koje su bile okačene relikvije koje su se odnosile na izvor. Izvoru je ukazivana religijska počast i wega je očekivano iscećenje. Nakon toga, izgradnjom konaka posvećenog konaku Presvete Bogorodice, drvo lipe je posečeno a izvor sproveden izvan dvorišta manastira, gde je sagrađena česma. Sadašnja česma i izvor su posvećeni Životvornom krstu, a voda sa izvora je zadržala stari status svete i isceliteljne vode.

Ključne reči: kult, sveti izvor, sveta voda, manastir, pravoslavlje, Presveta Bogorodica.

Milovan Vuković
Andon Kostadinović

**THE THAUMATURGIC SPRING OF SAINT PARASCHEVA
OF TIRNOVO IN BISKUPLJE (VELIKO GRADIŠTE)**

Summary

This paper describes the cult of the spring of Saint Parascheva of Tirnovo in the vicinity of the village of Biskuplje, not far from Veliko Gradište. This cult place is one of the many locations on the territory of Serbia where underground water which springs from the earth, according to a folk belief, has a thaumaturgic, healing, i.e. magical power. The belief in such power is also founded on the teachings of the church.

The paper first draws attention to the relationship between the folk and church religion. After a short description of the settlement (Biskuplje) in whose vicinity the cult place is located, all aspects of the thaumaturgic spring of St. Parascheva of Tirnovo are scrutinized – above all, its appearance, i.e. structure (basic objects, auxiliary objects, small inventory, etc.). This is followed by the description of the rituals which are performed at this cult place, and certain taboos which are related to this spring are pointed out.

It has been shown that the dominant character of the cult described in this paper can be considered of the light of the profane/sacred dichotomy.

Key Words: kult springs, Saint Parascheva of Tirnovo, Biskuplje, folk beliefs.

**ČUDOTVORNI IZVOR SVETE PETKE TRNOVE U BISKUPLJU
(VELIKO GRADIŠTE)**

Rezime

U ovom radu je opisan kult izvora Svete Petke Trnove u blizini sela Biskuplja, nedaleko od Velikog Gradišta. Ovo kulturno mesto je jedno od brojnih lokacija na prostoru Srbije na kojima podzemna voda koja izbija iz zemljine utrobe, prema narodnom verovanju, ima čudotvornu, isceljujuću, odnosno magijsku moć. Verovanja u takvu moć oslanjaju se i na crkvena učenja.

U radu je najpre ukazano na odnos između narodne i crkvene religije. Posle kraćeg opisa mesta (Biskuplje) u čijoj blizini se nalazi kulturno mesto, detaljno su sagledani svi aspekti čudotvornog izvora Sv. Petke Trnove – pre svega, u smislu njegove opremljenosti, odnosno strukture (osnovni objekti, pomoćni objekti, sitan inventar i sl.). Opisani su i rituali koji se upražnjavaju na ovom kulturnom mestu, te ukazano na neke zabrane (tabue) koje se odnose na ovaj izvor.

Utvrđeno je da se dominirajući karakter kulta čudotvornog izvora Sv. Petke Trnove u Biskuplju može sagledavati u svetlu dihotomije profano/sveto.

Ključne reči: kulturni izvor, Sv. Petke Trnove, Biskuplje, dihotomija profano/sveto.

Vladan Petrović
Ninoslav Golubović

**“THE HERMITAGE OF SAINT ZOSIM SINAJIT”
NEAR THE MONASTARY TUMAN (GOLUBAC)**

Summary

Monastery Tuman in the vicinity of town Golubac and the active sacred place called “The Hermitage of Saint Zosim Sinajit” is one of the religious wealth of Golubac municipality, and the eparchy of Braničevo as well. The value and the mystique of this place is reflected in the mixture of historical facts and fantastic, miraculous legends. The main characters of these legends are Miloš Obilić and the hermit Saint Zosim Sinajit, whose sinful encounter resulted in the construc-

tion of the monastery Tuman. Both in the past and present, "The Hermitage of Saint Zosim Sinajit" is attributed to many miraculous powers, which according to people's beliefs heal both eye and other illnesses. However, according to the local residents, this sanctity didn't receive the proper treatment from the state even though it certainly deserves it.

Key Words: sacred place, monastery, Tumane, St. Zosim Sinajit, Golubac.

„ИСПОСНИЦА СВЕТОГ ЗОСИМА СИНАЈТА“ КРАЈ МАНАСТИРА ТУМАНЕ (ГОЛУБАЦ)

Апстракт

Манастир Тумане, недалеко од града Голубца, односно активно култно место под називом „Испосница Светод Зосима Синајта“ једно је од вреднијих религијских богатстава целе голубачке општине и епархије Браничевске. Вредност и мистичност овог култног места огледа се и у споју историјских чињеница и фантастичних, чудотворних легенди. Главни актери ових легенди су Милош Обилић и испосник Свети Зосим Синајт, чији је кобни сусрет и догађај који се тада десио, био повод за изградњу манастира Туман. Како у прошлости, тако се и данас култном месту „Испосница Светод Зосима Синајта“ приписују многе чудотворне моћи, које по веровањима људи исцељују од очних и других болести. Међутим, по мишљењу многих мештана, ово култно место није ни изблиза доживело третмана од државе какав заслужује.

Кључне речи: манастир, култно место, Тумане, испосница, Св. Зосим Синајт, Голубац.

Ivana Ilić Krstić

Njegoš Dragović

PRERAST – NATURAL PHENOMENON AND THE CULT PLACE (МАЈДАНПЕК)

Summary

Cult places in each region affect the social, religious and cultural life of the population. Depending on the customs and rituals, as well as the faithful ethnic point of view, they have an important role since their birth until their death. Observation of the preparation and implementation of the ritual of commitment to the cult place, gives tangible material evidence to establish a genuine belief that they inherited from the older generation. Choice for the study of one of the cult places in the Majdanpek, was determined by multiple factors, such as the number of cult places, visiting, tying for the date, place or person, rituality and retelling the legend, as well as other stories about these cult places.

Prerast is unique natural and iconic object that is linked to the legend of purification, about the good and the evil which comes and disappears, that uses pure spring water. Visiting it as a cult place does not just have a ceremonial character, but is also has a nurturing tradition of the Vlachs population in Majdanpek, who believes in animatism and animism. Customs of the region identified with the continued existence of the soul after death, which enlightens at least up to seven years after death, to make the the afterlife like the one in this world. Preparations are more than modest, but notes that rituals have their own dynamics, distribution of responsibilities and that there are ritual items and objects that are used, such as bread, candles and pure spring water.

Key Words: cult places, customs, rituals, "pomane", Majdanpek.

ПРЕРАСТ: ПРИРОДНИ ФЕНОМЕН И КУЛТНО МЕСТО (МАЈДАНПЕК)

Резиме

Култна места угичу на друштвени, религијски и културни живот становништва у датој средини. У зависности од обичаја и ритуала, као и од етничке припадности верујућег становништва, она имају битну улогу од њиховог рођења па све до њихове смрти. Посматрање припреме и спровођења ритуалних чинидби на култним местима, даје опипљиви материјал као доказ за установљавање истинског веровања које су наследили од старијих генерација. Избор за проучавање једног култног места у општини Мајданпек био је одређен многоструким факторима, као што су: бројност култних места, посећивање, везивање за датуме, место или особе, ритуалност и препривавање легенди, као и друге приче о култности тих места.

Прераст је јединствени природни и култни објекат који је везан за: легенду о прочишћењу; веровање о добру и злу које долази и нестаје; ритуал у коме се користи чиста изворска вода. Посећивање Прераста као култног места има, не само церемонијални карактер, већ представља неговање традиције влашког становништва у Мајданпеку, које верује у аниматизам и анимизам. Обичаји овог краја поистовећују се са наставком постојања душе после

смрти, која се просвећује најмање до седме године после смрти, како би му у загробном животу било као у овосветовном. Припреме су више него скромне, али се уочава да ритуали имају своју динамику, поделу задужења и да постоје обредне ствари и предмети који се користе, попут хлеба, свећа и чисте изворске воде.

Кључне речи: култна места, обичаји, ритуали, помане, Мајданпек.

Vesna Milojević
Vesna Trifunović
Milutin Milojević

CULT PLACES IN KLADOVO DISTRICT: THE STORY OF MANASTIRICA

Summary

Modern societies incorporate numerous factors of different cultural origin which permeate each other, adapt to the concreteness of the environment and time, thus shaping the way of human existence. Individuals and groups create social relationships by organizing around certain symbolic complexes which specify the attitude towards the earthly (physical or tangible) and the other (intangible) world. Defining the attitude towards different environments in societies has been institutionalized through various forms, while the primary role is given to the values. The members of the same society can be consistent with different values, showing loyalty to various elements of the cultural system, including the religious.

Modern European societies have been developed on the constituent elements of Christianity, which have experienced a number of variations in different social systems; yet, one of their common denominators were Christian values. The process of modernization of Serbian society that lasted for full two centuries has gained legitimacy by Christian (Orthodox) values. In the context of cultural legitimacy, however, the harmony with other components of cultural system that testify the survival of different religious traditions (which are not Orthodox and do not rely entirely on its canons), has managed to survive in Serbian society. The story of Manastirica, a village in Kladovo district, is the testimony of present-day cult in the borderlands of eastern Serbia.

Key Words: cult place, eastern Serbia, St. Nicodemus, Manastirica – the Monastery of Holy Trinity, Green Thursday.

КУЛТНО МЕСТО У КЛАДОВСКОМ КРАЈУ: ПРИЧА ИЗ МАНАСТИРИЦЕ

Резиме

Модерна друштва садрже многобројне чиниоце различитог културног порекла који се међусобно прожимају, прилагођавају датостима средине и времена, уобличавајући, истовремено, начин људског постојања. Појединци и групе формирају друштвене односе организујући се око одређених комплекса симболичког значења, који уређују однос према оностраном (физичком или материјалном) окружењу и оностраном (нематеријалном) окружењу. Регулисање односа према различитим окружењима у друштвима се институционализује и кроз различите обрасце, а у њиховом функционисању примарну улогу имају вредности. Припадници истог друштва могу бити сагласни са различитим вредностима, показујући оданост према различитим елементима културног система, укључујући и религиозне.

Модерна европска друштва су се развијала на конститутивним елементима хришћанства, која су у различитим друштвеним системима доживела бројне варијације, ипак, један од њихових заједничких именитеља су биле хришћанске вредности. И процес модернизације српског друштва који траје већ читава два века је стекао легитимност и помоћу хришћанских (православних) вредности. У контексту културне легитимности, међутим, у српском друштву је опстала и данас траје сагласност са другим компонентама културног система које сведоче о опстанку различитих религиозних традиција, које нису православне или се не наслањају у потпуности на њене каноне. Прича из Манастирице, села у кладовском крају, је сведочење о култној пракси данас у пограничју источне Србије.

Кључне речи: култно место, источна Србија, Св. Никодим, Манастирица – манастир Св. Тројице, зелени четвртак.

Miloš Jovanović
Miloš Tasić

THE MEMORIAL IN ROGLJEVO (NEGOTIN)

Summary

The paper deals with the memorial (*zapis*) in the village of Rogljevo, near Negotin. The memorial is situated at the centre of the wineries (*pivnice*), located at the outskirts of Rogljevo. Histori-

cal as well as the data concerning social functions of the memorial are presented. The reasons for the losing of momentum of this cult place are also listed.

Key Words: Memorial, Rogljevo, Cult Place, Cult Tree.

ZAPIS U ROGLJEVU (NEGOTIN)

Rezime

U ovom radu se razmatra zapis u selu Rogljevu, blizu Negotina. Zapis se nalazi u centru pivnica, na obodu Rogljeva. Predstavljani su istorijski kao i podaci vezani za društvene funkcije ovog zapisa. Navedeni su i razlozi zbog kojih je ovo kultno mesto vremenom izgubilo na značaju.

Ključne reči: zapis, Rogljevo, kultno mesto, kultno drvo.

Dejan Krstić

THE SUVODOL MONASTERY, „THE HOLIEST“ PLACE IN THE TIMOK REGION (ZAJEČAR)

Summary

This paper gives the basic facts of the Suvodol monastery, the *holiest* cult place of the middle Timok, even of the whole Timok Diocese. Of cult objects, in the monastery there are a church, a chapel in one of residences, a cult fountain in the churchyard and a place for healing bath, and in its vicinity a cult spring for healing eye illnesses and three cult trees. Of auxiliary objects, today there are three residences, more graves in the churchyard and on an isolated cemetery, as well as facilities in the churchyard and on a separate location. The monastery has several spiritual and social aspects: it is a gathering place of orthodox believers, a place known for healings, a place that represents an identity symbol of people in five parishes and the area of whole middle Timok, a place visited by nature-lovers and those interested in cultural heritage, but a place that is yet to be touristically confirmed and offered within a strongly defined tourist strategy.

Key Words: Timok Diocese, Suvodol monastery, cult objects, religion, ethnomedicine, identity.

МАНАСТИР СУВОДОЛ : „НАЈСВЕТИЈЕ“ МЕСТО ТИМОЧКОГ КРАЈА (ЗАЈЕЧАР)

Резиме

У раду се износе основне карактеристике манастира Суводол, *најсветијег* култног места средњег Тимока, па и целе Тимочке епархије. Од културних објеката он има цркву, капелу у једном од конака, и у порти културну чесму и бокс за купање ради излечења, а у околини култни извор за очи и три културна дрвета. Од пратећих објеката ту су данас три конака, више гробова у порти и на издвојеном манастирском гробљу, као и економски објекти у порти и на посебној издвојеној локацији. Манастир има неколико духовних и социјалних димензија: он је стециште ортодоксних верника, место познато по излечењима, место које представља идентитетски симбол људи пет парохијских села и читавог средњег Тимока, место које посећују љубитељи природе и културних вредности, али које тек треба туристички да се валоризује и понуди у оквиру јасно дефинисане туристичке стратегије.

Кључне речи: Тимочка епархија, манастир Суводол, култни објекти, религија, етнотерапија, идентитет.

Lela Milošević Radulović

Dragana Stjepanović Zaharijevski

THE CELEBRATION OF SAINT GEORGE'S DAY AT THE VOTIVE CROSS IN VRTOVAC (KNJAŽEVAC)

Summary

The inhabitants of Vrtovac, a village in the municipality of Knjaževac, on the Balkan Mountains, celebrate Saint George's Day, a holiday of blooming spring and rebirth, anew every year, by offering a collective sacrifice at the votive stone cross dedicated to Saint George. This paper observes the layered structure of Saint George's Day ritual and customary practice within a socio-mythological context and through the lens of the unique combination of pagan rites and Christian customs, which are symbolically connected by stone, cross and tree as a construct of eternity, transition and constant renewal, with the aim of discovering the usefulness of their effects.

Key Words: Vrtovac, Saint George's Day, ritual practice, collective sacrifice, votive cross.

ЂУРЂЕВДАНСКО ПРАЗНОВАЊЕ KOD ZAVETNOG KRSTA U VRTOVCU (KNJAŽEVAC)

Резиме

Meštani Vrtovca, sela u opštini Knjaževac, na Staroj planini, svake godine iznova praznuju Đurđevdan, praznik cvetnog proleća i ponovnog rađanja, uz prinošenje kolektivne žrtve kod zavet-

nog kamenog krsta posvećenom svetom Đorđu. U ovom radu se u sociomitološkom kontekstu sagledava slojevita struktura đurđevdanske ritualne i običajne prakse kroz prizmu jedinstvenog sklopa paganskih obreda i hrišćanskih običaja, koji u simboličkoj ravni povezuju kamen, krst i drvo kao sklop večnosti, prelaza i neprestanog obnavljanja, sa ciljem razotkrivanja korisnosti njihovih efekata.

Кljučне речи: Vrtovac, Đurđevdan, ritualna praksa, kolektivna žrtva, zavetni krst.

Marija Cvetković
Danijela Gavrilović

CULT PLACES IN THE BABUŠNICA REGION

Summary

The aim of this paper is to present the classical cult places in the border municipality of Babušnica. The cult places which are examined here can mostly be considered partially or fully inactive cult places. What is specific, for example, is the loss of their cult function and the profanization of the visits to cult springs. The focus is on the forms of cult places which are found to be peculiar for this region: spring water, crosses located in the surroundings of the villages, and oak trees usually in the vicinity of the crosses.

Key Words: cult places, spring, cross, Babušnica.

КУЛТНА МЕСТА У БАБУШНИЧКОМ КРАЈУ

Резиме

Овај рад има за циљ да представи класична култна места у пограничној општини Бабушница. Култна места која су предмет посматрања углавном се могу сматрати делимично или потпуно угашеним култним местима. Специфичан је њихов губитак култне функције и профанизација посећивања култних извора, на пример. У фокусу су облици култних места која се проналазе као специфична за овај крај: изворска вода, крстови у околини села и храстова стабла углавном у близини крстова.

Кључне речи: култна места, извор, крст, Бабушница.

Suzana Marković Krstić
Aleksandra Kostić

ZAPIS (THE CROSS) IN THE BORDER AREA OF CRNA TRAVA: A SYMBIOSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL LIVES OF THE VILLAGE OF MLAČIŠTE

Summary

The paper deals with the celebration of religious holidays of the Ascension Day (May 29th) and the Assumption Day (August 28th), as well as the gathering of the local people and visitors around the religious record (Cross, Virgin Mary, prayer), vovplace in the village of Mlačište, in "the birch cult grove", in the region of Ivanovica. This record was built 80 years ago from the cut stone, as a rectangular monument, whose sides are identical (2 metres high), with the cross in the halo at the top, cut in the sandstone. Before this, first the wooden, and then the stone cross was built in the hollow of the beech and after it got ruined, the cross was placed on the stone foundation. Religious ceremonies are performed here as well as folk gatherings and celebrations when the local people and visitors put flowers on the Cross and light candles. However, the local people light their candles even during the profane days, so that it gradually gets the function of the church. The continuity of the local slava (the Assumption Day) has been gradually established and basic religious, social and emotional functions of the ritual gatherings at the cult place have been preserved. The satisfied spiritual, social and emotional needs of the local people and visitors to participate in the traditional village festivity contribute to the preservation of the religious, national and cultural identity of the Serbian people, disregarding the fact which side of the border they are situated.

Key Words: place of cult, the Assumption Day, the village of Mlačište, depopulation, preservation of cultural identity.

ЗАПИС (КРСТ) У ЦРНОТРАВСКОМ ПОГРАНИЧЈУ: СИМБИОЗА РЕЛИГИЈСКОГ И ДРУШТВЕНОГ ЖИВОТА СЕЛА МЛАЧИШТА

Резиме

У раду је из социолошке и психолошке перспективе сагледано слављење верских празника Спасовдана (29. маја) и Велике Госпојине (28. августа) и окуљање мештана и гостију око Записа (Крста, Богородице, Молитве), заветног места села Млачишта, у „брезином

култном гају“, на потесу Ивановица. Запис је сазидан пре осамдесетак година од тесаног камена, у виду четвороугаоног споменика једнаких страница (висине два метра), са крстом у ореолу на врху, исклесаним у камену пешчару. Пре тога, најпре дрвени, а потом камени крст у ореолу био је уграђен у шупљини велике букве, да би након њеног пропадања био постављен на камену основу. На овом култном месту врше се верски обреди и организују шири народни скупови и весеља, када мештани и гости Запис ките цвећем и пале свеће. Међутим, мештани и у профано време пале свеће на Запису, тако да он све више добија и улогу цркве. Током времена успостављен је континуитет слављења сеоске славе (Велике Госпојине) и сачуване су основне верске, социјалне и емоционалне функције ритуалног окупљања људи на култном месту. Задовољене духовне, социјалне и емотивне потребе мештана и гостију да учествују у традиционалној сеоској светковини доприносе очувању верског, националног и културног идентитета српског народа, без обзира на то с које стране државне границе Србије се он налази.

Кључне речи: култно место, сеоска слава Велика Госпојина, село Млачиште, депопулација, очување културног идентитета.

Marija Stanković
Dušan Stamenković

THE REMNANTS OF THE CHURCH OF ST PETKA IN KALIFER (SURDULICA)

Summary

The main aim of the paper is to provide a detailed description of the remnants of the Church of St. Petka in Kalifer near Masurica and describe the ways in which it is viewed as a cult place. Firstly, the paper introduces the notion of cult places and their classification. This is followed by an introduction to Masurica and its history, as well as the main features of the cult of St Petka. The central part of the paper describes the physical properties of the remnants, the history of the church, rituals and beliefs related to it and festivities taking place at this location. The final section provides the potentials of this cult place and its surroundings.

Key Words: St Petka, remnants, religion, Christianity, church, ritual, cult, South Eastern Serbia, Masurica.

CRKVIŠTE HRAMA SVETE PETKE U KALIFERU (SURDULICA)

Rezime

Osnovni cilj ovog rada jeste da pruži detaljan opis crkvišta nekadašnje crkve Svete Petke u Kaliferu nadomak Masurice i da predstavi načine na koje ovo mesto možemo da sagledamo kao kulturno. Autori najpre uvode pojam kulturnih mesta i moguće načine njihove klasifikacije, nakon čega sledi uvod u istoriju same Masurice i njene okoline, kao i opis kulta Svete Petke. U centralnom delu rada opisuju se fizičke osobine crkvišta, njegov istorijat, kao i rituali, verovanja i dešavanja koja ga prate. U završnom delu autori predstavljaju i neke potencijale ovog kulturnog mesta i njegove okoline.

Кључне речи: Sveta Petka, crkvište, religija, hrišćanstvo, crkva, ritual, kult, jugoistočna Srbija, Masurica.

Zoran M. Jovanović
Jasmina Petrović

THE CULT PLACES IN SERBIA'S BORDER AREA – EXAMPLES OF THE SEARCH FOR DESIRABILITY IN MONASTERIES SUKOVO AND RSOVCI NEAR PIROT

Summary

In the first part of the paper, we discuss certain works of sacral art found on the territory of Pirot, which have been affirmed as rarities "which should definitely be seen" due to their alleged iconographic peculiarities in recent years. These are the portrayals of *Bald Jesus*, *Virgin Mary with Wings*, *Dog-Headed Saint*, i.e. St. Christopher. In the second part of the paper, the characteristics of the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Rsovci whose inner wall holds the portrayal of the mentioned Bald Jesus are analyzed. The characteristics of the church and its surroundings are presented with reference to the legends and beliefs woven around it, among them the one of the healing power of water that flows down its walls. At the same time, what is confirmed is the original standpoint of the researchers that a greater interest in the church and the work on the reconstruction in the past decade is not only a consequence of the increase of importance of religious practice in the location, but also of secular motives, mainly of an economic nature,

which caused the "religious moment" and ecclesiastical art to become a part of their service, which is to say, a part of the so-called religious tourism and all that it can entail.

Key Words: cult spot, the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Rsovci, *Bald Jesus*, *Virgin Mary with Wings*, *Saint Christopher*, Christian iconography, religious tourism.

Jasmina Petrović

КУЛТНА МЕСТА У ПОГРАНИЧЈУ СРБИЈЕ – ПРИМЕРИ ПОТРАГЕ ЗА ПОЖЕЉНОШЋУ У МАНАСТИРУ СУКОВУ И РСОВЦИМА КОД ПИРОТА

Резиме

У првом делу рада се расправља о појединим делима сакралног сликарства на тлу пиротске општине који су последњих година због својих наводних иконографских особености афирмисани у јавности као раритети које „свакако треба видети“. Реч је о *Ђелавом Исусу*, *Богородици с крилима* и *Псоглавом светитељу*, тј. св. Христофору. У другом делу текста анализирани су особености цркве Св. Петра и Павла у Рсовцима, на чијем унутрашњем зиду се налази поменути приказ *Ђелавог Исуса*. Представљене су карактеристике храма и његовог непосредног окружења, уз осврт на легенде и веровања исплетена око те светиње, међу којима и је и оно о исцелитељској моћи воде што се слива низ њене зидове. Истовремено је потврђено првобитно полазиште истраживача да веће занимање за храм и рад на његовој обнови последњих деценија није само последица локалног раста значаја религијске праксе, него и световних мотива, пре свега економског карактера, због којих су „верски моменат“ и црквена уметност постали део њихове службе, што ће рећи и у склопу тзв. верског туризма и свега што он може подразумевати.

Кључне речи: култно место, црква Св. Петра и Павла у Рсовцима, *Ђелави Исус*, *Богородица с крилима*, *свети Христофор*, хришћанска иконографија, верски туризам.

Dragan Todorović

VOTIVE CROSSES OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF DIMITROVGRAD

Summary

Free standing stone crosses (celebratory or votive crosses) in rural communities around which the parishioners have gathered together for the sake of collective festivities are, for many centuries, of religious and social importance in the tradition of Central Balkan peoples, especially in Southeast and South Serbia, Northwest Bulgaria and Macedonia. In pre-Christian times, they were driven into the ground with the desire to protect both property and people from negative impacts of natural forces and phenomena. They were set up by the whole village, clans and families or even individuals grateful for the performed good deeds or because of the vow they made. People treated them with respect and in fear of punishment for accidental or intentional desecration. With the reception of Christianity, they were usually dedicated to a Christian saint or respective religious celebration.

The paper reports on the tradition of erecting votive crosses in Dimitrovgrad Municipality (in total 226 in 45 villages) with a special reference to their outlook and the habituated practice during the great religious celebrations in Radejna and Gradinje. Despite transformations and reconceptualizations of the original rites in the years of secularist atheization as well as revitalizations of the religious-ecclesiastic complex in Serbia in the last two decades, the worship of the votive crosses can be regarded as a contemporary form of the traditional people's religion rather than an expression of the Orthodox churchization of the local population of Dimitrovgrad villages.

Key Words: Southeast Serbia, Dimitrovgrad, Radejna, Gradinje, Votive Crosses, People's Religiosity.

ОБРОЧНИ КРСТОВИ ДИМИТРОВГРАДСКЕ ОПШТИНЕ

Резиме

Слободно стојећи камени крстови (“заветни крстови”, “оброци”) у сеоским атарима, око којих су се парохијани окупљали зарад заједничког светковања, имају вишевековни верски и друштвени значај у традицији народа централног Балкана, посебно у југоисточној и јужној Србији, северозападној Бугарској и Македонији. У претхришћанско време побијани су у земљу са жељом да се заштите имовина и људи од негативног деловања природне силе и појава. Постављали су их село у целини, родови и фамилије или појединци, захваљни за учињена добра или због изреченог завета. Народ се према њима опходио са поштовањем и у страху од казне због случајног или намерног скрнављења. Са прихватањем

хришћанства, обично су посвећивани једном хришћанском светитељу или одговарајућем верском празнику.

У раду се извештава о традицији подизања оброчних крстова у димитровградској општини (укупно 226 у 45 села), са посебним освртом на њихов изглед и спроведену обичајну праксу за време великих верских празника у Радејни и Градињу. Упркос трансформацијама и преосмишљавањима изворних обредних радњи у доба секуларистичке атеизације, као и са ревитализација религијско-црквеног комплекса у Србији из последње две деценије, поштовање оброчних крстова може се назвати савременим видом традиционалне народне религије пре него изразом православног оцрквљавања мештана димитровградских села.

Кључне речи: југоисточна Србија, Димитровград, Радејна, Градиње, оброчни крстови, народна религиозност.

Neven Obradović

Marija Jovanović

CHURCH OF SAINT PETKA: THE FAMOUS PLACE IN BOSILEGRAD

Summary

This paper is based on a field research and the interview with priest Zoran Stojanov, pastor of the third parish of Bosilegrad and the elder of the parish of Bosilegrad. The paper gives an overview of the Church of St. Petka in the village Ribarci that has been a famous place in this region for more than a century. Believing in the miraculous power of prayer to St Petka people from different places come to this church. Through prayer, the Holy Liturgy and by sitting barefoot in the churchyard, the people have been finding solace, peace and healing in it for years.

Key Words: Church of St Petka, Ribarci village, famous place, Zoran Stojanov.

ЦРКВА СВЕТЕ ПЕТКЕ: КУЛТНО МЕСТО У ОПШТИНИ БОСИЛЕГРАД

Резиме

Рад је настао на основу теренског истраживања и интервјуа са јерејем Зораном Стојановим, парохом треће парохије Босилеградске и старешином Црквене Општине Босилеград. У раду је дат осврт на Цркву Свете Петрке у селу Рибарци која више од једног века представља култно место овог краја. Верујући у чудотворну моћ молитве упућене светитељки Божијој Параскеви, Светој Петки, у ову цркву долазе људи из најразличитијих крајева. Кроз молитве, Свету литургију и босоногим седењем у црквеној порти, људи у њој годинама уназад проналезу утеху, душевни мир или исцељење.

Кључне речи: Црква Свете Петке, село Рибарци, култно место, Зоран Стојанов.

Jovan Živković

Dragan Todorović

CULT SITES OF LOPARDINCE MONASTERY (BUJANOVAC)

Summary

The paper gives a description of the cult places of the Monastery Complex Lopardince – Church of St. Archangels Gabriel and Michael, The Hollow Stone, a healing water spring and the Maiden Rock – in the north of the Municipality of Bujanovac, in the region of the Serbian village of Lopardince. With their care about their present outlook as well as by keeping alive the lore about their coming into being, the village people confirm an extemporaneous character of the magical-religious connection between the village collectivity and its supernatural protectors as well as the essence of duality, on one hand, between pre-Christian and para-Christian representations and, on the other, the Orthodox Christian semantic context in popular beliefs and practices.

Key Words: Southeast Serbia, Bujanovac, Monastery Complex Lopardince, Cult Sites, Church of St. Archangels Gabriel and Michael, Hollow Stone, Healing Water Spring, Maiden Rock.

КУЛТНА МЕСТА МАНАСТИРА ЛОПАРДИНЦЕ (БУЈАНОВАЦ)

Резиме

У раду се описују култна места манастирског комплекса Лопардинце – црква Св. Архангела Гаврила и Михаила, Шупљи камен, лековити извор и Девојачки камен – на северу општине Бујановац, у реону српског села Лопардинце. Бригом о њиховом садашњем изгледу и одржавањем предања о њиховом настанку сеоски живаљ потврђује ванвремени карактер магијско-религијске везе између сеоског колективитета и његових натприродних заштитника и суштину дуалитета између претхришћанских и парохришћанских предста-

ва и православно-хришћанског значењског контекста у народном схватању и практиковању.

Кључне речи: југоисточна Србија, Бујановац, манастирски комплекс Лопардинце, култна места, црква Св. Архангела Гаврила и Михајла, Шупљи камен, лековити извор, Девочачки камен.

Danijela Zdravković

THE CHURCH OF HOLY THEOTOKOS ON THE DEVIL'S STONE IN DONJA TRNICA

Summary

A place of cult implies a meeting point between the ritual and the other side, the divine, whereby respect to the latter is conveyed. The aim of this paper is to select and sociologically examine interesting characteristics of the concrete place of cult in the municipality of Trgovište – the medieval Church of Holy Theotokos dating from the 14th century on the Devil's Stone in Donja Trnica. This place of cult is among the Pčinja people widely known as the most significant and most vivid cultural locality of the archaic Pčinja region. It is an active place of cult, frequently visited, the most massive pilgrimages being important dates from the Orthodox Church calendar and the following rituals: Good Friday, Transfiguration of the Lord and Nativity. The sociological picture of this place of cult, which largely enlightens the structure of the folk and religious background of the ritual milieu, is seen through the general data, description and dynamics of its visits. A very relevant ritual performed out of ethnomedicinal reasons (sterility with women) is also conducted here by initiating the desired events through scenic movements (wriggling through the rock and leaving money gifts), its actors (visitors and believers) attach to it a likeable magic character and believe that the ritual will be copied from the ritual scene to the real life (passing through the hole in the stone symbolizes fertility). The beauty and power of this crossing ritual also comes from the belief that it has the strength of *homeopathic imitative magic*.

Key Words: place of cult, Church of Holy Theotokos, Donja Trnica, South-Eastern Serbia.

ЦРКВА ПРЕСВЕТЕ БОГОРОДИЦЕ НА ВРАЖЈЕМ КАМЕНУ У ДОЊОЈ ТРНИЦИ

Резиме

Култно место је свако место на којем се ритуално комуницира са оностраним, божанским и према њему изражава поштовање. Циљ овог рада је издвојити и испитати социолошки занимљиве карактеристике конкретног култног места у општини Трговиште – средњевековна Црква Пресвете Богородице из 14. века на Вражјем камену у Доњој Трници. То култно место је познатије међу Пчињанима као најзначајнији и најживописнији културни локалитет архаичне пчињске области. Она је активно култно место које се посећује стално, а најмасовији походи су у току године везани за дане из православног црквеног календара и обреде који их прате, а то су: Велики петак, Преображење Господње и Мала Госпојина. Општим подацима, описом и динамиком посећивања култног места дата је и социолошка слика култног места, која поприлично расветљава структуру народне и верске позадине амбијента самог ритуалног понашања. На том месту се одвија и посебно значајан обред на овом локалитету који се изводи из етномедицинских разлога (неплодност жене) и иницирајући жељене догађаје драмским покретима (повлачење кроз камен и остављањем дарова у новцу), његови виновници (посетиоци и верници) му дају симпатички магијски карактер, верујући да ће се обред пресликати са ритуалне сцене у реалном животу (проласком кроз отвор у камену симболизује се плодност). Лепота и снага овог обреда прелаза лежи у уверењу да овај обред има и моћ *хомеопатске имитативне магије*.

Кључне речи: култно место, Црква Пресвете Богородице, Доња Трница, југоисточна Србија.

Dragoljub B. Đorđević

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A PARTIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROMANI CULT PLACE: THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP IN PREŠEVO

Summary

For this occasion we have examined *the blacksmith's shop* as a Romani cult place in the Roma from Preševo, beginning from the initial information that this is the case of a still alive, active cult place. The blacksmith's shop is a sacred place for the Roma. How can it not be, when to the qu-

estion concerning what separates them as a people from the surroundings, the scholars always reply by saying that it is their vocation and the “special way of life” that comes with it. And the blacksmith’s craft occupies the first spot among them. The majority of the Roma in Serbia used to be blacksmiths. The blacksmith’s shop is the cult space which was treated with awe, where ritual activities were performed and “religious” attention was paid. There is no doubt: for the Roma from Preševo and the blacksmiths themselves the blacksmith’s shop has stopped being a cult place, a sacred spot which was respected and celebrated by a series of ritual actions. Only a vague memory of it remains in the younger generation passed down from the oldest Roma, most of them already deceased. Even though we have managed to only partially reconstruct the blacksmith’s shops in Preševo as the Romani cult places, nonetheless, this leaves us with the opportunity to classify them according to our typology as the (IA) cult places visited exclusively by the Roma and the (IIA) inactive, extinct cult places.

Key Words: Roma, Preševo, Serbia, cult place, blacksmith’s shop.

ДЕЛИМИЧНА РЕКОНСТРУКЦИЈЕ РОМСКОГ КУЛТНОГ МЕСТА: КОВАЧКЕ РАДЊЕ У ПРЕШЕВУ

Резиме

За ову прилику приступили смо обради *ковачке радње* као ромског култног места код прешевских Рома, полазећи од почетне информације да је у питању још живо, активно култно место. Ковачка радња је свето место Ромима. Како и не би била, када на питање шта их одваја као народ од окружења, познаваоци одговарају да је то њихово занимање и уз њега везан „специјалан начин живота“. А у њих је ковачки занат први међу свим осталим занимањима. Тако се и у Србији највећи број Рома њиме бавио. Ковачка радња је култни простор према којем се односило са страхопоштовањем, чиниле обредне радње и поклањала „религиозна“ пажња. Нема двоумљења: за прешевске Роме и саме коваче ковачка радња је престала да буде култно место, свети простор који се поштовао и славио низом ритуалних поступака. О томе је у млађем покољењу остало само нејасно сећање пренето од најстаријих Рома, већином већ покојних. Иако смо успели само делимично да реконструирамо прешевске ковачке радње као ромска култна места, ипак нам и то омогућава да их према нашој типологији сврстамо у (IA) култна места која посећују искључиво Роми и у (IIA) угашена, изумрла култна места.

Кључне реч: Роми, Прешево, Србија, култно место, ковачка радња.

PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE FOR DATA ACQUISITION ON CULT PLACES IN THE BORDER REGIONS OF EASTERN AND SOUTH EASTERN SERBIA (DBDJ/DT/DK– 2014)

PRELIMINARY NOTES

A cult place should be understood as every place where ritual communication is established with the otherworldly, the divine, and where reverence is paid to it.

A cult place which meets one of the following two conditions should be selected for research:

1. Represents a *classical* example of cult places in the particular region in the sense of its appearance, customary content, or importance for the local community
2. Represents an *extraordinary* example which differs from the others in the sense of its appearance, customary content, or importance for the local community.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE CULT PLACE

Official title (name) of CP:

Title of CP in the surrounding people/s:

Toponym of the area in which CP is located (if applicable):

Age of CP:

Location of CP: a) *in the municipality of* b) *in the town of*
c) *in the suburbs of* d) *in the village of*
e) *on the village territory of* (distance from the v. in km)

Number of population of the settlement (town/village) in which CP is located according to the 2011 census:

Settlement (town/village) has a church: a) *yes* b) *no*

Has a mosque: a) *yes* b) *no*

Population is dominated by: a) Serbs, b) Bosniaks, c) Albanians d) Vlachs, e) Bulgarians, f) Roma

Population is dominated by: a) Orthodox b) Muslims c) Catholics d) Protestants

Dominant CP visitors are: a) Serbs, b) Bosniaks, c) Albanians d) Vlachs, e) Bulgarians, f) Roma, g) members of various peoples

Dominant CP visitors are: a) Orthodox b) Muslims c) Catholics d) Protestants, e) members of various confessions

Which ethnic community takes care of CP: a) Serbs, b) Bosniaks, c) Albanians d) Vlachs, e) Bulgarians, f) Roma, g) no one community in particular

Which religious community takes care of CP: a) SOC, b) RCC, c) Islamic Community, d) Protestant Community (which one:), e) no one community in particular

Which social community takes care of CP (individual, family, clan, households with real estate nearby, hamlet, village, several villages, entire area, CP visitors themselves):
.....

Vicinity of other infrastructural or religious objects to CP (holiday area, highway, village community centre, monastery, church, cemetery...):

Infrastructural equipment of CP (access roads, water supply, electricity, lighting...):

CP object belongs to: a) SOC b) RCC c) Protestant Community d) Islamic Community (if CP is a sacred temple)

Approximate period when CP became inactive (if applicable):

CULT PLACE TYPE

I TYPOLOGY

- A) A cult place visited exclusively by the majority people;
- B) A cult place visited by the majority people together with the surrounding people/s;
- C) A sacred temple (church, mosque, etc.) as a cult place.

II TYPOLOGY

- A) An inactive, extinct cult place;
- B) An active (alive), functioning cult place.

CP Description

- A detailed description of the *appearance and content* of CP
- Detailed *colour photographs* of CP and the *ambiance/scenery*
- A detailed list and individual photographs of *cult objects* at the cult place (cult tree, cult grove, cult spring, cult fountain, wooden cult cross, stone cult cross, cult stone, remnants of a former church – church lot, church, chapel, mosque, tekiya, wall of a building, tomb...)
- Detailed location, description and dimensions of *each cult object separately* (for example: a large carved cross or a niche for lighting candles in the cult tree, an inscription or a decorative detail on the votive cross, a donator’s inscription in a church...)
- Photographs of *important details* on cult objects
- Detailed location, description and dimensions of *auxiliary, non-cult objects at cult places* (for example: auxiliary altars for performing rites – table, stone, stone plate..., auxiliary objects for serving cult meals – gazebos, tables and benches..., buildings above cult objects, bell towers, bells, residential facilities...)
- Separate photographs of all *auxiliary objects*
- Detailed location, description and, if necessary, dimensions of *small inventory at cult places* (for example: icon lamps, censers, small crosses, icons, candle holders, church banners, bowls, books, dervish accessories...)
- Separate photographs of *small inventory*
- Detailed location, description and, if necessary, dimensions of *cult gifts at cult places* (for example: remains of candles, remains of flowers, remains of clothing, towels, food remains, remains of utensils, coins...)
- Separate photographs of *cult gifts*

Procedure

- Collecting of, if there are any, old paintings, drawings, and written trails (literature) on CP
- Recording of interviews with the elderly population on CP
- Recording of interviews with the current visitors of CP
- CP has a traditional keeper: a) *yes* b) *no*
- Interview with the head of the sacred object (if applicable)
- Reconstruction of the former appearance and content of CP (if applicable)

CP Visiting Dynamics

- **I** Once a week: a) *on the precisely determined day*..... b) *on any day*
- **II** Several times a week
- **I** Once a month **II** Several times a month
- **I** Once a year: a) *on the precisely determined date*..... b) *on any date*
- If a), why? What is on that day, date?.....
- **II** Several times a year

CP Visitors

- **CP is more visited by:** a) *the majority* b) *other minorities (which ones)* c) *equally by the majority and minorities*
- **CP is visited by:** a) *local population* b) *population from neighbouring settlements and regions*
- **CP is visited by:** a) *the Orthodox* b) *Muslims* c) *both*
- **CP is more visited by:** a) *the elderly* b) *the middle aged* c) *the youth* d) *there is no difference*
- **CP is more visited by:** a) *men* b) *women* c) *there is no difference*
- **CP is most often visited by:** a) *families* b) *a parent with children* c) *individually*
- **CP is revered by:**
 - a) *offering (which) objects?*.....
 - b) *donating money*
 - c) *lighting (which) candles?*.....
 - d) *flowers*
 - e) *kissing*
 - f) *otherwise (how)?*.....

Reasons and background for establishing CP

(record from respondents a legend, traditional story or testimony which explains *the reasons for the establishment of the cult place /ethnomedicinal and ethnoveterinarian reasons* – epidemics, personal diseases, psychological pressure of the higher powers through visions during waking hours or while sleeping, fortune teller recommendations, pious people recommendations, an inherited obligation to preserve the cult place for the sake of good health...; *agrarian reasons* – because of misfortunes with crops, drought, hail, an inherited obligation to preserve the cult place for the sake of crops and good harvest...; *religious reasons in the narrow sense* – official religious organizations renewing due to their religious mission; *national-political reasons* – the state, authorities, parties which establish, renew and upgrade because

it is in line with their orientation, ideology and platforms; *positive relationship toward religion, heritage and home country* – renewal due to emotional reasons toward heritage/)

Rites performed at the occasion of establishment, renewal or upgrade of CP
(record from respondents a legend, traditional story or testimony on *rituals and other customs carried out at the occasion of establishment, renewal or upgrade of the cult place* (encirclement of the village for protection from diseases, custom of squeezing between two fires or under tree roots, ritual of choosing a patron saint's day with three small breads and three candles, consecration.../))

Reasons and background for visiting CP

Detailed description of the behaviour of visitors and rituals performed at CP

1. record from respondents *the title of the ceremony in the holy time, i.e. for the specific religious holiday* (village feast day, meal, prayer, church saint's day, monastery saint's day...);
2. record from respondents or on the basis of one's own field observations, if applicable also make photographs, *the behaviour, i.e. religious activities, during the common (profane) time* (for example, crossing, lighting candles, leaving gifts, prayers and the like during the chance passing by the cult place or the visits to it or the visits for the purpose of healing);
3. record in great detail from respondents or on the basis of one's own field observations, if applicable also make photographs (and find old photographs in respondents), *preparation activities for rites in the holy time, i.e. at certain holidays* (fasting, cleaning the cult place and cult objects, preparing the sacrifice – roasting the sacrifice or kurban soup, preparing cult meals, inviting guests...);
4. record in great detail from respondents or on the basis of one's own field observations, if applicable also make photographs (and find old photographs in respondents), *cult activities before the main rite in the holy time, i.e. at certain holidays* (lighting candles, decorating the cult place, presenting gifts to the cult place...);
5. record in great detail from respondents or on the basis of one's own field observations, if applicable also make photographs (and find old photographs in respondents), *main rites, main ritual activities, in the holy time, i.e. at certain holidays* (for example, bread cutting rite, ritual procession around the village or its entire territory, liturgy, mass, dervish rite, genuflection in the mosque, ethnomedicinal rituals...);
6. record in great detail from respondents or on the basis of one's own field observations, if applicable also make photographs (and find old photographs in respondents), *behaviour, i.e. activities, after the main rituals in the holy time, i.e. at certain holidays* (cult meals, music, celebration and dances, fair elements – various forms of entertainment and trade);
7. record from respondents how important the ceremony at the cult place is for the *identity of religious, social or ethnic community*.

Taboos related to CP

1. record from respondents *taboos related to cult places* (for example, taking anything from the cult place, demolishing or desecrating cult objects, performing base actions /e.g. physiological needs/ at the cult place..., and for *personal wantonness*,

Procedure

for nationalistic reasons, for example, during wartime, or for ideological reasons, for example, due to communistic orientation);
2. record from respondents (if applicable also make photographs and find old photographs in respondents), *reasons, actions, and physical consequences of the irreverence toward and desecration of cult places);*
3. record from respondents *consequences which, according to beliefs, happened to those who did not revere or who desecrated the cult places* (personal and family misfortune).

Reconstruction of the causes for the inactivity of CP (if applicable)

Detailed description of the causes for the inactivity of CP (if applicable)

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