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# **RELIGION, RELIGIOUS AND FOLK CUSTOMS ON THE BORDER**

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**RELIGION, RELIGIOUS AND FOLK CUSTOMS ON THE BORDER**

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**RELIGION AND BORDER:  
STATE, ETHNIC, CULTURAL...**





Sergej Flere

## **BASIC FORMS OF TERRITORIALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN EUROPE\***

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In the process of formation of modern society, until the present time, the following basic patterns of territorial arrangement of extension of religion have been demonstrated: (1) the Augsburg-Westphalia model<sup>1</sup>, (2) the Eastern Orthodox model, and (3) the model immanent to globalization is being yet developed. These models are not direct images of reality, but typological categories, which have expressed themselves during certain historical periods and in certain localities. The models had an impact upon religious and entire social life in general, as they also do today. Some institutional solutions, such as state religion, separation of church and state and 'religious freedom for all' are to be found in the contemporary implementation of these models, altering them and annihilating the former two.

In this paper we focus on how religious frontiers were established during the modernization of Europe, the establishment of modern society, as it began, coinciding with the rise of capitalism and spanning to the present. As we shall see, although not a major driving force of modernization, these frontiers and their establishment were intertwined with modernization.

We will concentrate on three major cases and situation: (1) the Augsburg-Westphalia solution, (2) the Eastern Orthodox solution and (3) contemporary globalization situation. This is not to say that these solutions were the only solutions governing religion in Europe, as other institutional solutions also sprang about, intervening and governing religious life within the frontiers mentioned.

### **THE EARLY MODERN SITUATION**

On the surface, we may notice wars and other events, however, the essence of the processes of modernization are to be found in the differentiation of processes and institutions. This also goes for religion and we will follow some instances. Modernization theorists contend that differentiation, along with other elements of modernization, brings about greater stability, efficacy and competitiveness for the society in question, in comparison to other societies.

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<sup>1</sup> Before the advent of modernization, in Europe only religious monopolies existed (Bouma 2007, 195).

### **The Augsburg-Westphalia solution**

The Augsburg and Westphalia peace accords, after inter-confessional wars, dealt most directly with regulation of religious relations, particularly frontiers in German lands, but they had a much greater pan-European and global significance. The treaty of Augsburg, considered by some as a truce only, dealt immediately with the position of Lutherans in German lands, granting them 'enjoyment of their religious belief, liturgy and ceremonies', as well as guaranteeing their property and personal freedom. Although in this charter the Emperor invoked 'Christain amity' as his point of departure, he expressly stated that all other (Protestant) groups and beliefs (outside Lutheranism and Catholicism) 'shall not be included.'

This is the first instance of the international law application of the *cuius regio elius religio* solution (also called *ubi unus dominus ibi una sit religio*), as we stated in an incomplete form. It should be mentioned that this solution was at variance with previous position of the Catholic Church, particularly Lateran IV Council, Constitution I, which stated that there is 'one universal church of the faithful, outside which there is no salvation' (1215). Further, the Augsburg document did not resolve imporant issues of urban religious minorities (although they were tolerated in both directions and of ecclesiastic property which was often seized after this peace by secular authorities.

The Augsburg Peace did not declare religious liberty, did not even address the issue, but was a step in the direction, as further complications among protestants (differences in faith between lords and the people) could no longer be dealt with by repression or mandatory conversion of the subjects.

The Treaty of Westphalia is a true double-pillar of modern society. Ending the Thirty Years War, after lengthy diplomatic negotiations. The two pillars of modern society were: the sovereign state, which would evolve into a democratic national state, and religious freedom, not just for the two fore mentioned confessions, but for all Christian faiths, even those not official in one state. The Treaty of Osnabueck of 1648<sup>2</sup> foresaw "*exercitium religionis privatum*", and tolerated communal worship by minority faiths in clandestine churches or as private, family or individual devotions (quoted in Kaplan 2007, 194). This amounts not to full parity and equality of religions, but to a fair amount of religious freedom, as religious faiths could be practiced within unofficial churches, or at least at homes, without being persecuted. But, these steps forward in religious freedom were part and parcel of the new order of sovereign states. Sovereign states were the ones who bound themselves to allow religious freedom within their borders. Thus there would typically be a state religion, but other faiths needed to be tolerated. The unit within which this was to be done was the state, with defined borders, as contained in the Westphalia agreements. In practice, the influence of the state religion and church would be great, particularly when the head of state was the head of church as well, but in other cases as well there would be great pressure to adopt the state religion. However, the basis for a further development in the pluralist direction was set.

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<sup>2</sup>A part of the Westphalia peace accords.

### **The Eastern Orthodox model**

The Eastern Orthodox model of church organization differs from the western one in that it never held on the idea of a universal church and ecclesiastic monopoly. Even when there was one patriarch only, even if it clinged to the idea of ecclesiastic Christian universality, the one in Constantinople, Orthodoxy could not rely on the idea of a sacrosanct unity and primacy, as Peter's rock, if it existed at all, lay in Rome. But for other reasons of a practical nature, the impossibility of factual control of all Eastern Orthodox sees, it was necessary to compromise with reality.

The Eastern Orthodox model sprang up as one where the church is ideally coincidental with nation state. This came about in a different manner than in the west. This model sprung after Bulgaria and Russia appeared on the scene and the Constantinople patriarch ceased to have the leverage envisaged for a universal spiritual ruler. On the other hand, throughout the history of Eastern Christianity, the principle of *symphonia* prevailed, according to which harmony between the state and the church should exist, both supporting each other. Orthodoxy was the cultural basis for the formation of many, particularly Balkan states, combining the concept of *symphonia* with the national idea and modern nationalism. Although there have been examples of ecclesiastic authorities opposing state authorities, the basic pattern has been the subjugation of the church to state authority (Leustean 2008).

Members of Balkan EO nationalities, according to Leustean (2008, 425), 'perceive themselves as continuators of a great past in which the church played the main role in providing salvation to the dead, the faithful and the yet unborn members of the nation'.

This is a type of state religion, in principle, which in Byzantium did not allow for minorities. Already at the beginnings of modernization, these countries contained many religious minorities.

We will not comment on whether and to what extent this model stimulated or limited modernization and religious liberty, although it may be mentioned that the idea of a nation being in entirety and essentially of a certain Christian confession is certainly not one stimulating modernization – but this idea and pattern is not limited to EO.

Both these models rested on the assumption that citizens would be members of the state church and church membership would be part of citizenship (subjectship) (Bouma 2007, 196). There would be exceptions allowed for recognized minorities from the outset, but the pluralism of Europe within the Westphalia system paved the way for religious liberty to advance, firstly in the Netherlands.

### **CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS**

As is well known, the present state of society is in turmoil and change. It is spoken as a 'fluid' society, as the crisis of the 'modern world system' (Wallerstein), 'eisk society' (Beck). Beck speaks of 'fundamental fragility, the mutability of societal dynamics (of unintended side-effects, domination and

power), shaped by the globalization of capital and risks at the beginning of the twenty-first century' (Beck and Grande 2010).

We may note, that in former Yugoslav lands, it may seem that with regard to territoriality of religion Vrcan indicated the major change. In one of his last papers, he wrote of 'borders and 'frontiers' as religious territorial demarcation lines becoming typical (2006). Borders are the usual ends of one phenomenon indicating the appearance of another, without any particular relationship between the two. Under the influence of the Yugoslav wars, Vrcan wrote of 'frontiers' as a special type of demarcation between religion, where it is regarded that religious and otherwise enemies live beyond the demarcation. They are not only different, but also to be dealt with in a manner which will obliterate their presence. They are 'defeatable' and 'suitable for extermination' (2006, 218). He pronounced this explicitly, pursuing from the experience of post-Yugoslav wars of the 90s. Many others have written on this and commented on the religious component of these wars. For example, Spickard, writing directly on our issue of religious borders, writes 'Ethnically based death squads often identified their victims by asking what prayers they learned as children' (Spickard 2007, 235). The phenomenon identified by Vrcan is one which was markedly present in these lands, which may spring and does in other areas (e.g., in Iraq, regarding Sunnis and Shiites), but it is definitely a minority phenomenon from a global perspective, in comparison to the major trends regarding the relationship between territoriality and religion at the beginning of the 21st century, as will be presented below. In parlance of the World system theory, what was noted of post-Yugoslavia and Iraq, may appear only in peripheral and semi-peripheral parts of the world (Spickard 250).

However, although the Yugoslav case was the most excessive in its way, ethnonationalist excesses mingled with confessional ones are not limited to the area of this former country, in impacting religion and religious borders. The phenomenon is also typical in certain post-communist countries with an EO tradition. Specifically, border issues appear in Moldova, Macedonia and Ukraine. In these countries, different religious entities claim to be legitimate in various areas, sometime at state level, in other creating specific new 'confessional territorial borders'. Thus, in Moldova the Metropolitan Orthodox Church of Bessarabia while the Moldovan Orthodox Church claims legitimacy upon the entire area of Moldova<sup>3</sup>. In the Ukraine the situation is more complicated with the parallel existence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church ([orthodox.org.ua/eng/node](http://orthodox.org.ua/eng/node), recognizing the authority of the Moscow Orthodox Patriarch) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (<http://www.uaoc.info>), which is minor in influence compared to the former.

A more discernible, as to territoriality situation, in Ukraine exists regarding the Greek Catholic Ukrainian Church (<http://www.ugcc.org.ua>), limited primarily to the western parts of the country in contrast the Eastern Or-

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<sup>3</sup>The essence of the conflict is that the Moldovan Church recognizes the highest authority of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch, whereas the Bessarabian does the Romanian Orthodox Patriarch. See Judgment by the ECtHR, no. 45701/99, 2001).

thodox, within which a legitimacy dispute predominates, basically not to do with borders. However, the East-West situation in Ukraine is a major one, although Huntington may not be correct in claiming it is a civilizational one, bringing about an imminent split of the state itself (1993)<sup>4</sup>. – Although all these and other situations are important and major problems, they may fade away, with the advance of globalization (see below).

Among, the major trend changes regarding religion and territoriality, the following should be noted:

*Firstly*, one could say that we today exist within a new pattern, a new system of rules, which can be indicated by the European Convention of Human Rights and its implementation by the European Court of Human Rights. Truly, this Convention governs religious liberty and the Court implements it. The Court further expands the basic idea of universal religious liberty, without qualifications and without borders. It often finds states guilty of violating religious liberty, advancing an entire philosophy of religious liberty, one including liberty of thought and conscience, and allowing for equal liberty for non-believers. This Court definitely acts in a manner to standardize religious liberty at a very high level, including proportionalizing certain limitations vis-à-vis other guaranteed liberties. The case of the ECtHR on religious liberty is rich and variegated.

However, the action on the part of the ECtHR is limited, as states are lax in fulfilling the judgment contained requests regarding legislation, in particular. As much as its judgments are relevant in every day life, they standardize the practice of states. In a limitative way, and open way for religious liberty for all, i.e. disregarding borders. However, a new social atmosphere is advanced by this ECtHR practice.

Inspecting the situation with regard to the ECtHR and ECHR, one may observe, that it is common for state legislation and the ECHR enshrined objectives to find themselves on opposite ideological sides, as a result of their dissimilar logic in deciding on these issues. Within the logic of states, issues where states invoke their traditions, particularly associated with the historically prevailing religion, sometimes their age-old legal arrangements for religious life, are particularly noticeable. Thus, in the case of *Jehovah's Witnesses v. Austria*, Austria defended its two tier system of religious communities because the first one was instituted in the 19th century, whereas the second represented a modern superstructure not deleting or adjusting the prior one (Durham 2005, 19).

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<sup>4</sup>Eight entities were listed by the Religious Information Service of Ukraine as registered 'Orthodox' entities in 2012, including the Russian Orthodox Old Believers' Church (Bila Krynytsia agreement), the Russian Orthodox Old Believers' Church (non-priest agreement), the Russian Orthodox Old Believers' Church (non-priest agreement), the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and Russian Truly-Orthodox Church, and a rubric devoted to 'other Orthodox' is also listed (<http://risu.org.ua/en/index/resources/statistics/ukr2011>), retrieved on 24 Feb. 2012. All are noted to have monasteries or missions. – Such a pluralist situation, is something historically unique in a country with an Orthodox tradition.

The ECtHR operates on completely different premises than the logic of most nation states. Not only does it impose the wording of Art. 9 of the ECHR, which speaks of 'religious liberty for all' (not citizens, not permanent residents, not indicating a minimum number of members for registration, not speaking of registration at all, particularly not as a condition for undertaking and enjoying religious freedom), but also consistently underscoring the value of religious pluralism as integral to the European political and legal order (e.g., Metropolitan Church, no. 45701/99, 2001, pt. 114, The Moscow Branch of the Salvation Army, no. 72881/01, 2006, pt. 58, Religionsgemeinschaft der Zeugen Jehovas, no. 40825/98, 2008, pt. 61<sup>5</sup>). Furthermore, in what was to become the position of the EU in the Treaty of Lisbon (2007, Art. 17), it equates religious and other, 'philosophical' (sceptic, agnostic) world views<sup>6</sup>.

The most important issue, however, as with constitutional courts, is whether the judgments are implemented narrowly, just by redressing – by the states in question – the immediate violations, or whether legislative reforms, but also constitutional amendments and administrative reforms follow to correct the situations which made possible the individual violations. Here we are confronted with the weakest spot as to the Court. The application is usually narrow, and reports of general reforms of legislation, in this case on religion and religious organizations, are rare. Bulgaria and Greece did fundamentally change their laws in applying the rulings and this was so only when there was enough support within post-transition ruling elites, as Anagnostou points out (730–31). It is questionable whether even these reforms reached the standards of the ECtHR judicial positions, as the position of Muslims in Greece is still not fully within these standards in Greece, whereas in Bulgaria the reform regarding registration of religious communities, which became province of the judiciary in 2002 did not do away with 'state intrusion' and bring about 'full transparency' (Anagnostou, 731).<sup>7</sup> But if Bulgaria and Greece are two Orthodox countries, almost on the fringes of Europe, it stands out that Austria has not changed its legislation, which was found to be fundamentally discriminatory in the *Gemeinschaft Zeugen Jehovas*, where the Judgment calls for a reform.

But one should not expect a supra-national court dealing with politically sensitive issues to become an interventionist court having the powers to

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<sup>5</sup> The Committee of Ministers of the European Council has not yet been satisfied with the execution and not passed the resolution, in accordance with its rules (communication from the Council of Europe dated 1 Nov., 2011).

<sup>6</sup> The American scholar Calo goes as far as to conclude that in the practice of the ECtHR, religious liberty is subjugated to religious and 'democratic' pluralism, not only associated to it. (2010, 261). Calo is critical of the ECtHR on the grounds of an alleged secularism lying behind, not preparing Europe for the encounter with Islam. He opines of the Court 'tolerate/ing/ /religion/ so long as it does not challenge the predominance of the secular.' (271).

<sup>7</sup> In all cases originating from Bulgaria, where violations have been found by the ECtHR, the EC Council of Ministers has yet to pass resolutions finding that the situations have been corrected, although legislation has been passed to this end.

impose judicial policy upon national legislators. Such a position of the judiciary is historically exceptional, possibly even questionable. Much has been accomplished already by its articulation of a judicial philosophy on Art. 9, 'by its extension of the judicial interpretation of the Convention rights to a variety of new claims and societal demands' (2010, 722), as Anagnostou writes. One must bear in mind that the Convention itself was adopted for a much smaller number of countries, which were culturally and legally more homogenous than is the case today.

The situation regarding Art. 9 is mostly of the same type as arising regarding the implementation of the Convention itself. The judgments are individual ones, the petitioners may have their individual situations redressed. But the broader issue is whether European states change their legislation in cases of violations of a systemic nature. Reports on this issue are scarce. Something may be seen from whether the Committee of Ministers has passed a resolution on the country having corrected its legislation on the issue. This is rarely so in the cases that have been mentioned.

*Secondly*, the very nature of globalisation changes the relevance of state borders regarding religion. Globalization opens an entire new situation as far as religion, and particularly its territorialization is concerned.

Latin America may serve as possibly the most striking example. Garcia-Ruiz and Michel (2011) consider that this process goes as far as to do away with 'territorial insularity' and 'specificities' of regions. Individuation is the most important factor in explaining religious revivals, such as the pentecostal one in Latin America. This individuation has to do with such a religion, its religious content being irrelevant<sup>8</sup>. What their analysis boils down to is that the evangelical nature of pentecostalism is conducive to the formation of the 'compliant actor' in contemporary capitalism (2011, 412 ff). On this path, the mass conversion and introduction of the religion into a new territory firstly has to do with doing away with the traditional national identity, whereas after a time a new pentecostal identity is asserted as the national one. They opine it will lead to traditionalistic and conservative view of the family and nation state organization. In contrast to previous evangelical pentecostalism, associated primarily with the poor, contemporary Latin American pentecostalism advances the idea of economic enrichment, as a sign of God's reward and in general, Garcia-Ruiz and Michel find an economic entrepreneurial logic in it (414)<sup>9</sup> Martin confirms this, articulating that pentecostalism serves in Latin America as a way out of the vicious circle of fate-like poverty (2002, 85-7).

Martin (2002, 7), another observer of this phenomenon, notes that archaic elements are brought into the practice of Latin American Pentecostal

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<sup>8</sup> These two authors go so far as to assert that 'no specific meaning is attributed to religion. It is first and foremost a repertory offering actors the necessary resources to make a relationship to themselves, others and the world.

<sup>9</sup> '... God ends up subcontracting Salvation to the market, setting it up as the supreme judge. This is what Prosperity Theology is about: turning believers' material wealth into a sign of God's benevolence' (2011, 415).

Christianity, with Christianity remaining intact. But within Christianity, this pentecostalism underscores the 'empowerment through spiritual gifts' at hand for all. Although Martin observes players, entities of pentecostalism in South America at the national level (Brazil, Guatemala, Argentina) and the mega-churches within them, it is clear that he has in mind a single cultural trend, responding to the needs of the times, which does not know of state boundaries, as is underscored by the subtitle of his book 'The world is their parish'.

Of course, Latin American pentecostalism was introduced with the assistance of missionary work. But the true issue is, why was this missionary work successful, whereas many others were not. Part of the answer lies in the religious ideas and practices, whereas the other has to do with organization, which stressed the autonomy of the local units and the apprenticeship system of leadership recruitment (Matviuk 2002).

We may observe deterritorialization in other ways as well, although the relationship between religion and territory does not just wither away.

Boli and Brewington (2007) draw attention to a different aspect of internationalization and globalization of religion: beside the religious groups themselves, numerous religiously based non-governmental organizations permeate social life, regardless of state borders, dealing with both a great variety of welfare and moral issues.

These changes in the world need not to be taken literally to pertain to Europe. One cannot expect proselytization, or even media connectivity to have such an effect in Europe, as may be in other parts of the world. However, one can expect that new religious forms and new religions be asserted and even to effloresce in Europe as well, state boundaries being less relevant in this context. The type of religiosity to be asserted cannot be defined in details in advance, but emotional and charismatic forms of religion should certainly be expected to be among them.

Further, existing traditional organizations may be expected to differentiate and accommodate different 'tastes' of their members.

Basically, we are dealing with a situation of 'competition', where state boundaries are less important or totally irrelevant. (Religious liberty, as proclaimed by international law, within the human rights agenda, without respect to state frontiers makes this competition fuller, with less particularistic barriers and protectionism of the traditional church, tradition and identity.)

This is the fundamental change, a trend we can trace to the Westphalia system, although Westphalia may seem to promote religious monopoly, but in a wider European context it paved the way for pluralism in the long run<sup>10</sup>. The state is progressively demonopolized as for religion, although the impact of tradition does not cease. The extent of change brought about by the human rights implementation in the area of religious life and by various features of globalization are not sufficient to speak of an articulate new pattern, for example of denominationalization in Europe. Traditional church-

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<sup>10</sup> It cannot be said of the Orthodox pattern to have included a specific dynamics, as the Westphalia did, in concert with other social factors.



ches and traditional identities still prevail. But they have been challenged and undermined, born by competition in the fulfilling of the various functions of religion (compensation, 'reward', pristine religiosity on the neuropsychological basis, Albright, 2001) to an extent that pluralization is the only future of religion in Europe. It is hard to imagine that state borders will play a more prominent role than they do today, even if the system of human rights implementation were to wither away.

Thus, the situation in front of us is rather a trend than a pattern. Although Europe is rather secularized it is becoming ever more pluralistic. The traditional churches and groups remain hegemonic, although to different extents and in some it is difficult to speak of hegemony at all (for example in England, in France, two otherwise dissimilar cases<sup>11</sup>).

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The changes depicted above are connected to broader social change within which we are found to the beginning of the 21st century, where one needs to mention, beside those generally known:

1. a rise in individual subjectivity, one's understanding as being possible to mould one's identity and decisions
2. being simultaneously citizen of a nation state, but one's understanding of being a citizen of the world at the same time
3. one's understanding that one has a 'right to residence', one may choose where to live (although limited) (Spickard 2007, 234).

One cannot rule out any further relevance to the phenomena accentuated by Vrcan, but their appearance may be regarded as a reaction to the basic trend of globalization, fostered by other forms of globalization, demographic, economic, media etc. The authentic religious origin of these trends cannot be considered of a major nature.

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<sup>11</sup> Officially, England could be classified as a country with a 'state church', although this has little impact in every day life, whereas France in the country with a strict separation and with *laïcité*, meaning a state control of religious life.

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Ivan Cvitković

**THE RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AT “ THE BORDER“ –  
AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER\***

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A few lines on religious/confessional identities amongst collective identities. The religious/confessional identity can be independent from ourselves. We gain it by birth in a family with Catholic, Islamic, Orthodox or any other family tradition. D. Diderot used to write that a child is baptised because he/she was born in a Catholic family, or prays according to Muslims' tradition due to his birth in a Muslim family etc. So, the family is key sociological determinant that influences on the religious/ confessional identity, at least when the territory of former Yugoslavia is concerned. Of course, it cannot be forgotten that the religious/confessional identity can be the result of one's own choice, though it is not that often seen on these areas, when a person makes the choice of his/her own religious identity by him/herself (most often, it occurs amongst those that belong to some protestant identities. What is the characteristic of the religious/confessional identity is that the difference is based upon a way of faith in God i.e. confessional affiliation. What can be interesting for a sociologist to make research on is what the place of religious/confessional identity is within versatility of identities. Moreover as for the fact that two most interesting collective identities on the Balkans are the religious/confessional identity and the national one. Amongst many Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs, the national identity is made of Islam, Catholicism and Orthodoxy. With all due respect of Islam (and the Islamic Community), Catholicism (and the Catholic Church) and Orthodoxy (as well as the Orthodox Church) in development of the national awareness of Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs, does one have to believe and be a Muslim, Catholic or an Orthodox nowadays to be a Bosniac, Croat or a Serb? There are different attitudes amongst Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs toward the religion and the confession: from fanatics, “non-churched” believers to those who are not believers. Nowadays, it is difficult to single out any indicator which would be sufficient for one to be a Bosniac, a Croat or a Serb. Monitoring media reporting, one can get an impression that majority of the Europeans is preoccupied with the Christian identity, Muslims in the European countries are preoccupied with the Islamic identity (and on the top of that, with national identities, which is the case with the population of former Yugoslavia).

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The religious/confessional identity at “the border”. „Each political and cultural entirety is the country of the border“ (Baker 2011) and, it would be said, as well as each religious/confessional environment. “A border” is considered a social area in which different religions and confessions are met. There, more than in any other place, differences are singled out and underlined. The religion becomes a sign of difference amongst people. That sign can often determine their social communication (their friends, partners etc.). This brief review will not target “the border” at which “major” and “minor” religious communities are met, but the one at which three equally strong confessional identities are met: Islamic, Orthodox and Catholic. That border passes exactly through Bosnia and Herzegovina (Does “the border” between eastern and western “lungs” of the Balkans pass through there, as Pope John Paul II would say?). A category of affiliation becomes very important at such “border” and the level of confessional self-identification is very high. The research on Religious and national relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1987) showed that the level of confessional self-identification was four times higher than the level of “I am a believer” self-identification. In addition, the other research conducted amongst the young people as the target group pointed at the fact that the religious youth is the most interested in the national history and the destiny of their own nation.<sup>1</sup> I would say that it was a destiny of Orthodoxy, Catholicism or Islam in the borderline, or the destiny of the religion at “the border”. It is to be stressed that according to the research conducted by the Institute for national relations in 1987, interviewees with the strongest religious and national feelings were those coming from the above areas (the valley of Neretva, Bosna and Drina river). The cruellest crimes occurred along the valleys of those rivers at “the border” during the war 1991-1995.

The more going into the bordering area, the more a need for the identity and for displaying symbol of that identity is (is not it shown by towers and minarets of newly built churches and mosques?). It goes without saying that the above is more related to the social (Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox) identity than to God. During the war 1991-1995 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, churches and mosques were raised to the ground and devastated by those that pray according to Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Islam (living in an illusion that they were doing such thing in the name of God and for God). Nowadays, those churches and mosques have been reconstructed, new ones have been built so that the towers (like the one in Mostar) and the minarets (like that one in Ustikolina) mark in which possession those territories are. That was admitted by the Archpriest of Derventa on the occasion of consecrating an Orthodox church (30 October 2005) in the location of Šešlije (located between Dobož and Derventa): „A church is built so that a traveller can see whose this territory is; we do not want something that is not ours, but let it be known what is ours“.<sup>2</sup> In that way, churches and mosques have turned from

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<sup>1</sup> The reference is made to the research on „Orientations of values and actions of the youth in BiH“, published in 1983 (authors: Ratko Dunđerović, Vlasta Ilišin, Jordan Aleksić, Furio Radin and Ibrahim Bakić).

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Bulletin of the Franciscan Theology*, Sarajevo, No. 1-2/2010/2011, p. 64.

previous “holy places” into “stony borderlines” across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

There is no such strong need to show and prove the identity in “the inside” of the territory, like the one at “the border”. Or, could it be that believers at “the border” experience easier their faith as one of possible options than their co-believers that are far away from “the border”? Due to sensitivity of the identity at “the border” and its denial, the latter would be taken as more certain to be proved as such than the former. In principle, “bordering” religious communities are the guards of traditions, being more conservative and cautious in encounters with the other values and identities (fear for the survival), more being turned to the past (like the Catholic Church, Serb Orthodox Church as well as the Islamic community in our areas). Those are more persistent in following religious moral, religious regulations, participation in religious services, religious self-identification. The confession at “the border” creates the feeling which separates “us” from “them”. There are more chalets that are worn, more prayer beads, and more participation in activities of the church at the “border”. If national “borders” are losing in their significance in the globalisation era, then, can it be also said for religious/confessional “borders”? Will confessional “borders” and conflicts with religious/confessional symbols prosper in their significance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? It seems as if spatial, geographic borders between states are those that were fastest raised to the ground, but “borders” between those that belong to different religions and confessions seem to remain as solid walls. Adnan Silajdžić (2003, 24) is right when stressing that “physical presence of two or more religions i.e. cultural traditions in an area is not sufficient guarantee that their followers do know one another quite well and that they make the required level of cultural and civilisation-related exchange”.

Interesting things in confessions happen at „the border“. Those confessions take something from the local tradition in that area and incorporate it into their religious and folk customs.<sup>3</sup> All that has not the character of norms, but the one of customs. By all means, taking some elements from neighbouring religions does not mean that their religious thoughts (sometimes, even their symbolic meanings) are taken over. For instance, undertaking memorial prayers on the seventh and the fortieth day by Muslims in the central BiH is considered a Christian influence on Islam in Bosanska Krajina. Colouring candles during Ramadan that is present amongst Muslims of Sarajevo is considered one of forms of syncretism. The candles are colours in green, or in blue or red, which represents a substitute for coloured eggs. That privilege was approved to Sarajevo Muslims by Sultan Fatih (Islam i muslimani 1977, 83). There are places where Muslims do not wear black clothes in their grief for the dead (like in Bosnia and Herzegovina), and the others where they do wear that clothes (like in Iran). There are some places where it

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<sup>3</sup> As for Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, those are: „Come to the place for prayers, undertake a memorial prayer in glades, caves and on river banks, follow a calendar of importance for seasons of agricultural and livestock workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, inaugurate days like Alidun itd.” (Karčić 2009, 126).

is not a part of the tradition that the dead are to be cried for at the burial, like in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but there are other parts of the world where Muslims do that.

Conflicts at „the border“ and their solution. It is said for „the border“ that it is an area of contacts, encounters, but also of conflicts. In addition to “conspiracy theories” at the border, “plots against us“ that end up in violence, there is spiritual violence (pressures to conscientiousness, beliefs, way of thinking etc.) that occurs more often at the “border” than in the “inland”. It is also there that an interpretation of national conflicts is more exposed (especially in the situation of empirical congruence of the national and the confession, like in Bosnia and Herzegovina) as well as of those confessional-religious ones (e.g. an interpretation of the 1991-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a religious/confessional war, though it was not started by religious communities nor it was waged for the religion, regardless of the fact that all three so called “traditional” religious communities were very much involved in that war, each in its own manner). What kind of role of religious communities in resolving such conflicts could be. Firstly, those communities should not only preach on but also show in practice that the violence amongst their members is the betrayal of faith. A message should be much stronger than it has been up to now: violence in the name of Christianity, Islam etc. is the betrayal of faith.

A few words on social conditions in which “the return” to religious/confessional identities has occurred in post-Yugoslav states. The identification has been “redirected” from the state and the class to the nation and the confession (Mazover 2011). Due to the fact that religions and confessions had a greater role in the birth of the nation in areas of former Yugoslavia than on the West, it has resulted in strengthened influence of religious élites on “national” politics. What has happened is nationalisation of God (God and Croats; God is a Serb as well etc.), which led to national confrontations. In that way, the religion and the confession have become a source of political (and national) legitimacy. Signs of not only national but of confessional identities have received greater significance than before: flags, prayer beads, chaplets, icons, cross, crescent, caps etc.

It is up to the religious communities to research and assess whether the establishment of close relations between political and religious elites as well as political strengthening of religious institutions was leading to a spiritual loss of religions after the fall of socialism, or to their reinforcement. Has that circumstance brought to the fact that Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam have become more national than ecclesiastical capital (Z. Kuburić)?

There is something in the psychology of the man from the Balkans. Everybody pretends to be someone else. And there lies a problem. One pretends to be an intellectual, which is not; to be tolerant, which is not; to be civilised, which is not; to be a believer, which is not etc.

We face the Other at “the border”, and the identity (or a need to show it) is actually earmarked in a relation to the Other. Our identity is considered only in the context of relations towards the Other. That identity can be jeopardised if something bad happens in those relations (like in time of

arms conflicts etc.). How to relate to the Other at “the border”? At first, it is needed to get free from the old (and the new) fears and notions on threatening Orthodoxies/Catholics, and even more to get rid of prejudice and fears from Islam and Muslims.

What are the perspectives of relations between religious/confessional identities at “the border”? It seems that there are two possibilities: encountering or distancing. I choose the encounter option, but there is a need to create social preconditions for that option. Not to close into one’s own national/confessional identity (which has been occurring in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the 1991-1995 war)<sup>4</sup>, but to open toward the Other, accept it, respect it. Those moral values will not come out of blue and by default; those are to be cherished from the childhood days onwards, throughout the lifetime. Zygmunt Bauman (2005, 106) writes: „An ability to live with diversities, not to mention to enjoy such life and have benefit from it, does not come just like that, nor it does happen by default. That ability is a skill that like all the others, require learning and practising.”

Both Catholics and Orthodoxies as well Muslims have to have an attitude in their consciousness that their are not “bastions”, guards of “the border” but that they are here for themselves. Creation of an atmosphere that is oversaturated by “the ideology of the victim” (various wars, politics, poisonous details from the past etc) amongst members of each of three identities can be devastating for all three identities.

Writing about the situation in the area of former Yugoslavia after the bloodstained wars at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Z. Bauman (2005, 185) stresses: „One of the scariest consequences is that mutual affability and friendly co-life of languages, cultures and religions are as less probable as ever“. I am afraid that unfortunately, Bauman has right.

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<sup>4</sup> „Traditionalistic blindness“ is something that rules here (Kuschel 2011, 136).





Vladimir Đurić

**RELIGION AS AN ELEMENT OF NATIONAL IDENTITY  
OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN BORDER AREAS  
(Legal Aspects)**

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The legal determination of the notion of specific social groups, as the previous issue upon which depends the individual and collective enjoyment of numerous human rights, is one of the most complex issues of theory and practice of public international and constitutional law. In order to acquire legal personality, or for their legally relevant existence, groups as such, in numerous countries must be recognized by the legal system, which places the problem of “how to define the borders of the collective in a non-coercive manner” in the forefront, while, on the other hand, the manner in which specific elements of the notion of specific social groups will be nomotechnically formulated significantly influences the legal practice, i.e. the subsequent processes of legal interpretation and application. In all multinational and multicultural societies the issues of determining notions such as religion and national minority, particularly religion as an element of national identity, also causes significant political debates and can have important political consequences. The relation between the concepts of religion and national minority, particularly the issue of religion as an element of national minority identity, their notional and substantive legal determination in the legal system is the subject of this work. In this work, specific attention will be given to the analysis of those issues in cases of national minorities in border areas which have their “own” kin-states that have concluded national minority protection agreements with the Republic of Serbia.

**THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL DETERMINATION OF A NATIONAL MINORITY**

There is no binding definition of a national minority in international law. The 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides in Article 27 that *In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.* The presented provision opens several questions, among the first of which are whether the state’s recognition of the existence of a specific minority on its territory is a prerequisite for the use of the rights enumerated in Article 27 (Andraši, Bakotić i Vukas 1998, 328)? Among internationalists, the prevailing opinion is that the *bona fides* fulfillment of the international

agreement, such as the Covenant is, does not permit absolute self-interpretation and that *international bodies have a right to ascertain the existence of minorities in respect of Article 27 based on objective criteria* (emphasis – V. Đ.).<sup>1</sup> The General Comment of UN Human Rights Committee number 23(50) in Article 27 of the Covenant adopted April 26, 1994, clearly notes that *the existence of an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority in a given State party (as in a party to the Covenant – comment V. Đ.) does not depend upon a decision by that State party but requires to be established by objective criteria*. What are the objective criteria based on which the existence of a specified minority can be established?

With a specific basis on Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in goal of its application's facilitation, the Special Rapporteur F. Capotorti suggested in 1977 the definition of a minority, under the guise of the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Prof. Capotorti's notable definition provides that the expression "*minority*" *pertains to "a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the State – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics different from those of the rest of the population and sow, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language."*<sup>2</sup> In order to assist states in the implementation of Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN began drafting in 1978 a document presenting more clearly the principles of international law on minority rights. The United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution n. 47/135 of December 18, 1992 adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The Declaration, which is not a legally binding act, does not include the determination of a national minority, but in its Paragraph 1 of Article 1 provides that *States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity*.

Through more careful examination of the presented norms, but also of the very names of specific international acts, it can be observed that vary-

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<sup>1</sup> Some scientific works on Public International Law maintain that according to Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights a state can claim its state territory to be homogeneous, in the opposite, or if it is not capable of making such a claim, its obligation according to Article 27 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights acquires a negative nature and the state *cannot deny minority rights to such persons* (emphasis – V. Đ.) – see Degan 2000, 530.

<sup>2</sup> UN doc E/CN.4/Sub.2/384. It should be noted that bad translations of Prof. Capotorti's definition are common in literature in which it is most common for the alternative conjunction "or" to be left out of the enumeration of the group characteristics in order for it to be reduced to a cumulative conjunction "and", so as to create the impression that Capotorti thought that a group, in order to be a minority, must have ethnic and linguistic and religious characteristics differing from the majority population – see further in the text.

ing notions are used in acts adopted, or prepared under the umbrella of the UN – the Covenant speaks of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, Prof. Capotorti's definition is devoted to the term “minority”, while the Declaration adds the notion of national minority. According to the Working Group on Minorities, the introduction of the notion of “national minority” in the Declaration does not imply the expansion of the scope of its application to groups not already referred to in the Covenant, singling out that “*there is hardly any national minority, however defined, that is not also an ethnic or linguistic minority*”.<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that such an identification is not also included in regards to religious minorities, although it is however noted that “*in some cases religion and ethnicity coincide*”.<sup>4</sup> However, despite all of the presented international act provisions citing religion as one of the characteristics differentiating a minority from majority population, certain authors, based on the practice of the international institutions under the guise of the UN, the Committee on Human Rights, are foremost of the opinion that, despite the fact of them being explicitly recognized as one of three minority categories, religious minorities are to a large extent excluded from minority protection and deliberation in the field of minority rights and that, in cases where they face discrimination and persecution, such occurrences are often cited under the rights of conscience and religion, and not as issues of minority rights infringement (Ghanea 2012, 4, 5).

In difference to the concept adopted under the umbrella of the UN, regional European documents on minority rights solely contain the concept of national minority. The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, does not contain the definition of a national minority, but in Article 3 it guarantees the right of every person belonging to a national minority freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such. In the Explanatory Report to Article 3 of the Framework Convention it is noted that the provision in question is left to such individuals to decide whether he/she wishes or not to be taken under the protection which derives from the principle of the Framework Convention, and that this paragraph “*does not imply a right for an individual to choose arbitrarily to belong to any national minority. The individual's subjective choice is inseparably linked to objective criteria relevant to the person's identity.*”<sup>5</sup>

Specific bilateral agreements on national minority protection concluded in Europe do not contain the definition of a national minority,<sup>6</sup> but, in

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<sup>3</sup> Commentary of The Working Group on Minorities to The United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities par.6 - E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2005/2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, par. 43.

<sup>5</sup> CAHMIN Explanatory Report to the Framework Convention, H (1995) 010.

<sup>6</sup> For example the Agreement between Serbia and Montenegro and the Republic of Hungary on protection of rights of the Hungarian national minority living in Serbia and Montenegro and of the Serbian national minority living in the Republic of Hungary and the Agreement between the Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Government of Romania on cooperation in the field of protection of national minorities. Done at Belgrade on 4 November 2002.

conjunction with the Framework Convention, provide that belonging to a national minority falls under an individual's freedom of choice.

Based on the presented provision and suggested determinations, without the existence of international legally binding definitions, can we determine specific criteria which could be used in ascertaining the existence of a national minority? In the holistic contemporary domestic legal theory studies which are not limited to the international viewpoint, but take into account different politico-theoretical approaches, the impossibility to rely on one concise and generally accepted definition of nation and national minority is noted as well as the need to remain on general definitions, of which particular concern is deserved by those which place culture in the center of the determination of a nation (as Rénan notes the "possession in common of a rich legacy of memories" and the "present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form"), while taking into account additional, objective criteria of identification, of which language has a particular importance (Jovanović 2004, 49). Public international law theory notes that based on review of different approaches, one can notice several important elements of the notion of a national minority which include citizenship, undominant position and sufficient number (Janković i Radivojević 2005, 244; Dimitrijević, Račić, Đerić, Papić, Petrović i Obradović 2005, 174). Beside the presented criteria, a long-lasting, traditional, settlement should be added, not necessarily implied by the criterium of citizenship. The fulfillment of the presented criteria is necessary, but not of critical importance to the existence of a minority. From all of the presented provisions and suggested definitions, it derives that minorities differ from the majority according to their ethnic characteristics, i.e. origin and language, culture, tradition, which implies the question of relation between several presented bases of differentiation and the establishment of the existence of a basis of differentiation and the fulfillment of other criteria of importance to the existence of a national minority. Before considering those issues, particular attention will be given to the question of religion as an element of national minority identity and its importance as a distinction element in the notion of national minority?

#### **RELIGION AS AN ELEMENT OF NATIONAL MINORITY IDENTITY**

In international discussions considering the definition of a national minority there is no consensus on whether persons differing from the majority population only by religion, can be considered national minorities and whether they fall under the scope of application of international instruments aimed at the protection and promotion of national minorities' different identities (Hofmann 2006, 18). However, despite the lack of theoretical consensus, Article 5 Par.1 of the CE Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities explicitly provides that parties undertake an obligation to promote conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, tradition and cultural heritage. Therefore, religion, with other characteristics such as language, traditi-

ons and cultural heritage, is the very essence of what makes a social group a national minority, more precisely it is determined by the Framework Convention *expressis verbis* as an essential element of national minority identity.

What is the relation between religion and other essential elements of national minority identity, precisely between several presented criteria of differentiation, and how to establish whether one of those criteria is sufficient for the existence of a national minority? In the suggested definitions, or provisions, a national minority is determined by objective and subjective conditions which *must be cumulatively fulfilled* in order for a group of citizens to be considered a national minority. In public international law theory it is noted that more current international legal practice takes into account subjective elements as a basis for the evaluation of minority group belonging, but amends them with objective elements because minority belonging does not necessarily stem from objective elements (i.e. family belonging), but can also be a result of upbringing, or subjective feeling, but on the other hand, subjective elements can also be abused, so only a combination of these two groups of elements offers a solid basis for the evaluation of national minority belonging (Avramov i Kreća 2003, 337). In the presented determinations of a national minority, particular attention should be given to the part which provides that a national minority is a group of citizens *whose members are characterized by a concern for common maintenance of their identity, or express, even implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, tradition, religion or language*. This subjective condition should be interpreted in a way that a certain group of citizens, even if it possesses characteristics different from the majority population, it cannot be considered as a national minority unless its members are not characterized by a concern for joint maintenance of a common identity. In the context of religion as an element of national minority identity, that signifies that a group different in religious characteristics from the majority population, cannot be considered a national minority, if its members are not characterized by a concern for maintaining their religion, as an element of national identity. Such an understanding stems from the freedom of expression of national identity, but also from the freedom of thought, conscience and religion which is guaranteed in a series of international treaties on human rights and in constitutions of democratic states.

The subjective choice of the individual is inseparably linked to the objective criterium relevant to his/her identity, which is also confirmed in the Explanatory Report to Article 3 of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Nonetheless, the objective criterium to the national minority belonging, that is the existence of a national minority *is made up of several alternatively set conditions, or criteria* which in the offered determinations, or provisions, are not equally set and, beside religion, include tradition, culture, language, ethnic origin etc. The alternative consideration of objective criteria signifies that for a specific national minority's existence the fulfillment of *all* criteria isn't necessary, just as each of the criteria, by itself, or for itself, can be, but is not necessarily sufficient for the existence

of a national minority. In the Commentary of Article 5 of the CE Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities it is clearly noted that not every one of these differences creates a national minority (Gilbert 2006, 155). In other words, a religious group is not always a national minority. As it was clearly observed in domestic legal theory, although religion can be and often is one of the elements which are objective characteristics of a minority, that is not necessary because, not only is it possible for a minority to be of the same religion as the majority, but it is very often that two or more religious communities are formed within a same ethnic group, whereas one of them being in the majority, and the rest in the minority (Krivokapić 2004, 193). The complex relation between religion and the existence of a national minority can also be seen *vice versa* – in order for a group of citizens to be a national minority it is not a prerequisite that it also differs from the majority population and from other national minorities, by religion. If a specific group of citizens form a specific national minority, it does not necessarily mean that it differs in all objective criteria from the majority population, and from other national minorities. On the other hand, religion is often the unique feature which distinguished persons belong to national minorities with a strong feeling of different identity from the majority. Precisely for that reason, *it seems that the objective criteria of the existence of a national minority, and among them most certainly religion, can also be foreseen in the context of subjective feeling of their members, or the importance that its members accord to the determination of their national self-identity.* It is understandable that self-identification should not be absolutized, because the logical consequence of absolutizing the right to self-identification can represent a legal abuse. This raises the question of who can and should be included in the resolution of issues if an objective characteristic, such as religion for example, is sufficient for a group whose members have a subjective feeling of particularity, to be truly determined as a national minority?

It seems that states are not the only sovereign arbiters in issues of national identity, especially in cases where specific groups of their citizens have a subjective feeling of differentiation from the majority population according to criteria important to the existence of a national minority, also including religion.<sup>7</sup> In states where a constitutional principle of division of church and state exists, that conclusion can be referring to religion, because of a principle difficulty for a religiously neutral state to determine the existence of religious differences of specific social groups. On the other hand, a religiously neutral state which respects the rights of national minorities should also valorize the importance and autonomy of churches and religious communities and thus, the issue of religion as an element of national minority identity can also be foreseen in a series of new dimensions balancing between somewhat opposed, and surely different international and constitutional le-

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the Advisory Committee helping the CE Council of Ministers in monitoring the application of the Framework Convention in the case of Cyprus, took the position of encouraging the Government to re-examine the notion of “religious group” for the Maronites whose members were dissatisfied with that term (Heintze 2006, 121).

gal goals of protecting national minority identity from the one hand, and the respect of the autonomy of churches and religious communities and their distinction from the state on the other. Before considering the legal aspects of the overlapping of those goals, which are surely specific among national minorities in the border areas, an observation of the definition of the notion of national minority in the legal system of the Republic of Serbia should be given, as well as whether religion is one of the legally recognized distinctive elements of national minority identity.

#### **THE DETERMINATION OF A NATIONAL MINORITY IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

The 2006 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia does not contain any determination of a national minority. The Constitution's author, in several provisions devoted to minority rights, refers to the legislative regulation of the realization of minority rights, but in none of the Constitution's provisions is their explicit referral to the legislative determination of the term of a national minority. Nonetheless, certain provisions contain implicit referral to the legal definition of a national minority which appears as a precondition of realization of national minority rights guaranteed by the Constitution.<sup>8</sup> Certain articles of the Constitution create, to a certain extent, margins of freedom which the legislator must have in mind when regulating the term of national minority. As such, Article 79 which regulates the right to the preservation of particularity, enumerates among other things, certain characteristics which account for that particularity, through a provision according to which members of national minorities have the right to expression, protection, preservation, development and open expression of *national, ethnic, cultural and religious particularities*.

The Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities is in force in the Republic of Serbia.<sup>9</sup> According to Paragraph 1 of Article 2 of the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, a national minority in the legal system can be considered any *group of citizens sufficiently representative, although in minority position on the territory of the State, belonging to an autochthonous groups of population with a lasting and firm connection with the State territory, and possessing*

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<sup>8</sup> As such Paragraph 3 Article 75 of the Republic of Serbia's Constitution provides for the possibility for members of national minorities to elect their national councils in goal of realizing the rights to autonomy in the fields of culture, education, media and official use of language and alphabet, *in accordance with the law*. Seeing how the legal regulation of the national council elections implies previous ascertainment of who has the right to elect their national council, or who is considered a national minority, it is clear that such a law should contain the definition of a national minority or at least take into account the existing definition.

<sup>9</sup> "FRY Official Gazette" n. 11/02. The law was adopted in 2002 in the former Federal Assembly of the FR of Yugoslavia following which it, in 2003, became a Law of Serbia and Montenegro, and following the end of the existence of the State Union, a law of the Republic of Serbia.

*some distinctive features such as language, culture, national or ethnic affiliation, origin or religion differentiating them from the majority of the population and whose members are distinguished by care to collectively nurture their common identity, including culture, tradition, language or religion.* The legal determination of a national minority in the Republic of Serbia contains several basic elements – citizenship,<sup>10</sup> sufficient representation,<sup>11</sup> a long-lasting and firm relation of the group with the state territory<sup>12</sup> and objective criteria of identification.

The objective identification criteria of a national minority are marked in the domestic legal definition of a minority by the notion of “features” which, according to the legislator, include language, culture, national or ethnic belonging, origin or religion. The attributes which the Law provides for being the bases of differentiation between groups which should receive national minority recognition and the majority, Serbian people are alternatively set, such that for the existence of national minority in the Republic of Serbia it is sufficient for the group of citizens to differ by at least one characteristic from the majority Serbian people and other national minorities, under the condition of fulfilling the other elements of the legal definition of a national minority, foremost of subjective nature. In the context of the theme of our interest, it is clear that religion can be the only element of national minority identification in the Republic of Serbia, which the state explicitly recognizes on the international field.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The lawmaker was of the opinion that for a group to make up a national minority, it must be made up of domestic citizens, which implies an exclusion, from minority protection in the Republic of Serbia, of groups of migrant workers and temporarily settled persons, refugees and persons without citizenship.

<sup>11</sup> The lawmaker failed to make any specific numerical criteria, but it is clear that his intention was to exclude groups which are best described by an archaic term from local anthropo-geographic science – “exotic population oases”. In rare scientific works devoted to the subject, there is word of the intention of our lawmaker to set a condition of “sufficient representation” instead of an enumeration of all communities which qualify for the status of national minority according to this law (save for the Roma which are explicitly mentioned as a national minority in Article 4 of the Law), or the definition of some relative threshold of participation in the total population number, can be considered correct and justified, as long as that does not create a practice of imposing exaggeratingly high criteria for the recognition of the legally relevant status of minority status (Jovanović 2004, 271).

<sup>12</sup> Groups which differ from the majority, Serbian population in the Republic of Serbia, in language, culture, national or ethnic appurtenance, origin or religion, and whose members have recently been naturalized cannot be considered national minorities in the Republic of Serbia.

<sup>13</sup> In the first report on the implementation of the Framework Convention in the FR of Yugoslavia submitted in 2002 the State noted that according to its legal regulation religion can be one of the characteristics which set apart a group of citizens representing a national minority from the majority population – ACFC/SR (2002) PARA 65 (3.1.). It should be kept in mind in view of religion also not always being a reliable criterium for identifying different national minorities in view of the absence of a state



In the presented legal determination of a national minority particular attention should be given to the subjective criteria of determination, that is the part which provides for the national minority group of citizens “*whose members are characterized by a concern for joint maintenance of their common identity, including culture, tradition, language or religion*”. The presented legal determination should be interpreted such as that some group of citizens, although possessing attributes by which it differs from the majority population, cannot be considered a national minority unless its members are not characterized by a concern for joint maintenance of their common identity, including culture, tradition, language or religion. Such an understanding stems, among other things, from the constitutional freedom of expression of national identity (Article 47 of the Republic of Serbia Constitution), that is from the right of every person belonging to a national minority freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such (Article 3 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities), but also from other rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution which are related to religion, culture, and language.<sup>14</sup> The legislator accords special attention to the self-determination of the national minorities which is also noticeable from the legal determination according to which members of minorities should *collectively* maintain their *common identity*. In the context of religion, as it is observed in sociology of religion articles, that can imply confessional identification which is a notion wider than religiosity and signifies the recognition and acquiescence to a particular religion disregarding personal (un)-religiosity (Đorđević 2005, 195).

The provisions of bilateral international agreements on the protection of national minorities to which Serbia is a party, are of significant importance for the determination of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia’s legal order, and foreseeing religion as an element of national minority identity in that light. Seeing how those agreements serve as primary protection for national minorities in the border area, in the foreseeing of open issues of religion as a national minority identity element, attention should be directed towards the appropriate provisions of those agreements as well.

#### **OPEN ISSUES CONCERNING RELIGION AS A NATIONAL MINORITY IDENTITY ELEMENT**

There are four groups of unresolved issues pertaining to legal aspects of religion as national minority identity elements which are of particular importance to border area national minorities.

#### **The Role of the State in Promoting Conditions for the Protection of National Minority Religious Identity**

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religion in Serbia and the religious orientation being left to the individual (Krivokapić 2004, 285).

<sup>14</sup> Such as the freedom of religion which, among other things, embodies the right to preserve one’s religion, or to change it according to one’s own choice (Constitution Par. 1 Art. 43), the freedom of opinion and expression (Constitution Par. 1 Art. 46) etc.

The relevant international acts on the protection of minorities provide for the right of persons belonging to national minorities to maintain their identity individually or in community with others. The obligation of the state to respect the identity of a minority, and to also ensure conditions for the protection of that identity, which is a step further in minority protection, is explicitly provided for in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and the CE Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Article 1 of the Declaration prescribes for the states to protect the existence and national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities on their territories, while Article 5 Par. 1 of the Framework Convention, among other things, provides for the parties to undertake the promotion of necessary conditions for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, religion, language, tradition and cultural heritage. In the Commentary of the Working Group on Minorities to the UN Declaration, it is noted that the minority protection is based on four demands: protecting the existence, non-exclusion, non-discrimination and non-assimilation of groups.<sup>15</sup> If the only attribute which differentiates a minority group from the majority population is its religious affiliation, and if its members possess a national minority conscience and wish to maintain their identity, then the role of the state in preserving that identity is imposed as a specific issue, that is the character and content of its duty to protect minority identity and create conditions for such a protection. It is clear that the state must respect the existence and particularity of the group and its members, just as it respects the inviolability of life and human dignity of all, just as the freedom of religion. As well, the duty of the state not to exclude and not to discriminate persons belonging to minorities based on their religious identity can derive from the “general” ban on discrimination according to which religious affiliation is one of the banned bases of discrimination. Is there, beside those obligations, anything else that might be subsumed under requisite conditions needed for persons belonging to minorities to maintain religion, as one of the essential elements of their identity?

Although one can easily be of the position that the state has an obligation to secure conditions for the maintaining of national minority identities, and despite the fact that religion undoubtedly can be a method of identifying a group, it is debatable how far the state should go in securing conditions for a group to maintain and preserve its religious identity. Namely, in a state where the freedom of religion is guaranteed, in accordance with international standards, which among other things, embodies the right of persons not to possess, or change their religious beliefs, as is the case in the Republic of Serbia, it is clear that the freedom of religion of every person belonging to a national minority implies the freedom to change religion. In such a legal frame, the obligation of the state to promote conditions for maintaining nati-

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<sup>15</sup> Commentary of The Working Group on Minorities to The United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities par.6 - E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2005/2.

onal minority religious identity primarily means tolerating existing religious identities of minorities; it cannot embody the complete preservation of that identity, the stratification of the religious structure of the population, because such a role of the state would be in contravention to the group members' freedom of religion. However, freedom of religion is not an exclusively individual right, but it is also enjoyed in a community, it also has its corporate dimension whose expressions are churches and religious communities, which has its influence on foreseeing duties of the state to secure conditions for maintaining national minority identities in the context of their religious identity. So, in a state with a constitutionally proclaimed separation of church and state, the role of the state in promoting conditions for maintaining religious identity must not imply any form of intervening in issues of church and religious community autonomous life. Having that in mind, it is clear that for the principle of creating conditions for maintaining the religious identity of minorities, it is important that the state allows for various religious minorities to self-regulate (Gilbert 2006, 162). In that sense, states have a double role: to avoid unjustifiable interference and to take steps for the minority to maintain its culture (Gilbert 2006, 163). Avoiding unjustifiable intervention in the context of preservation of religion as an element of national minority identity does not only signify that the state must refrain from policies which have an effect of religious assimilation of minorities, but also need to protect minorities from activities of third parties which might have an assimilatory effect.<sup>16</sup>

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, in this regard, contains an excellent provision according to which the state, in measures of education, culture and public information, stimulates understanding, appreciation and respect of existing differences, among other things, because of the particularity of its citizens' religious identity. In what manner are such obligations of the state determined in bilateral agreements on the protection of national minorities by which, as was stated, the position of minorities in the border areas is mostly regulated, that is which were concluded with specific kin-states of Serbia's national minorities?

The role of the state in securing conditions for the protection of national minority identities, by that the securing of conditions for the protection of religious identity as well, is variously regulated in bilateral agreements on the protection of national minorities. According to the Agreement on protection of national minorities with the Republic of Macedonia,<sup>17</sup> Article 1 provides for the contracting parties' obligation to promoting conditions necessary for maintaining and developing the identity and rights of national minorities as a whole, while Article 2 provides a right to express, maintain and develop

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<sup>16</sup> Commentary of The Working Group on Minorities to The United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities par. 6 - E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2005/2, par. 28.

<sup>17</sup> Agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro on the protection of the Macedonian national minority in Serbia and Montenegro and protection of the Serbian and Montenegrin national minority in the Republic of Macedonia. – "SCG Official Gazette" – International Agreements, n. 6/2005.

not only ethnic, cultural, linguistic, but also religious identity, for persons belonging to national minorities. It should be noted that religious identity is mentioned only once more in that Agreement, in Article 5 which defines that persons belonging to minorities also have the right to express and develop their religious identity individually, or in community with other members of their group, and that the contracting parties will create conditions and adopt measures needed in that goal.

The Agreement on the protection of national minorities concluded with the Republic of Croatia<sup>18</sup> prescribes in Article 1 that the contracting parties will secure members of minorities the right to express, maintain and develop their national, cultural, linguistic and religious identity. Article 2 specifically notes that the contracting parties oblige to secure, among other things, the right to maintain national identity and religion, for members of minorities. Differing from the Agreement concluded with the Republic of Macedonia, this Agreement contains a specific article which provides for the contracting parties to respect the right of members of minorities to freedom of expression of their religious affiliation, to practice of religion and maintaining religious rituals and catechism and to stimulate such aims of religious communities.

The Agreement on the protection of national minorities between Serbia and Hungary<sup>19</sup> provides in Article 1 that the contracting parties agree to secure for the Hungarian national minority residing in Serbia and the Serbian minority residing in the Republic of Hungary the maintaining and development of their national, linguistic, cultural and religious identity according to the principles and provisions contained in documents of the UN, CSCE/OSCE and Council of Europe which are noted in the Preamble of that Agreement. According to Article 3 of the Agreement it is prescribed that persons belonging to national minorities have a right to, individually just as in community with other members of their group, freely express, maintain and develop not only their ethnic, culture and linguistic but also their religious identity.

The Agreement on the protection of national minorities concluded with Romania<sup>20</sup> prescribes in Article 5 that members of national minorities have a right to, individually or in community with other members of their group, express and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity and the contracting parties will stimulate such aims as well as adopting

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<sup>18</sup> Agreement between Serbia and Montenegro and the Republic of Croatia on the protection of the rights of the Serbian and Montenegrin minority in the Republic of Croatia and of the Croatian minority in Serbia and Montenegro – “SCG Official Gazette” – International Agreements, n. 3/2005.

<sup>19</sup> Agreement between Serbia and Montenegro and the Republic of Hungary on protection of rights of three Hungarian national minority living in Serbia and Montenegro and of the Serbian national minority living in the Republic of Hungary – “SCG Official Gazette” – International Agreements, n. 14/2004.

<sup>20</sup> Agreement between the Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Government of Romania on cooperation in the field of protection of national minorities – “SCG Official Gazette” – International Agreements, n. 14/2004.

necessary measures. That is the only provision on the religious identity of members of national minorities and the role of the state in securing conditions for its protection in that Agreement.

The issue of the state's role in protecting religious identity of national minorities, particularly those in border areas, can also be foreseen in the context of the role which their kin-state can and is permitted to have.

### **The Role of the Kin-state in Promoting Conditions for the Protection of National Minority Religious Identity**

A certain number of state constitutions in Europe, including Serbia's and its neighbouring countries', contain provisions on members of "their" people abroad.

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, in Article 13 Par.2, prescribes for the state to develop and promote relations between the kin-state and Serbs living abroad.

The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, in Article 49, provides for that state to care for the position and rights of members of the Macedonian people in neighbouring countries, to assist their cultural development and promote relations with them.

The 2011 Hungarian Constitution, in Article D, provides that the state, having in mind the existence of an integral Hungarian people, bears responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders and that it will assist the survival and development of their communities and support efforts to safeguard their identity, the advancement of their individual and collective rights, the establishment of their autonomies and their prosperity in states in which they reside, as well as mutual cooperation and cooperation with Hungary.

The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, in Article 10, sets a norm for parts of the Croat people in other countries to be guaranteed specific care and protection by the Republic of Croatia.

The Constitution of the Republic of Romania, in Article 7, provides for the state to assist in reinforcing links with Romanians that live abroad and to act accordingly in goal of maintaining, developing and expressing their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity, respecting the laws of their countries of citizenship.

If we observe more closely the presented provisions of selected constitutions, we can conclude that the constitutional concept of relation between kin-state and their minorities abroad is determined variously by its content. In certain countries it merely embodies the reinforcing of links between the kin-state and their minority abroad, while other cases explicitly provide for the kin-state to have a role in defending the identity of its minority. The explicit mention of the minority religious identity and the assistance to its maintaining, development and expression is only included in the Constitution of Romania.

Certain countries adopted laws regulating the role of the kin-state in maintaining the identity of minorities abroad. In relevance to this work, atte-

tion should be directed to the question if those acts provide that religion is an element of national minority identity which kin-states protect in that manner and what the role of kin-states in protecting religious identity of their minority abroad is.

In 2001, Hungary adopted Law LXII on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries<sup>21</sup> whose Article 2 explicitly states that the Republic of Hungary wishes to contribute to the well-being and welfare of Hungarians living in neighbouring countries and the *maintaining of their cultural and linguistic identity*. The Law has caused serious political reactions and scientific analyses.<sup>22</sup> It is important to note however that the Law doesn't provide the maintaining of the religious identity of the Hungarian national minority, nor the role of the kin-state in that. The Romanian Law on Support to Romanians Abroad adopted in 2007, replacing the previous one from 1998, has a different approach. Article 1 of that Law determines the beneficiaries as ethnic Romanians, as well as those belonging to the Romanian cultural vein, living outside of Romanian borders and who endeavour to maintain, promote and assert their cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious identity. Therefore, according to the Law, the religious identity can also be of importance for the kin-state and even in the case where the issue is of a group belonging to the Romanian cultural circle. The Law was amended in 2008 with an expansion of the circle of beneficiaries in order to even include persons belonging to national minorities, linguistic minorities and ethnic autochthonous groups existing in states neighbouring Romania "irrespective of the ethnic name they use". Comments of such an approach clearly demonstrate a peculiar expansion of the new legal frame and goals in comparison to documents of the Council of Europe, such that some communities that could be embodied by its provisions have the status of national minorities in Romania itself (e.g. Aromanians), while others do not enjoy such a status in states where they re-side (e.g. Vlachs) (Tanasescu 2009, 162). The Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region who's Article 4 provides for the maintaining, reinforcing and realization of links between the kin-state and Serbs in the region through, among other things, the maintaining and caring for the Serbian cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious identity.

What is the relation between the roles of the state where minority lives and the kin-state in securing the conditions for the protection of national minority identity, including also religious identity? The CE Venice Commission has deliberated this issue, specifically because of numerous so-called status laws, most particularly in its Report on Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by the Kin-State. In that Report, the Venice Commission has come the position that responsibility for the protection of national minorities lies primarily with the states of residence, that the respect of the existing frame of minority protection must be considered a priority, as well as that the effectiveness of the agreement approach in national minority protection can be rocked if agreements on national minority protection are not in-

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<sup>21</sup> Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania, Slovakia, the Ukraine.

<sup>22</sup> See for example the Hungarian view and justification of that approach in: Hatvany 2006.

terpreted and applied *bona fides* in light of principles of good neighbourly relations between states.<sup>23</sup> In the part of this work dedicated to the role of the state in promoting national minority identity it was pointed out that states should protect minorities from activities of third parties with an assimilatory effect as well. In that sense, the protection of minorities with a specific identity, including religious, might also embody measures and activities by which states prevent assimilation, or the imposition of a religious identity coming from other states, in the border area in cases where such activity is taken by the kin-state.

### Identity Development

All bilateral agreements on the protection of national minorities contain provisions which clearly provide the right of members of national minorities not only to maintain and express, but also to *develop* a minority identity, including the religious identity as well. Article 79 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia also prescribes that members of national minorities, among other things, have a right to *develop* a religious particularity. The “development” of a minority identity, or at least its religious part, is not that clearly established in international multilateral instruments. Namely, Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights does not contain guarantees for identity development, while the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities provides for states to *encourage conditions for the advancement of national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity*. According to the Commentary of the Working Group on Minorities, the promotion of minority identity demands specific measures which express, reproduce and *further develop their culture*. The Working Group was of the opinion that cultures are not static and that minorities should be given the opportunity to develop their culture in context of a developing process and which should provide for interaction between minorities, between the minorities and the state, as well as between minorities and a wider social community.<sup>24</sup> A more careful observation of the Commentary can suggest that the Working Group left *development* out of the context of religious identity. A similar approach can be noticed in the text of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The presented Article 5 Par. 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities explicitly provides that the contracting parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to *maintain and develop their culture* and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, tradition and cultural heritage. Therefore, the Framework Convention does not contain an explicitly worded obligation for contracting parties to promote

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<sup>23</sup> Report on the Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by their Kin-States, CDL – INF (2001) 019.

<sup>24</sup> Commentary of The Working Group on Minorities to The United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities Par. 6 - E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2005/2, Par. 29.

conditions for the *development of national minority religious identity*, but only provides the obligation of states to create conditions for religion, as an essential element of identity, to be *preserved*. Not denying however, that religion and a minority's religious identity can be considered part of its culture in the wider sense,<sup>25</sup> it is still important to note a certain hesitation of the Framework Convention to explicitly provide for the contracting parties' obligation, and the right of persons belonging to minorities, to *develop religious identity*. What would in fact such an obligation, or right, mean?

Bearing in mind that the relevant domestic and international acts, if providing for the development of identity, including religious, do so most often prescribing it cumulatively with the *maintaining, or preservation and expression* of common identity, one can first put the question whether its writers only had existing identities in mind, namely the further development of identities existing at the time of adoption of these acts, or is such a determination sufficiently wide enough to answer society's needs in recognizing the reestablishment of identities, or rather, in the true sense, the constitution of new minority identities? In principle, it seems, at least when it comes national identity, that based on individual liberty, the expressing national identity must take into account the position that a common care for the maintaining a common identity can also relate to developing and maintaining newly created or reestablished national identities, in as far as it is not *prima facie* clear that, *bona fides*, based on objective criteria, there is need for excluding the existence of a minority *national* identity (e.g. the case of Native Americans in the Republic of Serbia, or the equation of regional and ethnic identity). However, the development of religious identity can be, first of all, the development of individual religious identity, based on individual freedom of religion. In view of the collective aspects of freedom of religion, the development of identity can mean the development of identity within the frame of an existing religious affiliation of a minority – increase of faithful among persons belonging to a minority, the development of religious cultures and structures etc. Such an interpretation stems from two important starting presumptions: A religiously neutral state which respects individual freedom of religion, but also the autonomy of churches and religious communities, except for regulating religious organization establishment, could not have any role in the creation of conditions for the development of a religious identity; the right of persons belonging to a minority to develop a religious identity in community, if that would imply changing that identity, particularly in the case where the minority is determined exclusively on the grounds of religious particularity, could in fact be turned into the complete opposite of the idea of minority protection and could represent a planned modification of identity. Things are different with national minorities in the frame of which exist different religious identities. In such a case, identity development amo-

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<sup>25</sup> Theory suggests that the term "culture" is perhaps best suited to describe literature, symbols and common manifestations and practices of relevant rituals, customs and legacies, such as for example holidays, fasts, pilgrimages, cults and a specific calendar distinguishing minorities from the majority population (Ghanea 2012, 6).



ng members of a minority can also signify a modification of religious identity which, understandably, does not result in a change of national identity. All of the mentioned follows from the interpretation by which religious identity is determined by religion.

A particular question is, however, if the religious identity of persons belonging to a minority can be equated with the belonging to a specific church or religious community, understood not only in the sense of religion, but also in the sense of, in time and space, a specific administrative-organizational structure. That would in fact manifest the issue of developing religious identity as a question of whether persons belonging to a minority can establish “their” churches and religious communities. International and domestic instruments do not contain, in important numbers, provisions which recognize such a right. Of the bilateral agreements on the protection of national minorities, such a possibility is provided only by the Agreement on the protection of national minorities concluded with Hungary. According to Par. 4 Art. 3 of that Agreement, the contracting parties, recognize the right of persons belonging to national minorities to freely manifest their faith and facilitate, among other things, the establishment of religious institutions. The most notorious example of recognition of that right is Article 8 of the CE Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. In its Article 8, the Framework Convention prescribes that parties undertake to recognize that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to manifest his/her religion or belief and to establish religious institutions, organizations and associations. In regards to the presented provision, we can notice that it, unlike some other provisions of the same Convention, does not provide for the right to establish religious organizations, institutions and associations to be exercised in community with the other members of the group. Comments to that provision of the Convention, remind however that Art. 3 according to which members of the minority realize their rights and enjoy freedoms which stem from principles contained in the Convention individually or in community with others, thus the systemic approach was reason enough why such a determination was left out of that article (Machnykova 2006, 234). Still, in the Explanatory Report to the Convention it is clearly stated that the Convention does not imply the existence of collective rights, and for Art. 8 it is noted that the freedom of religion applies to all, thus meaning that persons belonging to national minorities should, in accordance with Article 4 of the Convention (therefore without discrimination), also enjoy it.<sup>26</sup> The essence of the presented provision of the Framework Convention is therefore the securing *that persons belonging to the national minority not be discriminated in the realization of the freedom of religion, for being members of a national minority, and not to enjoy that freedom as persons belonging to a national minority*. From such an interpretation could also derive that *the establishment of religious institutions, organizations and associations is primarily done within the frame of existing religious identities, and not to signify the establishment of national religious institutions, organizations and associations*. Any form of establishment of national religious organizations could give birth to important dilemmas and impose the question if the national pre-

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<sup>26</sup> CAHMIN Explanatory Report to the Framework Convention, H (1995) 010, Par. 54.

fix of such newly-formed religious communities imposes a specific religious identity to all members of a national community? The Commentary to Art. 8 of the Framework Convention clearly point out the contracting parties' obligation to respect the autonomous character of internal religious affairs and to refrain from intervening, without a valid reason, in the religious organization of national minorities, corresponds to the responsibility to ensure that minority communities be able to exercise freedom of religion through legal entities. In other words, the contracting parties to the Framework Convention have a positive obligation to make a legal personality status available to national minorities who wish to practice *their faith (emphasis V. D.)* (Machnykova 2006, 254). Pursuant to the presented Article 5 of the Convention providing for the positive obligation of contracting parties to create specific conditions for members of national minorities to *maintain* religion as an essential element of their identity, through systematic interpretation of the Convention and linking Article 8 with Article 5 but also through a lack of provisions which might explicitly guarantee the right of persons belonging to minorities to develop a religious identity, it can be concluded that the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish religious organizations, institutions and associations is primarily in the function of maintaining their religion, and not of the development of institutional structures of religious communities which members of the minority do not belong to, and which they can join, individually exercising their freedom of religion.

#### **The Influence of Other Elements of National Minority Identity on Religious Identity**

If a group of persons is a national minority which differs from the majority according to its language, culture, and other attributes, does that necessarily mean that the enumerated particularities have an influence on specific aspects of religious identity and religious life of that minority? There are two groups of questions in which the presented dilemma can occur. Primarily, in principle, it is related to the legal obligations in the churches' and religious communities' identity policies, and it is linked to the recognition of the existence of the minority on the part of the churches and religious communities whose believers are persons belong to the national minority. This issue beholds yet another aspect of the relation between the state and churches and religious communities. Namely, in states whose public authorities recognize the existence of specific national minorities, and in which there is a model of separation between state and churches and religious communities, the question arises have the churches and religious communities a duty to accept and recognize the existence of national minorities? Principally, having in mind that the state and churches and religious communities are separated in those models, it is clear that churches and religious communities are not obliged to declare themselves on the existence of specific minority identities, nor to (publicly) accept or recognize them. The existence of national minorities is not an issue under the jurisdiction of churches and religious communities. On the other hand, state recognition of the existence of national minorities cannot be entirely stripped of its influence on churches and religious communities – following such a recognition, churches and religious communi-

ties, through their actions, should not be allowed to incite national intolerance and hatred – e.g. to openly negate and/or promote the (non)existence of a minority identity.

A particular question in regards to (state) recognition of the existence of national minorities which differ from the majority according to language, is whether churches and religious communities whose believers are persons belong to that minority are duty-bound to use the minority language and alphabet in their affairs, from administrative to liturgical, and whether the state is allowed to intervene in such issues. The issue of language and alphabet used within churches and religious communities, is regulated by acts of autonomous law and the state should not be allowed to intervene in such issues. The state's possible demand to churches and religious communities that they use, in their affairs, national minority languages and alphabets, would, besides being principally untenable because of violating the autonomy of churches and religious communities and their canonical structure, that is violating the principle of separation of church from state, open a whole series of dilemmas in regards to their realization in practice, from numerical criteria needed for directing such demands, to information on the linguistic structure of the flock.

### CONCLUSION

Religion, with other characteristics such as language, traditions and cultural heritage, is the very essence of what makes a social group a national minority and can be the sole element of distinction and determination of a national minority. Whether religion is an element of determination of a national minority is a complex issue in whose settlement the state is not the only and sovereign arbiter because of a principal difficulty for a religiously-neutral state to determine the existence of religious identity in a specific social group. On the other hand, a state with the constitutional principle of separation of state and church, and which respects the rights of national minorities, should accept both the status and autonomy of churches and religious communities and thus the issue of religion as an element of national minority identity is manifested in different dimensions of balancing between equally important goals of protection of national minority identity and the respect of the freedom of religion, the separation of churches and religious communities from the state and their autonomy. The state has an obligation to promote conditions for maintaining of national minority identity, but it is debatable how far the state needs to put in place conditions for the group in general so that it can maintain and preserve its religious identity. While on the one hand it is beyond doubt that the respect of minority religious structures' autonomy and self-rule can have its importance in that role of the state, on the other hand, we have yet to resolve whether the issue of promoting conditions for the maintaining and safeguard of religious identity imply the development of new group religious identities and the creation of new national religious organizations. If a national minority is solely determined by its religi-

ous identity, then the development of a new group religious identity, according to the right of its members and the obligation of the state, can lead to the opposite of minority protection. On the other hand, developing the religious identity of minorities which have yet to be determined, or are not exclusively determined by their religious identity, is not in function of protecting national minorities and thus falls under the general legal régime of treating religion and churches and religious organizations: from their autonomy and separation from the state, to the respect of general rules on establishment and the affairs of churches and religious communities. Even when the right of members of national minorities to establish religious institutions, organizations and associations is explicitly proclaimed, its function is to secure that persons belonging to a minority not be discriminated in realizing freedom of religion, because they are members of a minority, and not to enjoy that freedom as persons belonging to a national minority.

The legal aspects of religion as an element of national minority identity has certain particularities in view of minorities in the border areas and embody roles which kin-states can and are allowed to take in protecting the religious identity of national minorities, as well as foreseeing the manner in which religion is treated in bilateral agreements on the protection of national minorities concluded with those states. The regulation in Serbia, as well as in its neighbouring national minority kin-states, differ in content regarding the role of the kin-state in securing conditions for the maintaining and developing of religion as an element of national identity – certain countries do not even determine religion as an element of identity of “their” national minorities, nor do they provide any role of the state in religious identity protection and development, while some other kin-states are particularly interested in the protection and development of the religious identity of their diaspora. All bilateral agreements on the protection of national minorities concluded by the Republic of Serbia with national minority kin-states provide for members of national minorities to have a right to express, safeguard and develop not only of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, but also of religious identity, but variously regulate the role of the state in promoting the conditions for the preservation and development of such an identity.

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Dragan Koković

## CUSTOMS AND CULTURE – MEANING OF THE BORDER\*

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Tradition and culture are closely connected to the *custom*. They are, in a way, a birth place of customs which does not imply that no difference can be made between them.

The concept of custom denotes all those behavioral patterns making up a constituent part of particular community while being transferred by tradition. When applied in their own community, the customs are most often limited to relatively insignificant and informal behavioral patterns that take space in-between particular habits and social institutions. In a wider sense, the customs are taken to represent a way of life, habits and prejudices different with each nation and in various historical epochs. The customs are characterized by *diffused sanctions* expressed in reproach, contempt and ridiculing of those who fail to observe them.

The customs are the oldest forms of regulating social relations. The most definite and obligatory ones are elementary norms of the common social life. They are articulated through behavioral patterns with which people have accompanied particular actions and procedures, various events of importance in the lives of individuals and communities. No matter how multifaceted, diverse and elaborate they appear to be, the elementary customary norms always have one single function, namely to *regulate the most general forms of people's common living*.

The custom as a social rule comes into being very slowly, by repeating a certain pattern of behavior in a given social community or situation. When members of this social community begin, due to its long-lasting repetition, to regard this kind of behavior as obliging, it means that it has become a custom, that is, the given form of behavior has turned into a custom. *The strength of a custom is, therefore, in this long duration but this is, at the same time, its weakness since it cannot adjust itself enough to the changes in the society so that very often it acts as a conservative, restrictive force.*

Once established customary rules tend to be observed by the people who lack any clear idea about their reasons why they should do so, that is, about the purpose of their existence. Unconsciously, by the very practice of people's behavior, the rules about something being "right" or "wrong" are fo-

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rmed.<sup>1</sup> Agnes Heller (1978) stresses that the valid ceremonies of some epochs are observed by people with very little difference in intensity. She remarks how, basically, everyone buries his dead kinsmen (whether he loved them or not, whether he believes in the afterlife or not); everyone greets others on entering a room with people in it, no matter if he does it friendly or disdainfully – this does not change anything so far as custom observation is concerned.

The customs are created by so-called non-institutionalized communities, that is, those that solve their problems by a collective action, without intermediacy of special executives or government bodies. These communities are not only makers of custom norms but also a warranty of their observation. That is why the customs are stronger and more enduring in so-called primitive societies rather than in modern ones because of their greater need for unity and cohesion. A typical example of these customs is *a tribal custom* since the tribes came into being and organized themselves as appropriate communities that respected certain limits so that people could make decisions about their own affairs as much as possible. As an example we can mention Montenegrin tribes having the following characteristics:

1. bordered territory on which each household had its own land, house and cattle; but the whole tribe or some of its parts have their own common land at one or many places; as a rule, these are mountains, pastures and forests;
2. tribe and its territory; when in need, are to defend themselves together or expand;
3. all the tribe members have one single common name;
4. often is the case that members of one tribe have an origin in the same ancestors; less numerous families that are later on adjoined to the given tribe could, in due time, accept the lore claiming that they also originated from the same common ancestor;
5. tribe has its elders or chiefs, spontaneously coming to prominence or are selected in other cases; their functions in time become hereditary. In time, also, a special traditional history is built in the tribe; and,
6. tribe is partly a kind of cult community; members of one tribe usually celebrate the same patron saint's day while some of them have a common church as well (M. Barjaktarević, „On Montenegrin Tribes“).

Thanks to the customs with members of the tribal way of life, in time quite a precise system of action, behavior and evaluation is formed.

There are two kinds of customs, namely those related to *conquering nature* and those *used for regulating social relations*. The former represent a specific technical practice while the latter used to regulate all the relations in society.

*Elementary customs* are greeting customs, wedding mores, funeral mores, clothing and decoration mores, etc. On the other hand, *particular customs* do not express the same social interest; instead, they result from

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<sup>1</sup> Many customary rules came into being as early as animist stage of development of religion and are related to cults and primitive magic activities.



interest differentiation and regulate life and activities of groups and layers in society. Observation of particular customs represents a form of recognition of interests, goals and values of these groups and layers. That is why all of them carry *an ideological stamp on them*: for instance, the choice between the church and the civil burial is a value-imbued act which otherwise characterizes all the particular customs. Observation and attendance of the particular customs speaks, more than anything else, about the man's personality and the extent of his identification with the group he belongs to; their violation is not meaningless as is the case with the elementary customs. The particular customs are evidence that, at the same time, different customs stand for different people. The elementary customs, just like particular ones, can be institutionalized. However, if this possibility exists, it does not mean it is always going to be realized; particular customs are institutionalized only in a small number of cases.

*Individual customs* are a kind of individual habits which remain within the circle of action of socially valid customs. The violation of individual customs is not the same as that of a social norm since it exclusively refers to the person who has done it.

There is a well known saying that "as many villages, so many customs". That is why not a single culture or community is spared of misunderstanding and conflicts. Social and cultural groups differ in terms of the ways in which they allow the expression of the opponents' demands. Some are more conflict-tolerant than others.

The reception of foreign cultural influences and the transplanting of foreign institutions should be done with caution since this kind of penetration could lead to counterproductive results. Slobodan Jovanović (1991, 575) noticed that excessive and inadvertent taking over of foreign patterns of behavior, most of all, of political institutions, led to the emergence of foreign impact opponents who ascribed, more or less, all our troubles to these translated institutions. Stressing that we looked for our political patterns mainly in the West, the foreign impact opponents were also labeled as opponents of the West. Some of them were truly moderate claiming, which was perfectly acceptable, that in transplanting foreign institutions we should proceed gradually and cautiously without losing the sight of our domestic circumstances different from those in the West. Yet, there were other opponents of the West who believed that in our country there were self-made political institutions that could have developed quite successfully even without any foreign patterns but whose development went wrong exactly because our domestic institutions wanted to crossbreed with foreign ones.

The pressure of foreign cultures and their influence on the development of authentic patterns – a phenomenon that is today called imperialism by sociologists who want to stress excessive taking over of foreign cultural tendencies – are written about by Tihomir Đorđević who stated that we stood (and are standing still) *at the crossroads of two cultures* that vie, albeit secretly, for dominance. He says that one of them is our folk culture as expressed in our popular culture, folk history, folk medicine, folk law, folk philosophy, folk mores, folk music and all in which folk spirit and individuality

are articulated, while the other one is a foreign, strange one; it exerts its pressure on the former. To this he adds that it will be foolish to think that our old national culture could eternally oppose the new one which is constantly imposing itself on us, trying to penetrate ours. With the coming of our people into a closer contact with foreign peoples, new state apparatus, traffic, etc. a *new foreign spirit* is introduced into *people's lives* and it will not be long before "even our villages from the shepherd's cottages would open the door to new elements which simplify each typicality and remove every authentic people's identity trait" (Ђорђевић 1984, 9).

By quoting the first volume of the *Anthology of the Yugoslav Academy* in which it is said how, in more recent times, "national treasure deteriorates at a terrifying speed" since it is blown away by the wind of modern culture, Tihomir Ђorђевић states that the old customs have been deteriorating for quite a while and not many are mindful of the saying, „better for the whole village to vanish rather than the custom“.

In his analyses of foreign influences, Tihomir Ђorђевић referred to the folk life in its entirety (totality of human living – demographic, economic, linguistic, ideological and other changes). *A stronger culture is, at the same time, a conquering one* while demographic changes can, for example, explain to us real human dramas with the population caught in the campaigns of foreign cultures. The changes in the sphere of economy belong to the domain of radical changes. They firstly appear as *initial* and then become *dominant* and, finally, they serve as the basis for making projections of future state.

When it comes to foreign influences, sharp-witted Slobodan Jovanović observes, regarding the issues of what is foreign and cross-bred, one contradiction which has remained hidden from many others. Namely, it is true that advocates of western institutions have been opposed but this opposition has not come from representatives of some domestic institutions. Those that stood up to foreign patterns *were not able to counteract them with any domestic patterns*. „The patterns they stressed were again foreign ones.“

In exploring one's own legacy the most difficult thing is to reconcile "atomistic view" of some elements of culture with the understanding of their social and historical meaning and function as well as their symbolic meanings. One must not penetrate into an *immediate cultural change* but it is also necessary to embrace the whole history of cultural processes. Always successful have been those researchers who have not discarded the methodology of the cultural-historical analysis but who, also, refused to remain stuck to it or to restrict their exploits just to this domain.

The influx of foreign influences very often leads to cultural conflicts which are explained as conflicts induced by different influences that affect individuals or groups of different customs and cultures.<sup>2</sup> The norms and ways of living of one culture ask for different reactions and responses with respect to another culture or cultural group (race, social class and layer, ethnic and national origin, religious affiliation, way and style of life, etc.) which

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<sup>2</sup> This kind of conflict has especially become prominent between old European and new American cultural structures.

means that at the basis of the given conflicts there lie different norms, mores and patterns of behavior that are regulating the given life situation.

Cultures are *dividing* and *uniting* forces. Cultural and religious conflicts are on the rise and today are more dangerous than ever before in history. Some opinions claim that future conflicts are going to be triggered off rather by cultural than economic factors and ideologies. The most dangerous cultural conflicts are those along improper borders between civilizations (Hantington 1999, 29).

The philosophical assumptions that are at the very base of values, social relations, customs, overall view of life, are considerably different from one civilization to another. The awakening of religion all over the world enhances these cultural differences. Cultures can change the nature of their impact on politics and economy which can vary from one period to another.

Most often three ways of contacts and conflicts between cultural norms are singled out, namely:

1. different cultures are in touch and get mingled in *border areas* (implying here border belts between different cultural communities),
2. cultural norms get mixed up in the process of *cultural colonization* or change of one state's borders, and,
3. cultural norms are intertwined and transmitted by *economic migrations*.

Cultural conflicts are *those of values* unlike other ones induced by different interests or scarce material resources.

Social and cultural conflicts can be fruitful as a special kind of *protection from even greater and worse conflicts*. Truly free societies cannot exist without conflicts; they are free since allowing for conflicts, including cultural ones as well.

The purpose of a conflict is to *overcome ossified state and conservative consciousness*. If the conflict is leading to growth and progress, if it affirms the values otherwise pushed into the corner of culture, if it creates the conditions for the emergence of new values and defends the confirmed values of existence, then it can be considered as fruitful and necessary. It is well noticed that a conflict-free society is "tired or already dead." The conflict should not devalue life, culture and civilization; neither should it create chaos. The destructive energies brought about by the conflict, namely, the energies that do not renew but destroy instead, should be directed to a side track. Mass energy should be used for creativity and productive human existence.

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Miloš Jovanović  
Miloš Tasić

## DOES GOD SPEAK MY LANGUAGE, TOO?\*

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A lot of eyebrows were raised in the Serbian public concerning the case of building a church in the village of Malajnica near Negotin.<sup>1</sup> Politics showed its ugly face in this case and national passions awakened, with the growing fear and worry that Timočka Krajina could become the “new Kosovo”.<sup>2</sup>

The case even gained international significance when Romania, due to the “unresolved Vlach issue”, threatened to stop the granting of the candidate status to Serbia for joining the European Union. Fortunately, the situation regarding candidacy was ameliorated after the meeting of the presidents of Romania and Serbia, but the “Vlach issue” still remained on the agenda.

In the village of Malajnica in Negotinska Krajina a building of the Romanian Orthodox Church was raised in 2004 (ph. 1 and ph. 2). On the estate of Bojan Aleksandrović a church and a steeple were built, and they were sanctified by the vicar<sup>3</sup> bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Church with his see in Vršac, bishop Danil.

The building inspector issued an order for demolition due to the deviation from the approved project for the construction of a commercial building. The demolition order caused a revolt by certain Vlachs and Romanians, and there was also a reaction in Romania – a protest was staged in front of the Serbian embassy in Bucharest. Afterwards, Ion Macovei, Romanian am-

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the texts by Aleksandar Apostolovski published in *Politika* on May 29, i.e. May 31, 2011, as well as the article by Ž. R. Dragišić “New Dispute over Romanian Church” (full bibliographic/webographic information on the cited texts is given at the end of the paper in the list of used references).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the text by Slavica Marković with an ominous title “Cultural Genocide at Work” published in the magazine *Timočanin* 17, no. II from 2008, or the articles by Nataša Jovanović in the magazine *Pečat* no. 194 from December 2, 2011, and no. 195 from December 9, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Vicar (Latin: *vicarius* – a deputy, representative) – the name for a man who has the right of a prefect (*diecesis*), he can be a deputy, that is, a representative of a bishop. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope is called the first vicar of Jesus Christ. There was no such institution in Orthodoxy before 1698, when the Russian Emperor Peter the Great allowed Varlaam, the Metropolitan of Kyiv, to appoint a deputy – a vicar, because of his poor health.

bassador, and Ion Gabriel, cultural attaché in Serbia, visited the municipality of Negotin in order to try and clear up the misunderstanding. The representatives of the municipality of Negotin determined that the building inspection proceeded in accordance with the law, since it considered the constructed building a religious object, while its investor, *the Society for the Culture of Romanians – Vlachs in Serbia “Orthodox Romanians”* from Malajnica, considered it a commercial object.

Bojan Aleksandrović, a priest of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and at the same time the president of the *Society for the Culture of Romanians – Vlachs in Serbia*, was forced to submit a request for the construction of a commercial building because only the construction of residential and commercial buildings was permitted in the village.<sup>4</sup> And since the Romanian Orthodox Church is not recognized, outside the territory of Banat, as one of the religious communities in Serbia by the Ministry of Faith, the only possibility to build a temple was to ask for a permit to build the headquarters of the *Society*, where religious service would also be performed.

The Law on Churches and Religious Communities of the Republic of Serbia acknowledges and explicitly cites the seven “traditional” religious communities, thus Article 10 reads as follows:

“Traditional churches are those which have a centuries-old historical continuity in Serbia and whose legal subjectivity is acquired on the basis of special acts, and these are: Serbian Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, Slovak Evangelical Church a.c., Christian Reformed Church, and Evangelical Christian Church a.c. Traditional religious communities are those which have a centuries-old historical continuity in Serbia and whose legal subjectivity is acquired on the basis of special acts, and these are the Islamic Religious Community and the Jewish Religious Community.”

Apart from these religious communities, which are allowed to be automatically entered into the Register of Churches and Religious Communities, the Ministry of Religion has granted this status to the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Dacia Felix (Daciei Felix), with its see in Romania and administrative seat in Vršac (Vârșeț) in Vojvodina, practically limited to the territory of Banat.

Regarding this situation *the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance* – ECRI, in its report on Serbia from 2011, under item 117, stated the following:<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> By the by, Bojan Aleksandrović was subject to various inconveniences over the above case in Negotin (see: Одбор за људска права Неготин, 2005). At the end of August 2011, he sent an open letter to the President of the Republic of Serbia, Boris Tadić, asking him for help in resolving the awkward situation related to the position of the Romanian Orthodox Church in eastern Serbia, which was directly endangering his personal safety, but also the safety of his closest associates (see: Александровић 2011).

<sup>5</sup> We are grateful to Dragoljub B. Đorđević for drawing out attention to the existence of this document.

“The Serbian Orthodox Church continues to play a predominant role in Serbian society. For example, the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Dacia Felix was registered in April 2009 and accorded equality with the ‘traditional’ churches and religious communities. Prior to that, Article 2 of the relevant regulations provided that ‘with the consent of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church’s organisational unit of Banat shall be entered into the register’. Concerning this, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief emphasised that the State must not condition the granting of certain rights, including the registration of a religious community and the recognition of its legal status, on the agreement of another religious community. The Special Rapporteur noted that this was the standard approach taken by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (ECRI 2011, 29).”

Apart from that, the registration of religious communities is not obligatory, but those that do not get registered face difficulties when trying to open a bank account, purchase or sell property, or issue various types of publications. The Law on Property and Taxes exempts only “traditional” religious communities from paying the property tax and value added tax (VAT), i.e. allows them to file for VAT returns.

On January 27, 2009, Bojan Aleksandrović tried to enter the Romanian Orthodox Protoperbyterate<sup>6</sup> of Dacia Ripensis into the Register of Churches and Religious Communities in Serbia, but the Ministry of Faith stopped the aforementioned procedure on March 24 of the same year, and this adjournment “will last until the authorities of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Romanian Orthodox Church do not reach a decision on the manner of organisation of parts of the Romanian Orthodox Church on the territory of the Republic of Serbia in line with their internal legislature and canon law”.<sup>7</sup> The explanation of the decree, among other things, reads:

“Since the above issue is regulated by the canon law and presents a separate legal matter whose resolution is in the hands of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Romanian Orthodox Church, the actions of the Ministry of Faith may cause conflict between these two churches in this case, which would contradict the Law on Churches and Religious Communities, and would not contribute to harmonisation of relationships between churches and religious communities.”

This means that the church in Malajnica, as a temple of the Romanian Orthodox Church, is built on the territory of the Diocese of Timok, which belongs to the Serbian Orthodox Church (ph. 3).

The canonical tradition recognises only one way of organising Orthodox churches – the local one. This means: one territory, one church, with one

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<sup>6</sup> Protoperbyterate is a type of church unit in which the chief elder is a protoperbyter, which is the same as a protoiereus, a protopriest, that is, a priest. It is usually organised where there is no dioceses and no bishops, as a sort of temporary solution: until a diocese is organised.

<sup>7</sup> The decision of the Ministry of Faith no. 080-00-2/2009-02 signed by the then Minister, prof. dr. Bogoljub Šjaković, is available at the internet address: <http://www.timocpress.info/sr/?p=2103#more-2103>.

bishop. The overlapping jurisdiction is not only unfamiliar to the canons but is also strictly punishable. Here are some of the canonical rules that discuss this matter in most explicit detail:

**35<sup>th</sup> Apostle Canon**<sup>8</sup>: A bishop must not venture to ordain out of his own bounds for cities or countries that are not subject to him. But if he be convicted of having done so without the consent of such as governed those cities or countries, let him be deprived, both the bishop himself and those whom he has ordained.<sup>9</sup>

**Canon II of the Second Ecumenical Council**: The bishops are not to go beyond their dioceses to churches lying outside of their bounds, nor bring confusion on the churches; (...) And let not bishops go beyond their dioceses for ordination or any other ecclesiastical ministrations, unless they be invited. And the aforesaid canon concerning dioceses being observed, it is evident that the synod of every province will administer the affairs of that particular province as was decreed at Nice. But the churches of God in heathen nations must be governed according to the custom which has prevailed from the times of the Fathers.

**Canon VIII of the Third Ecumenical Council**: ... The same rule shall be observed in the other dioceses and provinces everywhere, so

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<sup>8</sup> All canons are taken from the website [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org) ([www.pravoslavije.net](http://www.pravoslavije.net) in Serbian), unless noted otherwise. The latest translation of the canons of the Orthodox Church into Serbian was not available in the process of writing of this article. It can be found in: Јевтић 2006.)

<sup>9</sup> Nikodim Milaš (2004b, 97–98) interprets the 35<sup>th</sup> Apostle Canon in the following way: “Every diocesan bishop is completely independent in exercising the hierarchical rights in his diocese. No one can stop him from doing that if he is exercising his rights within the canonically determined borders, nor can anyone interfere in the internal affairs of the diocesan administration or influence the rights of the aforementioned diocesan bishop either indirectly or directly. This is forbidden according to the Canons even to the first regional bishop or metropolitan (...), and it is also forbidden that one diocesan bishop may influence the hierarchical rights of another diocesan bishop. Relationships between diocesan bishops with regular jurisdiction are thus fully and correctly standardised in the Canons, rendering impossible any conflict between them concerning the diocesan authority (...). Among the basic rules of a diocesan bishop belongs his right to ordain priests in his diocese. This right of his tends to and would like to be vouched for and secured by this Apostle Canon of ours. The circumstances seemed to be such at the time of publication of this Canon, that certain bishops allowed themselves to cross the borders of their jurisdiction, and ordain clergymen in other bishops’ dioceses. This Canon strictly forbids such acts and orders for everyone who dares do such a thing to be deposed from the level of bishop; and also to depose from their hierarchical levels all those who have received their ordination in such an illegal manner. The Canon allows that a bishop can perform the ordination in another’s diocese only with the knowledge of the authorised diocesan bishop. And this can occur, when due to certain circumstances the bishop in question cannot perform the act himself, and so asks and authorises a neighbouring bishop to ordain one of his clergyman in his stead; or when in a diocese, due to exceptional circumstances in the church life, a disorder is created in the church, and so a need arises to temporarily give up on the current regulations; or, at last, when a diocese is widowed, so the legal authorities invite an external bishop to ordain several clergymen of the widowed diocese.”



that none of the God beloved Bishops shall assume control of any province which has not heretofore, from the very beginning, been under his own hand or that of his predecessors. But if any one has violently taken and subjected a Province, he shall give it up; lest the Canons of the Fathers be transgressed; or the vanities of worldly honour be brought in under pretext of sacred office; or we lose, without knowing it, little by little, the liberty which Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Deliverer of all men, hath given us by his own Blood. Wherefore, this holy and ecumenical Synod has decreed that in every province the rights which heretofore, from the beginning, have belonged to it, shall be preserved to it, according to the old prevailing custom, unchanged and uninjured.

**Canon XVII of the Council in Trullo (Quinisext Council):** Since clerics of different churches have left their own churches in which they were ordained and betaken themselves to other bishops, and without the consent of their own bishop have been settled in other churches, and thus they have proved themselves to be insolent and disobedient; we decree that from the month of January of the past IV Indiction no cleric, of whatsoever grade he be, shall have power, without letters dimissory of his own bishop, to be registered in the clergy list of another church. Whoever in future shall not have observed this rule, but shall have brought disgrace upon himself as well as on the bishop who ordained him, let him be deposed together with him who also received him.

**Canon XIII of the Synod of Antioch:** “No bishop shall presume to pass from one province to another, and ordain persons to the dignity of the ministry in the Church, not even should he have others with him, unless he should go at the written invitation of the metropolitan and bishops into whose country he goes. But if he should, without invitation, proceed irregularly to the ordination of any, or to the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs which do not concern him, the things done by him are null, and he himself shall suffer the due punishment of his irregularity and his unreasonable undertaking, by being forthwith deposed by the holy Synod” (Милаш, 2004b, 62-3).

**Canon III of the Synod of Sardica:** “... that no bishop pass from his own province to another province in which there are bishops, unless indeed he be called by his brethren, that we seem not to close the gates of charity” (Милаш, 2004b, 106).

**Canon XV of the Synod of Sardica:** “... if any bishop should ordain to any order the minister of another from another diocese without the consent of his own bishop, such an ordination should be accounted invalid and not confirmed” (Милаш 2004b, 124-125).

The problems in the East (since the Western Christian Church has not known similar issues) began with the formation of nation-states during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and a stronger, even excessive, national position of local churches.

When the borders between Yugoslavia and Romania were formed after World War I, a large number of Serbs stayed in Romanian Banat, and the Diocese of Timisoara remained under the jurisdiction of Belgrade, as it used to be, by an agreement of the two churches (Serbian and Romanian Orthodox), only with the Romanian Orthodox Church establishing its own met-

ropolitan archdiocese on the same territory. This is, from a strictly ecclesiastical point of view, nonsense, but it was justified by the circumstances in the field. The Serbian Church never appointed a bishop in that diocese, and there was an administrator who occasionally came to Timisoara. The Romanian Church has a vicariate in Vršac (established in 1971) which functions under the same principles.<sup>10</sup>

In a statement issued on May 28, 2011, the Holy Archiereus Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church expressed regret “that it has come to a profound crisis in the relationship between the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the oldest Christian Church, and the Romanian Orthodox Church, due to the non-canonical activities of the latter in the Holy Land.”<sup>11</sup> In further text, the statement addressed the activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Serbia:

“Unfortunately, the hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church does not respect the canonical order and jurisdiction of sister Churches in other places as well. In our case, the Council is grateful to the Romanian Orthodox Church for a good relationship toward the Diocese of Timisoara of the Serbian Orthodox Church and for the support provided to its administrator, priesthood, and monkhood, to which the Serbian Orthodox Church responds with the position full of brotherly love toward Romanians in Serbian Banat, but at the same time the Council expresses regret and a strong protest against the non-canonical intrusions by certain bishops and clergymen from Romania on the territory of two dioceses in eastern Serbia, without the blessing and approval of authorised bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church. If the non-canonical and non-brotherly activity of these persons continues, the Council and the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church will have to take all canonical and legal measures to stop it, to preserve the centuries-old canonical order, and to prevent the violation of the sanctity of inter-orthodox unity, whoever the inspirer and organizer of the activities which endanger that unity (Иринеј 2011).”

To gain insight into the motives behind the construction of the temple of the Romanian Orthodox Church on the territory of the Diocese of Timok, we travelled to Negotin in mid-December 2011, to speak with the main actor of the entire case – priest Bojan Aleksandrović. We first contacted him by electronic mail, having found his e-mail address on the web site of the Romanian Orthodox Protopresbyterate of Dacia Ripensis ([daciaortodoxa.ro](http://daciaortodoxa.ro)) (ph. 4).

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<sup>10</sup> Zorica Kuburić (2010, 35) reports on the vicariate of the Romanian Orthodox Church: “As far as the Diocese of the Romanian Orthodox Church Dacia Felix is concerned, with its see in Deta (Romania) and its administrative seat in Vršac, I was told in the Ministry that they are, according to an agreement, registered within the Orthodox Serbian Church”. More on the Romanian religious communities in Banat, see: Бурић-Миловановић *et al.* 2011.

<sup>11</sup> The Holy Synod of the Jerusalem Patriarchate ceased communion with the Romanian Orthodox Church on May 9, 2011, because the latter built a church and hostel in Jericho without the permission of Jerusalem.

Warmly welcomed in the facilities of the Protopresbyterate, we started our interview, and at the very beginning Bojan Aleksandrović answered our question regarding the reasons behind his activity:<sup>12</sup>

“You see, as far as Malajnica is concerned, Malajnica is practically a symbol because it is where it all started, in fact, here the problem is *performing service in the mother tongue* [emphasis M. J. and M. T.]. That is the first problem. That problem has existed for a number of years, almost two hundred years now. Due to the lack of service in their own, understandable language, the believers started visiting fortune tellers which addressed them in their native Romanian, that is, Vlachian language. I believe you have heard of the Vlachian magic in eastern Serbia, it is known all across the former Yugoslavia. People did not understand the priest, so they slowly cast aside the Church and started visiting fortune tellers.”

Villagers from the region of Negotin turned to the local fortune tellers for their religious/spiritual needs since they could not have prayers read for a specific problem or liturgy performed in the language that they understood from the Serbian Orthodox Church clergy – it has been like that since 1833, when the region in question was annexed to Serbia and when the first diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church was established there, thus the service has only been performed in Serbian, that is, Church Slavonic. By the by, the quality of church life in this region is, as our interviewee testified, at a quite low level:

It is miserable, a miserable situation and a miserable state, when in a Serbian village, a Serbian church, and there’s no one at the service, and the priest isn’t doing anything. Let’s not even start on the Vlachian villages. Before my appointment for the parson of Malajnica, the village was served by the priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church. When people saw a priest in the village, they would begin talking among themselves “Here comes the priest, someone must’ve died...” The only purpose for a priest to visit the village was a funeral.

The Serbian Orthodox Church claims that there’s room for everyone in it. The official script is Cyrillic, official languages are Church Slavonic and Serbian, so what then, for example, with Vlachian villages in eastern Serbia where the language is Romanian and script Latin? They say: “Let them ask for it, and we will provide.” Well then, why does the Church exist? Why does that organised Patriarchate exist? In the parts where Orthodox jurisdiction is not established it can be understood that no one knows what language is spoken and what peoples live there, but where there is a church organisation such as the Patriarchate, for it not to know that other peoples and languages exist on the territory which it governs and not to allow them to attend service in their mother tongue, that is inadmissible. However, such a situation is, in fact, an obvious conclusion that the church hierarchy of one people cannot govern another people since it doesn’t understand the being and needs of that people, and that’s

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<sup>12</sup> The cited quotations are slightly corrected in comparison to the original transcript after several consultations with our interviewee.

why every Church should lead its own people spiritually, when that has already begun, with the formation of national Churches. It's one thing to say the Patriarchate of Antioch, it is territorial, and a different thing to say the Serbian or Romanian Church.

Due to the neglect of the church organisation toward the congregation, the young priest first asked the authorised bishop (of Timok) to allow him to perform service in the Vlachian (or Romanian) language (Bojan Aleksandrović insists on it being the case of one and the same people and language). However, he did not arrive at understanding. Later, even a conflict with bishop Justin occurred, and Bojan Aleksandrović was stripped of his priestly duties even though he was a clergyman of the Romanian Orthodox Church. On the history of the problem of performing service in the Vlachian/Romanian language in eastern Serbia, our interviewee spoke at length, since he considered it crucial:

“The first known priest in Zaječar, the town which is the see of the Serbian bishop for Timok, was priest Barbul who moved here from Romania. What did he want here from Romania if he didn't have anyone to perform service for? If there were no Romanians here. Specifically speaking, the Memorial of the Diocese of Timok of the Serbian Church from 1934 reads: ‘in the village of Šipikovo, during the Turkish and Bulgarian rule, the service was most often performed in Romanian.’ Thus, we're not making anything new up. In Vlachian villages, the service was performed in Romanian, even a book by the Serbian Orthodox Church says that.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1990s, during the war in Bosnia, Patriarch Teoctist, blessedly deceased of Romania, posed that question [service in the mother tongue – M. J. and M. T.] at the request of some people from around here. There was no talk of the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Church here, but it was only a matter of providing service in the Romanian language within the Serbian Church for those believers who wanted it. ‘Give our brothers the option of having the service in their mother tongue.’ However, there was no reply. And then, on one occasion, I can't remember what year it was exactly, I know that Zoran Lilić was the president of Yugoslavia, and Zoran Lilić is from a nearby Vlachian village, his father was a blacksmith and he knows Vlachian/Romanian very well. Romanian Patriarch Teoctist was invited by Patriarch Pavle, I'm not sure, whether they went to see something in Bosnia or they just talked, I'm not sure anymore of the details, but I know that Patriarch Teoctist said: ‘Good, we will help you as much as we can’, and then the Romanian Orthodox Church gave the Serbian Orthodox Church a substantial amount of money as non-refundable aid, but it also asked the Serbian Church to “provide our Romanian brothers from eastern Serbia, from Timočka Krajina, with the service in Romanian”. Then Lilić joined the conversation, so as to show that he also kind of knew something about the whole thing, since he was from that region, and said: ‘There are no Romanians there, those are Vlachs.’ Blessedly deceased Patriarch Teoctist replied: ‘Call them

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<sup>13</sup> Bojan Aleksandrović provided the data from the book: *Споменица Тимочке епархије 1834-1934*, edited by Milan Cvetičanin, and published by the Literary Fund of the Diocese of Timok, Sremski Karlovci, 1934.

what you will, but provide them with the service in their mother tongue', he didn't even say Romanian, but their mother tongue, and if it was a dialect – then be it a dialect, just let them understand it better. Patriarch Pavle was silent. When I'm conducting the service myself, I say the words as they are said in that village, because the purpose is for the people to understand what's being said or read to them. It's a well-known fact that different dialects are used in different regions with different peoples, and Romanians/Vlachs in eastern Serbia are those who speak archaic dialects of the Romanian language. There's a story where two women are standing in a church and listening to the sermon, and so one tells the other: 'Oh, this bishop is so well-spoken', but the other says: 'Really well done! But have you understood anything, I know I haven't', 'Neither have I', says the first one, and this is completely wrong. Everyone has to understand the service. The Romanian Church has been asking for it since the 1990s: 'Let's have a dialogue, let's have a committee for the dialogue, let's, let's, let's talk' – but there is no reply. And then things like this happen, and then the Serbian Church says: 'We demand a dialogue immediately!', alright, a dialogue, there was a dialogue, they went, there were two meetings, unjust, they were unjust at that time as far as we were concerned, because the agreement was that the parties involved in the problem would not participate as members of the committee. Justin and Romanian Daniel. The Serbian Church took Justin, and the Romanian did not take Daniel. The documents that I had as a reply were not taken into consideration, 'not to upset the Serbian brothers', and there it was solved what was solved, but the Serbian Church took it upon itself, they agreed upon it, to ordain the priests, to bring in Romanian priests, and for the bishop of the Serbian Church to start performing the service in Romanian, for Justin to organize it with Ignatius of Braničevo. That was back in 2006, sometime after Easter, the Octave of Easter, however, nothing has happened to this day. Then we were separated for some time from Vršac, so our protopresbyterate, our archiereus see was directly under the Patriarchate, then over there, then here again, we tried everything imaginable. Then Patriarch Teoctist passed away and came Patriarch Daniel. Justin did not, at first, recognise my chirotony, did not recognise me as a priest, and then overnight he changed his mind and sent me a letter, 'to priest Bojan Aleksandrović', called me before the church court to strip me of my priestly duties. So, we're playing like children, now I want to, now I don't. I informed Patriarch Daniel and Patriarch wrote him a nice letter, where he asked him kindly 'not to take any more steps against priest Bojan Aleksandrović' and so on, and so forth, and as a reply to that letter Justin sent me a decision on the cessation of my priestly duties. What more is there to talk about?"

We were interested in the motives behind the strained relationship of bishop Justin toward the entire case, and maybe mostly toward Bojan Aleksandrović himself, and our interviewee shared his impressions with us:

"Realistically speaking, I can't understand such behaviour. If someone believes in God, that can't be understood unless that someone is a nationalist, since there are people who are in faith and church, out of 'nationalistic' reasons – 'Orthodox Serb', you can't be a Serb unless you're Orthodox, and if you're not Orthodox or if you're an 'Orthodox Roma-

nian', if you're something else, you can't be Serbian. No! We have to be, above all, believers, okay, someone should satisfy their nationalistic needs as well, but nationally, what does it mean to be a nationalist? A nationalist is, if we take the definition as how it is supposed to be, a man who loves his people. One should not be an extreme nationalist, a chauvinist, but a nationalist, you are a nationalist, for sure – in the sense that you should not as a nationalist now wear a t-shirt with the Serbian flag, but say "I live in Serbia, all's normal, it's my state, my ancestors were Serbian, I belong to the Serbian Orthodox Church", that's nationalism, that's positive nationalism. Now, the fact that it has all changed in our country and that the meaning of the word nationalism and every time you say homeland, I'm really sick of it (...) Milošević immediately comes to my mind, and the songs before the second *Dnevnik*, 'Fatherland!' and all that, and I get sick instantly. The system of values is distorted in our country, that's why it's like that. That is why I can't understand why Justin is doing all this, except maybe because he doesn't want to share the authority or because he lacks in faith, that's the only way I can understand it. As one of my colleague says: 'Listen, you should understand Justin as a man, but never as a Christian, spiritually.' Let anyone say, let any Serb from our region who has been offended by us, come out here and say it, there are no such people."

On the overly emphasised, let us not say extreme, nationalism in the Church, for which Aleksandrović mostly blamed the priests who had come to Serbia from Bosnia, he said the following:

"For example, I have nothing against anyone here, but a priest comes from Bosnia and says: 'This is the Serbian land, if you want Vlachian – cross the Danube to Romania!' I lost three members of my family in World War I, who fought for Serbia and gave their lives for it, while his great grandfathers fought on the Austro-Hungarian side. How am I to know that it wasn't his great grandfather that killed my great grandfather? The latter fought as a Romanian for the Serbian state, and the former as a Serb for Austro-Hungary, and he's telling me to leave my house, and there's 90% of priests here who are from Bosnia."

Also in line with this anti-nationalistic, cosmopolitan<sup>14</sup> attitude was Aleksandrović's position on the adoption of the custom of decorating the Christmas tree:

"I have changed my way of thinking and understanding, since I have visited other countries, where several Orthodox churches function on the same territory, for example, you saw that we have decorated the Christmas tree because we have to give some presents to children for Christmas. If someone in the Serbian Church was to decorate a Christmas tree, he would be declared a traitor, since he would be following a 'Catholic custom', that's not Catholic, that's not Catholic at all. They say 'you should decorate the Yule log', and that's not Christian. What is a Yule log? The Yule log is a pagan custom. It is burned as the symbol of destruction of pagan statues which Slavs made from it. It is burned on

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<sup>14</sup> We will feel free to say here: Can the position of a true Christian be any different from this one?

the eve of the birth of Christ so as to show the distance from paganism and to prepare for the newborn Christ. I get sick when I hear that some priests sanctify the Yule log, sprinkle it with holy water and say that it symbolises Christ and then they burn Christ! That has got nothing to do with Christianity.”

Our interviewee paid special attention to the loyalty of Vlachs/Romanians to the state of Serbia, since he was accused of the “Romanization of Vlachs” in various texts where he was mentioned, as well as someone who advocated the “separation of Negotinska Krajina from Serbia”:

“If I was the first to know that my closest kin was doing that, I would be the first to warn them, and if they didn’t mend their ways, I would be the first to turn them in. I would be the first to turn them in, since it is our duty to exclude the extremists from our ranks. This means that if someone would want something else – ‘OK, my friend, I don’t want to be a part of it, leave me out of it...’, now, how should I put it, such a person is no longer a Christian. That person, who wants to separate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is no longer a Christian, and what could they start? The Republic of Zaječar? I mean, it’s nonsense. We have printed a calendar (...) we have printed it and you can see, it was not an obligation, nor a duty, but, I simply wanted it to be that way – *we live in Serbia, Serbia is our country* [emphasis M. J. and M. T.] and you can see here also: February 15, what does it say next to the holiday, the holiday is in Romanian, but here in brackets it is written in Serbian: ‘National Day of Serbia’. So, although this is a small thing, but even with that we show who and what we are. We just don’t want to let anyone make us feel like we’re strangers in our own house or we don’t want ourselves to feel like we’re strangers. It’s simple: you pay the taxes, you live in your state, all of that, and they say: ‘No, you can’t use your own language!’ Why is that? For what reasons?”

And here, absolutely, I want it to be known that there are no problems between Serbs and Vlachs. Problems are made by local civil and church authorities. I declare under my full responsibility that there is no people in Serbia more loyal than Romanians/Vlachs, and that is exactly why we want to enjoy elementary rights in our own house.”

Aleksandrović stressed that there were a lot of Serbs among the believers who came to Malajnica to worship and satisfy other religious needs. Furthermore, among the Serbs themselves there were those who opposed the demolition of the church:

“Well, when they wanted to demolish the church in Malajnica, people signed petitions, Serbs who work abroad, Serbs from neighbouring villages, which is the proof that there are no problems between the Serbian and Vlachian people here. There is a problem only between the representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the local government. It is they who support this nationalistic element.”

Concerning the question about how canonical rules forbid double church jurisdiction on a single territory, our interviewee, more or less, took up the position that “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sa-

bbath” (Gospel of Mark 2:27), in the sense that the canons exist in order to facilitate the resolution of a conflict, and not to escalate it. He first talked about the case of the “American Split” within the Serbian Orthodox Church<sup>15</sup>:

“When the problem regarding the Diaspora of the Serbian Orthodox Church occurred. (...) It was that split in America, and how it ended – by signing a contract and everything was automatically recognised. They fell under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarchate. If they were doing things by the canons, it would mean that from the moment they joined the Serbian Patriarchate, all weddings, all services for the dead, all chirotonies needed to be renewed, since, practically, they were not in unity with the church. One act recognised it all. Many asked for an explanation for such a non-canonical action. A renowned Serbian theologian, bishop Atanasije Jevtić, replied very wisely in the sense that the canons did exist not to... make the situation more difficult and problematic, but to solve the problem. Thus (...) man was not made for the canons, but the canons for man.”

Then, he talked about the abovementioned case of the Diocese of Timisoara, and the lack of historical continuity between the early Daco-Roman dioceses of the Christian Church and the later church organization of Christianised Slavs:

“There’s a Serbian diocese in Timisoara and there’s no problem, the Romanian church has intervened with the Romanian state to recognise the Serbian diocese as a special religious community so that it could enjoy all rights. The Romanian Orthodox Church in Romania has a Ukrainian vicariate, and apart from the fact that they mention the Romanian Patriarch Daniel, there’s nothing Romanian there. The alphabet, script, letters, services, all, all, all, absolutely all is in Ukrainian. (...) Meaning there’s no good will neither from the state authority, nor from the Serbian Church for this problem to be solved in Serbia, and I don’t even want to start on the Ministry of Religion, it is a Ministry that only complicates the problem.<sup>16</sup> We can see on television that it’s creat-

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<sup>15</sup> The abovementioned split occurred in May 1963, when by the decision of the Holy Synod of the SOC the then American-Canadian bishop Dionysius was suspended “for improper behaviour”. Later on, he separated and declared the Free Serbian Orthodox Church. The split was overcome at the beginning of the 1990s.

<sup>16</sup> Aleksandrović is not at all satisfied with the work of the Ministry of Faith: “Nowhere in the world, at least nowhere in the surrounding area, I don’t know, in normal countries there is no separate Ministry of Religion. The Ministry of Religion is a ministry for spending money. I, literally, don’t see the purpose for the existence of this Ministry, apart from complicating problems, and it is precisely the Ministry of Religion which escalated the problem between the Romanian and Serbian Orthodox Church. Now even that former Minister Milan Radulović bragged about when he was criticised that he respects the position and decisions of the Serbian Orthodox Church too much, he would say ‘That is not true, they are attacking us’, or say, ‘We did not do anything’, or say, ‘The Serbian Orthodox Church did not exert any pressure because we did our job so well that there was no need for them to intervene’. So, practically speaking, he worked more in accordance with the church, canon law than the secular, state law.”



ing problems even with other religious communities, and on our example, it complicates the problem, when it can call both sides and say: 'OK, people, let's agree on this and let's solve the problem', but no! 'Canon law! There can't be two bishops on one territory according to the canon law.' Alright then, let's enforce the canon law! So there can't be two bishops on one territory. What are we going to do with Timisoara then? 'Just don't bring up Timisoara', like 'that's a historical diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church.' OK, let's see what's so historical about it. This region was under the Pashaluk of Vidin until 1833, and the see of the hierarch for this region was in Vidin. There were two of them. One sent from Bucharest, Romanian, the last one was Kalinik, for, as some document mentioned it, the Romanian majority, and the other one was a Phanariote Greek, who was in charge of the Serbian population. It is also known that this region was under the government of the Diocese of Rymnik from Romania, then there was some exarch from Orsova who appointed priests around here. How did the Serbian Church come to this region? They say: 'Well, here it is, when the Patriarch of Constantinople issued a *tomos* to Prince Miloš, he also numbered all the villages in this region and that's canonical.' Alright. Let's go back to the past a little further. The Romanian people here, the Vlachs, Romanians, whatever you may call them, are the descendants of the ancient Dacians, the Romanized Dacians, who had lived on this territory. Now, it is a well-known fact that in the first centuries of Christianity there was a very developed church organization here. When did it vanish? With the coming of Slavs, Huns, Avars, Goths – the end, meaning the end for the Christian church here. Then, we take the canon law, there were dioceses here, one in the nearby city of Aquis, where the village of Prahovo is today, a Daco-Roman diocese, meaning that it was a diocese of the people who lived here. Slavs came, destroyed it, Christianity was practically extinct, and then came Saint Cyril and Methodius, Christianised Slavs and started their church organization. And they say: 'We have Cyril and Methodius, this and that, and everything is fine', alright. Let's see now, how can we bridge the gap between the Daco-Roman dioceses and the church organisation of Cyril and Methodius after Christianisation? There's a minus there, it's illegal. (...) If we come back to the canon law and all that, then this jurisdiction practically has a great hole in its canonical continuity. The Daco-Roman church structure was destroyed violently and that was not according to canons. It would be in line with canons if what is taken and destroyed is returned, and not covered by something else."

Aleksandrović relativized the authority of the canons which relate to the service in a particular language by placing them opposite to the Biblical tradition:

"The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles is the birthday of the Christian Church, that is, the will of the Holy Spirit is practically the demand to serve the people in their language. What does he who does not allow that do? He commits a blasphemy. And what does the Gospel say? That everything will be forgiven, except the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which will never be forgiven. And then we talk about canon-

icity and canons. He who defies the will of the Holy Spirit cannot say much about canons.”

As a justification of sorts for his actions, he offered the “higher interest”:

“Nobody likes to share the authority, but we have to look at the spiritual interest of the people. When I say people, I above all mean the Orthodox people. Now, is it this one or that one, it doesn't really matter. And if I was in the position of the Serbian bishop Justin, and if the same thing happened, because we started building the church, apart from the fact that we tried to talk to him earlier, he was so hostile, I would get in my car and go visit that man – ‘Here, my friend, we have a problem, let's solve it, let's see how we can solve it’, and not the police immediately, the demolition of the church, the hatred, we were on all local televisions, ‘The war is beginning, Serbs and Vlachs have lived in peace and harmony for centuries, and now there's some guy Bojan...’, it doesn't matter, I say, maybe there's some luck in the fact that it is indeed Bojan, since I'm from around here, since it is in my interest to have both peoples happy,<sup>17</sup> since I want to cooperate with both of them.”

Bojan Aleksandrović thought that today the main concern is the keeping of people within the Orthodox religion – regardless of which church jurisdiction. At the same time, he advocated the complete freedom of confession, the freedom for everyone to make their own decisions on which church they would like to belong to:

“Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the goal should be to keep the people within the Orthodox religion. Whether it is through this jurisdiction, or that one, it doesn't matter anymore. Because, if someone refers only to the jurisdiction, when we know how many hollow things there are on the side, one gets slightly sick of it all...”

My reasoning is that the people should be left to make their own decision on which jurisdiction they want to belong to. (...) I think that the people should be allowed to belong to the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Church because of the following thing as well: there's a diocese of the Romanian Orthodox Church for Romanians from Banat, well now – in Romania it is not for Serbs from Banat. It is for Serbs from Romania and the ones that want to belong to the Serbian Orthodox Church there. It's the same here, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church established a diocese and declared it the diocese of Romanians in Yugoslavia, which was later transferred to Romanians in Serbia, so I don't see a problem here.”

At the very end of this text, we would like to emphasise that our intention was not to provide the final word or make judgments in the dispute over the authority of the Serbian and Romanian Church, nor to favour anyone involved in this dispute. We were only interested in the position and thoughts of the man in the centre of the problem, who is ethnically “divided” himself, and our interest was only to get to know the situation well.

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<sup>17</sup> Aleksandrović is Serbian on his mother's side, and Romanian/Vlach on his father's.

We hope that this problem will find a solution which would be acceptable for all, and that it will not escalate further and bring about consequences which would, surely, be adverse for everyone.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Ph. 1: Church of Michael and Gabriel the Archangels and Saint Parascheva in Malajnica



Ph. 2: Church steeple in Malajnica



Ph. 3: Fresco of Saint Sava in the Church of Michael and Gabriel the Archangels and Saint Parascheva



Ph. 4: Plaque on the house where the Romanian Orthodox Protopresbyterate of Dacia Ripensis is seated



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## ECUMENISM – THE NOTION AND ITS GENEALOGY\*

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### INTRODUCTION

"Religions are an expression of eternal metaphysical needs of human nature. Their greatness can be seen the fact it represents the whole extra-sensory supplement to a man, everything that they cannot provide for themselves. At the same time, they are also a reflection of whole peoples and cultural epochs. It is impossible to compare which process was greater: the emergence of the state or the emergence of a religion. /.../ Here, our supreme object of study is the rule of something general against countless spirits, to the complete disdain for earthly in yourself and others /... /"

(Burkhart 1997, 47)

From this quotation, we can see that the author puts the religion side by side with the state. Its existence is essential to a worldly man, because it gives him the sense of existence in extreme situations of despair and suffering, which are, nowadays, becoming more frequent. It cannot be denied that, in modern conditions, the achievements and the problems of our age have become the problems of all people. Social differences within the states, reproduction of imaginary needs, religious tensions, terrorism, economic crisis cause the vibration of our planet. The study of religious traditions of mankind and direct knowledge of the various peoples from all continents makes it easier to overcome all these human miseries. However, it is of utter importance to study the modern processes among present religions, which take place at the same time as all other human misfortunes of the modern era.

"Ecumenism", as a denominational-religious idea, a socio-historical movement, has recently become embodied in the form institutions. It has been essential for the reconciliation of all people, even if they were only Christians, and of historical importance for overcoming all misunderstandings and resolving problems on a planetary scale. The ancient dream of the Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa from the 15<sup>th</sup> century about the peace among the reli-

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gions began to appear in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was the fighter against the religious wars who thought that only the conversation between the religions (confessions) can bring peace on earth. However, there is still an open question about the readiness of some religions to make a dialogue and cooperate with each other.

### **THE TERM ECUMENISM**

"The word ecumenism is derived from the Greek word ecumena or ikumena (oikoumene – ikos – home, house). The noun ecumenism was often used in the Bible and in the works of the Church Fathers, and it referred to the sum of the settlements in the known world, which was historically used with specific reference to the geographical area of the former Roman Empire. Today, it refers to the universe or the whole inhabited world, the cosmos, harmony, unity, order."

Rakić 1993, 283.

The term ecumene (world, universe) became the part of the Christian terminology very early, particularly the term ecumenical; it is not surprising to find the terms such as Ecumenical councils, ecumenical symbols of faith, ecumenical fathers and the Ecumenical Patriarch. The word ecumenism may refer to the dialogue and cooperation of Christians with other religions such as Jewish, Islamic and others. However, in the majority of the cases, ecumenism is reduced to inter-Christian cooperation and dialogue in order to achieve full unity of the Church, which experienced deep divisions during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (schism, splitting) and led separate lives with altered teachings, church organization, worship and practice.

According to R. Rakić (1993, 283),

"we should make distinction between the concept of ecumenism of the concept of tolerance. The concept of tolerance is broader than the concept of ecumenism which has its boundaries; tolerance means submission, unengaged submission of what is happening in another ecclesial community."

More precisely, tolerance implies that a member of certain religion (creed, denomination) does not look askance at his Brother in Christ, or members of other religions, while ecumenism implies active dialogue and cooperation between the religions.

### **HISTORICAL GENEALOGY OF ECUMENISM**

Starting from the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century or from the era of Constantine, i.e. Christianization of the Roman Empire by the Edict of Milan in 313 that legalized Christianity, even to this day, this term has become widely used. It was firstly used in the Protestant terminology at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but it has recently become acknowledged. Since then, ecumenical issues have been the subjects of the numerous debates, which resulted in the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York in 1900.

At the Oxford Conference "Church, Community, and State" in 1937, the term ecumenism was defined as an expression of the ecumenical unity of the Church in history. The knowledge and activities of the church are considered to be ecumenic if they are directed towards creating the unity of Holy Church, the brotherhood of Christians, if they acknowledge the Lord /.../ (Todorović 2007, 118).

As a movement, ecumenism is the result of several causes. The missionary factor, or the clash of the missionaries of different churches in the same missionary area, had negative influence on the spread of Christianity. The needs of all churches to preclude the horrors of war and various forms of social and moral evil, the inappropriateness of the controversy between certain churches, general tendency of human society for unity and cooperation manifested in the establishment of international organizations with the aim to make connections between humans. The ecumenical movement, as a historical and social fact, an ecumenic mood, appears in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, there are those opine that this movement was developed much earlier: in apostolic times, during the Reformation in the last century. Therefore, we can talk about three aspects of ecumenism: Old Church or Orthodox ecumenism, Geneva ecumenism and Roman ecumenism.

### **THE OLD CHURCH – ORTHODOX ECUMENISM**

Old Church ecumenism, or oecumenism emphasizes the continuity and temporal and historical connection to the ancient undivided Church of the first century. The early Church was based upon the knowledge of the absolute unity of the church. The heretics were excommunicated from the wider community and sentenced at the convocations. The efforts to achieve the overall unity were made when separate groups appeared (Manichaeans, Nestorians, Monophysites, etc.). After the split in 1054 (sometimes known as the Great Schism) between the East and the West, there have been great efforts to heal the destroyed unity.

The Orthodox ecumenism emphasizes that the Orthodox Church is the The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church which has preserved the unimpaired betaken faith from the apostles, through the Fathers of the Church, and that any ecumenical endeavor is impossible if we do not return to the ancient sources and origins of the Church (Anastasije 2002, 83).

The western sources usually take the year of 1910 as the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement, when the World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh. However, in 1902, Patriarch Joachim III of Constantinople invited all Orthodox churches to cooperate with the Roman Catholics, Protestants and to cooperate with each others (Anastasije 2002, 83).

After World War I, in 1920, The Patriarchate of Constantinople re-addressed all Christian churches to form *the League of the Churches of Christ*, and to unite in a joint moral and practical work. They proposed: the exchange of brotherly letters, meetings of representatives of churches in one place, establishing the links between theologians and theological schools, the

exchange of students and scholars, Christian conferences, joint use of temples and cemeteries, etc. As a matter of fact, the Orthodox Churches have become seriously engaged in ecumenical issues since then.

Serbian Orthodox Church used to organize Inter-church Conference in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and send the famous theologians to the theological meetings in the West (the Bishop of Bačka Irinej Ćirić, the Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, Prota Miloš Parenta – the priest). It had its delegates at the First World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne, 1927 (the Bishop of Bačka Irinej Ćirić) as well as delegates in Edinburgh, 1937 /.../ (Rakić 1993).

After the World War II, two political blocks were created, so the churches behind the Iron Curtain could only gradually take part in the ecumenical movement. They became significantly involved in the so-called *three Pan-Orthodox conferences in Rhodes* in 1961, 1963 and 1964 where the delegations of the Serbian Orthodox Church were present; after that in the Pan-Orthodox conferences in Belgrade in 1966, and three Pan-Orthodox Conferences (the last one was held in 1991), where several topics out of ten became part of the agenda of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church.

The attitude of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pan-Orthodox conference in Rhodes was good relations between the Orthodox church and other churches and confessions; also, the Orthodox church wanted to build the unity in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Lord, and in the Gospel According to John (the reference of all Christian churches), "they all should be one" (Gospel of John 12, 21).

#### **ECUMENISM OF PROTESTANT CHURCH – GENEVA ECUMENISM**

After the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the Lutheran Church, the Reformed (Calvinist) Church and the Anglican Church separated from the Roman Catholic Church, the issue of the unity of Christians was presented in a new way. Parallel to the split, there were many ecumenical efforts of individuals to establish the lost unity. The Catholics wanted to convert those who went astray, and the call of the Pope Pius IX to the Orthodox and Protestants at The First Vatican Council in 1870 was the evidence of their commitment. Even during the time of the reformists, some of them traveled to Constantinople with the aim to establish the internal unity of the Reformed, and make contacts with the Orthodox.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about new opportunities for contacts in the mankind. This is the century of the expansion of Western nations and great Christian ventures. At that time, the ecumenical movement was acting through the various world, religious and confessional organizations and associations (confession or denomination means confession of faith – Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism, Protestantism): The Evangelical Alliance in 1846, The Lambeth Conference (Anglican) in 1867, The Presbyterian World Alliance (non-Episcopal) in 1875, the Methodist Conference in 1881 (devotional wing which grew out of the Church of England), The Old Catholic Union of Utrecht in 1889 (the wing of the Catholic Church did not accept the dogma of



the infallibility of the Pope and his universal jurisdiction), the British and the Foreign Bible Society in 1804, The Baptist World Alliance in 1905, and others.

Also, young people who wanted to act and preach the Gospel in the world created their own associations: Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor in 1884, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) in 1985 with the famous ecumenical worker John Mott. In WSFC, the word "ecumenism" was used for the first time. The question of religious affiliation was rarely asked. However, in all these movements, the churches barely cooperated with each other. The modern ecumenical movement began when the churches became engaged in the seek for unity and renewal of the "Body of Christ".

The first part of the history of the ecumenical movement (1910-1937) was characterized by the foundation and the activities of two movements: The Faith and Order Movement and The Life and Work Movement. After World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, the first world Conference for the Faith and Order was held in Lausanne in 1927 (394 delegates from 108 churches). At the second world conference in Edinburgh in 1937 (504 delegates from 123 churches) the decision of critical importance was made: *Ecumenical Council of Churches* was founded in cooperation with the movement Life and Work.

The Life and Work Movement emphasized that there should be mutual Christian participation in the activities (the first conference was held in Stockholm under the presidency of the Archbishop of Uppsala – Sederbloma Nathan; on behalf of the Serbian Orthodox Church there were the Bishop of Dalmatia Idinej Đorđević and Archimandrite Valerian Pribićević) – church and social and moral issues (family, children, marriage, sexual education, crime, alcoholism, etc.); church and International Relations (causes of war, the issue of race, duty of Christians to the state) and others. In 1929, this movement evolved into the so-called the Ecumenical Council for Practical Christianity, which was located in Geneva /.../ (Rakić 1993).

The Faith and Order Movement dealt with dogmatic issues – the teaching of some churches. Although those who belonged to the Orthodox churches started to collaborate on a more practical level from 1920, those in The Faith and Order Movement felt at home, testifying their its rich tradition.

### **ECUMENISM OF ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The Catholic Church looked with distrust on the ecumenical movement whose aim was the unity of the Church, since the Catholic Church was the one which could embrace all other divisional church. Moreover, from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it forbade their followers to cooperate with the ecumenical movement. This negative relationship attitude was justified by the fact that the ecumenical movement used to be predominantly protestant. However, the attitude of the the Catholic Church towards the Ortho-

dox Church was different, considering similar dogmatic teaching. Nevertheless, they needed to foster the dialogue and convergence with the Protestants.

"It was not until the Pope John XXIII, on 5 June 1960, established a "Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity" and placed the ecumenical thinking in the center of Vatican Council II, which was convened and concluded by Pope Paul VI in 1965. Ecumenical thought was expressed in the Declaration on Religious Freedom and in the Decree on Ecumenism, 1964. After it, the anathema of 1054 was symbolically nullified – the anathema according to which Pope Leo IX and Patriarch of Constantinople Michael Cerularius were excommunicated (this was done by Pope Paul VI and Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras, on Dec. 7, 1965) (Rakić 1993, 288)."

After the Vatican Council II, the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the The World Council of Churches (WCC) improved. There were heterogeneous working groups with the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Council, Alliance of Reformed Churches, Methodists, Jews and others. The Orthodox Church, during the preparation of the Holy and Great Council, established the inter-Orthodox committee for theological dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, which achieved outstanding results regardless of the political circumstances. This enabled the establishment of the unity of churches on the Orthodox ground (this was forced by the Vatican as well). These events affected the confidence in the Orthodox ecumenism.

Catholic theologians, apart from concrete ways to participate in the ecumenical movement, allege three means: the prayer, the revival that would originate from a source and a dialogue. A dialogue can have various shapes, e.g. inter-confessional discussions on theological issues, and controversial theology which would be exercised in a spirit of dialogue.

If the separated Christians examine each others, they are obliged to perceive the aspects of Christian or historical truth completely and seriously, since they are usually more or less misunderstood, especially in the case of opposite religious beliefs and mutual ignorance. This dialogue would not have done damage to the demands of truth and it should take into account the mutual love and prayer. Therefore, there are the established norms of canon law and other documents in church teachings. For example, they forbid communion in the mysteries – Holy Communion, warning against the false dogma or Protestant understanding of the dogmatic truth. The contacts and dialogues are under the supervision of the bishop, in case of local meetings, or the The Holy See – "holy chair", if they cross the narrow boundaries. The Catholic Church opined that the ecumenical movement was born "by Inspiration of the Holy Spirit" and that they did not need specific approval or a subsequent report to cooperate with non-Catholics in the social, political, public or moral field. The Roman Catholic believer was simply tied to the general laws of their church. The human and spiritual atmosphere is a primary consideration. Prayer and appreciation of positive Christian values in other people are decisive for the favourable renaissance of the atmosphere.

The esteemed Catholic theologian Karl Rahner said that Roman Catholic understanding of the basis, nature, object and purpose of the dialogue reflected their opinion about the existence of other churches and ecclesial communities, as well as their attitude towards conversion (back on track) and the conversion of individuals (change over to another religion) should not be used to solve the anathematized "heresy" or "schism." On the contrary, all of them should be considered as partners of the dialogue and cooperation among the Christians. First of all, their task is a common belief that churches are not in apart from each others, that they are not only "separated brethren" but they have their common origin in Christ (Rakić 1993).

On 29 June 1995 in The Vatican, Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I signed a Common Declaration which stated:

"We also thank God for this brotherly meeting of ours which took place in his name and with the firm intention of obeying his will that his disciples be one (Jn 17:21). Our meeting has followed other important events which have seen our Churches declare their desire to relegate the excommunications of the past to oblivion and to set out on the way to re-establishing full communion. /.../Our new-found brotherhood in the name of the one Lord has led us to frank discussion, a dialogue that seeks understanding and unity /.../. Joint Commission has been able to declare that our Churches recognize one another as Sister Churches, responsible together for safeguarding the one Church of God, in fidelity to the divine plan, and in an altogether special way with regard to unity. /.../. These affirmations we have made together not only hasten the way to solving the existing difficulties, but henceforth enable Catholics and Orthodox to give a common witness of faith /.../."

In the course of history and in the more recent past, there have been attacks and acts of oppression on both sides. As we prepare, on this occasion, to ask the Lord for his great mercy, we invite all to forgive one another and to express a firm will that a new relationship of brotherhood and active collaboration will be established. Such a spirit should encourage both Catholics and Orthodox, especially where they live side by side, to a more intense collaboration in the cultural, spiritual, pastoral, educational and social fields, avoiding any temptation to undue zeal for their own community to the disadvantage of the other /.../. In meeting one another, the Pope of Rome and the Ecumenical Patriarch have prayed for the unity of all Christians /.../ They bear in their heart a concern for all humanity, without any discrimination according to race, colour, language, ideology or religion. They therefore encourage dialogue, not only between the Christian Churches, but also with the various religions, and above all, with those that are monotheistic (Samardžija 1999, 81).

#### **ECUMENICAL COOPERATION WITH NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS**

Maskuari said: "Today, Christianity is one among many world religions". Some of those religions are secular; like marxism, for example. Oth-

ers are sacral, and some of them are older than Christianity, like Buddhism and Hinduism.

Pope John Paul II agitated the Catholic Church when he officially announced that the concept of biological evolution was acceptable. Pope Pius XII described evolution as a serious hypothesis in his encyclical *Humani generis* in 1950.

”Pope John Paul II said in his speech at The Pontifical academy of Sciences that the new meaning indicated that evolution was much more than merely a hypothesis. The theory of evolution has been taught in almost all catholic schools since 1950. This statement will certainly help atheists to join ecumenical unity more easily. Our goal is not only the unity of Churches, but the unity of mankind, too (Samardžija 1999, 220).”

Ecumenical Movement takes up different measures that can unite not only many Christian communities but also all the religions and cultures of the world. The Christians can not any longer perceive themselves as the center around which union of the world should be formed. If the union is feasible in this world, it will be accomplished in line with freedom and ethical structure. Even if Churches managed to achieve a recognized union among themselves, they would afterwards bear the stamp of a single sect in the increasingly unified world. Therefore, this perspective does not encourage us to work on the ongoing union of Churches. The World Council of Churches is aware that it has reached its turning point. The second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism does not approve of preliminary discussion and ,along with the Declaration on the Church’s relations with Non-Christian Religions, shows the same aggrandizement towards the whole mankind and does not put restrictions on Christian liberty with geographical boundaries.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholics and major Protestant Churches had been questioning their relations with the Jews. The Catholics had earlier denied that the Jews claimed the right to God’s covenant with Abraham because the Jews had terminated the covenant with Abraham when departing. However, the Catholics now publicly admit that the covenant have never been terminated. This Catechism, which was published in 1994, states: “The Old Testament is an integral part of the Bible. Its books were inspired by God and contain permanent value of the Old Testament, which was never revoked”.

Although there is a huge difference between the God’s covenant with Abraham and the Old Testament Books, the writer still tries to make a connection between the Catholics and Jews by stating this. Similar statements are also given by the theologians from the Protestant Churches, and this has given Jewish theologians a sign that Christianity has begun to change its form and that the new era of inter-religious relations is coming. Thus, certain Jewish theologians have begun to give favorable statements about Christianity. In 1988, United Synagogue of Conservative published its statement of faith, *Emet Ve-Emunah*:

“As Conservative Jews we acknowledge, without any apologies, that the Jewish civilization owes much to the nations of the world. We avoid triumphalism and respect other ways to serve God. However, we also believe that other monotheistic religions, Christianity and Islam, serve to spread knowledge and are loyal to God and the Torah of Israel. Many modern thinkers, Jews and pagans, notice that the God’s Covenant could refer to many nations. Theological humility demands from us to acknowledge that we all have only one God and God has more than one nation. Our tradition recognizes explicitly that God made a covenant with Adam and Eve, and later with Noah and his family, as well as the special covenant with Abraham, and the great revelation to Israel at Sinai. A part of our mission is to understand, respect and live with other nations in the world, to point out those truths which we can find in their culture and share with them the truths that we have discovered. (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1997, 357).”

By quoting these covenants with Adam, Noah and Abraham, Jewish theologians acknowledge for the first time that there are other nations besides the Jews who serve God as well. After all, the Jewish religious authorities and theologians have long recognized that Christians are not idolaters—they are those who believe in one God. They furthermore stated that Christianity had brought God’s Torah to the nations of the world, notwithstanding the different interpretations of it. There have always been individuals among the Jews who, like Nicodemus, believed that Jesus “came from God”. However, what is the general attitude of the Jews towards Jesus Christ today?

“The issue of Messiah remains unsolved; from the Jewish point of view, Jesus did not fulfill Messiah’s prophetic expectations. He certainly was not the Messiah whom the Jews had been expecting. Even after His arrival, the Jews remained submissive to the Romans; war, hatred, poverty and maladies continued to flourish (Samardžija 1999, 222).”

Putting aside Christ as the Messiah, can Israel accept another role of Jesus in world history? It certainly can, if the covenant was open to nations, and if God had done it through Christ. Therefore it is a big event of the Jewish covenant being fulfilled in history. Seen from this perspective, Christianity is no longer the enemy of Judaism but its collaborator in the world. This collaboration brought forth a blessing to the world which would have otherwise been the pagan world. The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Jerusalem started a new era of Catholic-Jewish relations. This contributed to bringing two traditions closer together. The recognition by the Jews of the Vatican as the legitimate state and the Pope as its legitimate ruler, is a significant step in the process of reconciliation and cooperation.

Big changes occurred in the Jewish-Catholic relations at the meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee in Prague in September 1990.

“On this occasion, we were able to turn to the “new spirit” of the Jewish-Catholic relations, the spirit which emphasizes cooperation, mutual understanding and reconciliation, good will and common goal, in order to replace the former spirit of doubt, mistrust and resistance (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1997, 357).”

When the final act was signed between the Holy See and the state of Israel on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Decembre 1993 in Jerusalem, and when the full relations were established between these two international bodies, we could have looked back on thirty years of progress and reconciliation and concluded that the Jewish-Catholic relations were much better than they had ever been before. The Jews and Catholics are now putting effort into preparation of new theologians and their adjustment to these radical changes. They are doing everything they can at seminars and schools for rabbis and priests in order to prepare the future leaders of two religious communities in the new spirit of the Jewish-Catholic relations, so they can study the results of the dialogues and establish contact with the teachers of other religions. For this reason, rabins give lectures at Catholic universities every year.

In his first accreditation letter to Pope John Paul II in September 1994, the Israeli ambassador said:

“The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel is not a regular change, on the contrary. It is the beginning of a new constructive dimension in which the Catholic church and the Jewish people are brought together in dialogue. We all must be patient and persistent in our search for greater mutual understanding /.../. We are not two charities; much less two teams who negotiate. We are two religious communities and as such, we are summoned to appreciate the challenge./.../ The Jews and Christians meet before God under new historical conditions. This is an answer to God’s call in spite of Christian-Jewish voluntary or forced distance (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1997, 357).”

The Roman Catholic Church officially appologized for missing out the chance to rise up in defense of the Jews from the genocide committed against them by the Nazi regime in World War II. In his special letter, Pope John Paul II expressed hope that the historical Declaration of the Vatican’s repentance for Catholic negligence towards the slaughter of the Jews would heal the wounds of past misunderstandings and injustices. During his visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome on the 13th of April,1986, Pope John Paul II stated:

“We have a unique relationship with Judaism that we do not have with other religions. You are our dear, beloved brothers and it can be said that, in some way, you are our older brothers (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1997, 357).”

Synagogue’s Chief Rabbi, Toaff, welcomed the Pope:

“We can not forget the past, but today, we want to start off, with trust and hope for the future, this new period in history which promises to be rich in mutual undertakings /.../. Rabbi Toaff wrote later on: The theological discussion is not possible because we part our ways there and the agreement is not attainable Any possible agreement would mean that either we or the Church have to renounce our positions (Toaff and Ebreo 1998, 367).”

If there is the truth in theology, as it is expected, is it wise to talk about unity and leave theological questions aside only in order not to be for-

ced to relinquish misconceptions which have crept into religious communities? If the foundation is not solid, it will be like building a new building on the sand, and such building can not weather the storm.

Besides Christian-Jewish dialogue and cooperation, Christian-Confucian dialogue was also taking place. The representatives of these two groups held three conferences: in 1988, 1991, and 1994. Occasional talks had been held even before, but these conferences were international. At the first conference in 1988, Phillip Sin, the president of Hong Kong College, pointed out in opening remarks why it was possible to hold these inter-religious conferences: the first reason was the contribution of educational religious studies and philosophical traditions; the second was increased self-criticism in the scientific tradition and pluralistic concept; and successful inter-religious dialogues in different parts of the world. We can not claim that these conferences made some changes among Christian and Confucian theologians, but it can be said that both parties are now closer than they have been before/.../ (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1997, 357).

The Buddhists had done something unusual which prepared the ground for a dialogue with the Christians. J. Uliana was invited in 1955 to give lectures to the Catholics at the Buddhist college. Leo D. Lefebure wrote a book entitled "Buddhism and Christianity" in which he had described the Christian-Buddhist dialogue from 1993. Lefebure asked the following question: Is it possible to establish understanding between the Christians and Buddhists? He was trying to find similarities between the Christians and Buddhists and raise the bridge which would bring these two religions closer.

The International Conference of the Buddhists and Christians was held in 1984 in Hawaii. One of the most important conferences was held in Japan in 1994. Both sides sent its best theologians. At the end of the conference, delegates took part in Buddhist "Obon" Festival in the Great Hall in Tokyo. Two dialogues were held that same year in Europe. The First European Christian-Buddhist conference was held with its main theme: "Buddhists and Christians for peace, justice and integrity of the countries". The conference was in Switzerland and 150 delegates were present. The Second Christian-Buddhist Conference was held in Denmark. The theme was: "What spiritual wealth can offer the Christian-Buddhist tradition to the people who live in a secular world?" (Samardžija 1999, 224)."

The sixth session of the World Conference on Religion and Peace was held in November 1994 in Italy, and 850 delegates from 63 countries were present. Prior to the session, Pope John Paul II received the participants in the Vatican synodal hall and wished them a warm welcome. The joint ethics, peace and security, development issues, personal rights and responsibilities, the rights of children in the world and ecological harmony were discussed at the session (Samardžija 1999, 225).

Therefore, the religious assembly discussed everything except religion. It is always advisable to study the best solutions to social problems, but, in this case, social problems took over the position which belonged to religion. The General Overseas Secretariat for Managing Christian-Buddhist Dia-

logues was formed in 1994. It was concluded that the swap between Christian and Buddhist monks would be done, and that the theologians of both religions would be giving lectures on mutual topics, like "Korean concept of the great deity and Christian concept of God", at least once a month in Korea. From the 18th to the 20th of June 1994, the meeting of the Christians and Buddhists was held in Japan on the subject "The void-God is dead". Christian-Buddhist Association in the USA organized a resort in whose halls seminars and debates were held on the subject "Active spiritualism, the voice of the Christians and Buddhists, the great masters, a gap in Christian and Buddhist tradition (Samardžija 1999, 226).

In 1969 the Christians tried to reopen a dialogue with the Muslims. Even the most conservative Muslims were in favor of finding common ground between the Christians and Muslims. The two delegations met near Geneva in Switzerland at a conference which had been carefully prepared by some serious preliminary research. During his visit to Africa in 1969, Pope Paul VI expressed great respect for Islam and the representatives of Islamic communities. The sixth Christian-Muslim dialogue took place in Athens, on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1994, and the main topic was: "Education for understanding and cooperation". 40 theologians from 14 countries were present. The Greek minister of Education and Religious Affairs, among other things, said:

"Social and cultural differences should not empower conflicts; they should be an instrument of dialogue and assistance in education, mutual understanding and elevation of religious accomplishments. The new generation must not be raised on fanaticism and misled by wrong information". Metropolitan Damaskinos also stated: "An honest inter-religious dialogue is the only way for religion not only to suppress intolerance in the present crisis, but also to gather all nations in pure religious mission." Head of the Royal Institute for Islamic Culture Studies in Jordan, dr Nasser Al deen Al Assad, pointed out: "peaceful coexistence, religious tolerance and mutual understanding between all nations, and suppression of violence (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1997, 357).

### ECUMENISM IN OUR REGION

The ecumenical work in our region can contribute to overcoming national antagonisms, obstacles and habits inherited from the past. It awakens the consciousness about efficient Christian territorial cooperation that is needed in order to overcome inherited obstacles and habits from the past which caused tragedy. The relations between the Catholic Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church must be absolved from all political aspirations. Numerous meetings of heads of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church dignitaries (starting from the encounter between Patriarch German and the Archbishop of Zagreb, Franja Seper, in Sr. Karlovci in 1968-the first one after the war), and the Reis of the Islamic community and the representatives of the Jewish community, bear witness to the sincere intentions and desires for healing the inherited wounds from the past.



Nevertheless, it must be noticed that, at the present historical moment, the ecumenical relations of the Ortodox Church with the Catholic Churches are better in the West than they are in our region. This is corroborated by the meeting of the representatives of the Serbian Ortodox Church and Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia, which was held in St. Gallen, Switzerland in 1992. However, ecumenism is not only cultivated by the official church hierarchy but also by its believers, which is commendable. Certainly, we must always bear in mind that ecumenical cooperation must never contain any notion of conversion from one denomination to another. Therefore, the cooperation between the Ortodox and Protestan Churches is much easier since they do not advocate the view that they are the only true Church which we should all join. They are only one branch on the tree of the Church Body (The Anglican Branch Theory).

According to the former and most esteemed General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Visser Hooft, Orthodox Christianity has the mission of cherishing ancient Christian traditions in the field of education, faith, church organization and religious services. Orthodox Christianity preserved itself from the world's influences by cherishing the precious heritage of the original Christianity. It revealed to the Western world much of its treasures of liturgies and doctrines. The principle of prevalence of conciliarity over individualism also belongs to Orthodox Christianity (Rakić 1993, 289).

One can not aspire to create the Universal Church in the twentieth century by exercising human powers because, if the Universal Church had never existed and if it did not originate from Jesus Christ then it would never come into being. Meetings, conferences and inter-confessional unions can be a symbol for the rise of a new ecumenical spirit among Christian humanity, but they can not create a church which will eventually become truly universal for the first time in history. Division of churches did not happen, but the division of Christian humanity did. And the question is comprised not of the union of churches but of the union of Christians, and the union of the Christians in the East and West, and the union of the Christians in the West.

The process of rapprochement and reunion should start in the depth of the soul. We understand Christianity as a social and moral religion. The great significance of social work for the union of the Christians can not be denied; especially in Protestantism. Nevertheless, the social issue is not essential for Christian knowledge. Christianity is not a social religion; it is rather based on mystical and spiritual than on social or moral grounds. Neglect of the mystical side of Christianity and its path to eternity, can not lead to the true union. The Liturgical Movement of our time talks about the mythical foundations of Christianity. In one part of Protestantism, which is liturgically the most impoverished, the thirst for liturgy emerges. The union of Christianity will be achieved on the basis of spiritual rather than social explorations of all Christian confession, and on the renewal of spiritual life.

Christianity and all other religions can and must contribute to the establishment of international discourse and negotiations, to the ancient ideals of peace, freedom, brotherhood, love and social justice among the people.

Christianity, Judaism and Islam, according to which humanity and all creation comes from God, and which always emphasize holiness, independence and authentic value of human personality, are the basis for current dialogue on human rights, peace and social justice. Such discussion in the international bodies are possible but only under the assumption that these ideals have universal value worldwide; the assumption which would be unthinkable without ontological doctrine of the oneness of mankind.

Also, religion considers it its duty to encourage anything that really serves the peace and paves the way to justice, brotherhood, freedom and mutual love among the children of one heavenly Father, and among all nations that make up a unique family of mankind. Ecumenism is a battle against famine and devastating poverty in the world- problems which can not be easily solved because economically developed nations live in abundance and consider themselves good Christians while leading in arms race instead of spending money on humane deeds. The ecumenical work is the testimony of love for neighbor, regardless of religion, race, class. In a word, Christianity is the religion of love, and humble but diligent missionaries in the jungles of Africa or the Siberian taiga or at the icy shores of Antarctica witness to it, let alone comprehensive actions conducted by the Christian churches to help the affected parts of the world. Thus, love precedes the ecumenical work and enables it.

### **ECUMENISM: MYTH OR REALITY**

Ecumenism, in its broadest sense, implies a dialogue of the Christians with non-Christian religions, for discussion with non-Christians can benefit the Christians, too. Here we go so far as to provide a discussion with those who are not believers. In this paper, ecumenical ideas relate to discussions about the unification of Christian churches and the convergence of Christian churches with non-Christians and non-believers. The Movement for unification of all Christians refers to the so-called visible unity and looks for the visible shape of the invisible unity of believers. Restoration of unity among all Christians means that in every church there is a renewal and change. Besides, unification doesn't imply fusion. Judging by the definition of the concept of Ecumenism, we see that there is not a strict and precise idea of it. While some equates it with Protestant Ecumenism, others compare it to Orthodox or Catholic Ecumenism. Some find Ecumenism only in mutual cooperation of the Christians, while others find it in Polytheism and with those who are not believers. Thus, the undefined status of Ecumenism allows many speculations, as well as its use for achieving some other goal, i.e. "higher" political goal, that has nothing to do with religion. The crucial question is: Is Ecumenism merely an idea, a project or a dream of the greatest humanists of our time, who has recognized, unlike ordinary men, the sublime inside its core, or, is it a real process happening right here and right now on planet Earth?

The concept of Ecumenism is indeed the most sublime idea that the human mind could possibly conceive, in the sense that it brings out the best in every individual. But, is a human being ready to give up its egotism and

selfishness in order to achieve the higher goal for the sake of entire mankind? Of course not, since partial interests of individuals are above the general welfare and peace. Thus, it can be concluded that Ecumenism can not fulfill its sublime purpose. Instead, Ecumenism is simply demonstrated at various meetings, conferences and events which usually end long before the crucial questions get to be asked.

We can conclude that the concept of Ecumenism does not match the Ecumenical process. The concept of Ecumenism tells us about an earthly church, the reconciliation of all the religions of the world while the Ecumenical process, in most cases, involves an inter-religious cooperation that will eventually manifest itself as a humanitarian operation. However, this process must not be underestimated, even if it were related to collecting food for the children of Somalia, because every humanitarian action has positive consequences for humanity. It can be inferred that there is no authentic union among the Christians, nor between the Christians, non-believers and all other denominations. The unification of all religions into one is just another utopia. Ability of a man to imagine an utopian society is surpassed only by his attempts to achieve. The main reason for this is the issue of dogmas which are still taboo in Ecumenical dialogues, and which are always put aside as if they were less important. They are never discussed even if they were the greatest misconceptions about this world. No religion is ready to give up their misconceptions and mistakes. Instead, they glorify it as the highest truth. But nevertheless, we should not disregard the contribution of Ecumenism, even if it were merely a concept that shines through.

There are real differences and the incomplete union. If the unification is not possible, then reconciliation is, if the belief in the unity is illusory, then the belief in convergence is not. Nowadays, Ecumenism is more a necessity than choice in order for the churches to survive the "market of last meaning", they must join forces. The basic idea behind the Ecumenical movement is restoration of the unity among all Christians. If sister churches had once lived in full communion, it would be possible to revive the communion again since we are all Christians, just in a different way. The dialogue between sister churches implies not only the mutual understanding but also the mutual absolution.

Perhaps the rift between the two churches was a way to comprehend and create a new unity, which would be based on the experiences of the past centuries that lead us back to a new beginning. Thus, the dialogue on salvation is necessary. Both churches can not be right, but both of them must have the right to advocate, in an equal manner, for their position and defend it in a sensible and humane way, learning from each other: this is the only way to follow in God's footsteps! The discourse is feasible between the equals: a relationship of superior and subordinate churches is not sustainable because they are all just humble and equal servants of God on earth.

Perhaps everything that seems impossible in these hard times, will become feasible one day: maybe the divided brothers in one religious community will embrace each other as well as their other brothers from all over

the world, regardless of their confession, because “they are all one”, after all. There is no unification, but there is a hope for a better future: Whether or when that future is coming, only God knows.

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Mihailo Antović

**EVOLUTIONISM AND CREATIONISM:  
ARGUMENTS FROM COGNITIVE SCIENCE\***

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This article attempts to provide a few suggestions as to how theories of modern day cognitive science could help initiate a dialogue between the view of morality taken by Christian creationists on the one hand and that embraced by evolutionary theorists on the other. In the first section (1) I lay out my understanding of the problem of morality as presented in (Orthodox) Christianity and cognitive science, trying to draw some parallels between the two views and putting specific emphasis on the phenomenon of *empathy*. The second section (2) gives an outline of a theory of evolutionary origins of morality based on the contributions of authors in cognitive science such as P. Churchland, D. Dennett, V. Ramachandran and M. Turner. The section describes their suggestions related to the work of mirror neurons, the role of oxytocin, memetic evolution, and the capacity for double-scope blending, and discusses the importance of these postulated phenomena in the development of biological and heteronomous morality. Connections with pagan values and the codes of the Old Testament are hypothesized. The concluding segment of the section proposes that cognitively modern human beings may have undergone an additional wave of double-scope blending around *Anno Domini*, as best exemplified by New Testament morality – the uncompromising ascetic feat of struggle against the evil in oneself, based on love. This rather dramatic change in the practice of empathy, relevant both historically and individually, seems to remain largely unnoticed by cognitive scientists, perhaps as its potential evolutionary origins remain unclear. While attaining virtue by this kind of effort, the ultimate task for a believer, is tremendously difficult, the argument stresses that a scientific study of this phenomenon may also be of some relevance. The final section (3) predicts possible objections to the connections suggested in the present paper by proponents of both Christian creationism and evolutionary theory and proposes that much of the vigor, even rage, in the apparent creationist/evolutionist controversy may have aroused from the confused targets of their respective criticisms.

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**THE PROBLEM OF MORALITY**

In many ways, our appreciation of morality is what makes us human. Our internalized 'knowledge' ('sense'?) of moral values seems to be one of the principal constituents of our 'selves'. It 'follows' us all the time, whether through external coercion ('norms', 'laws', 'customs') or, to paraphrase Chomsky, through internalized 'moral intuition' ('conscience'). While, as with any cognitive faculty, there is significant cultural variation in terms of its micro-realizations, the basic mechanisms of the human 'moral mental system' do not appear to depend much on our cultural or linguistic heritage (Hauser 2007). Although the conflict between universalism and relativism, among many other fields, has also reflected on discussions of the nature of human morality, many agree that at least basic moral norms are biologically grounded and thus equal for all human beings. As the author of the present article is a linguist by primary profession, it would be appropriate to quote here a famous linguist, who happens to also be a leading proponent of universalism in the philosophy of mind (Chomsky 1998):

"We can begin to see human nature in terms of certain capacities to develop certain mental traits. I think we can go further than this and begin to discover universal aspects of these traits which are determined by human nature. I think we can find this in the area of morality. For example, not long ago I talked to people in the Amazon tribes and I took for granted that they have the same conception of vice and virtue as I do [...]. We had no problem communicating although we were as remote as is possible culturally."

Or, on a more recent occasion (Chomsky 2002):

"More generally, it would be hard to find anyone who accepts the doctrine [that massive bombing is the appropriate response to terrorist crimes] [...] if we adopt the principle of universality: if an action is right (or wrong) for others, it is right (or wrong) for us. Those who do not rise to the minimal moral level of applying to themselves the standards they apply to others – more stringent ones, in fact – plainly cannot be taken seriously when they speak [...] of right and wrong, good and evil."

Possible political connotations of this view, in our local circumstances in particular, could inspire a separate article. Here, however, I suggest that, following Chomsky, we should accept the methodological position that human 'moral intuitions' are universal. This kind of thinking seems to be adhered to by supporters of two apparently dramatically divergent methodological systems of interest in the present paper: the Orthodox Christian practice of ascetic feat and the quest for the biological grounds of moral intuitions in modern cognitive science. The aim of the discussion that follows, therefore, is to draw possible parallels between the view of morality in the two systems and propose how cognitive science may inform discussions on ethics relevant to practitioners and theorists of religion, including sociologists of religion. The more important personal aim of the article is to suggest to the academic public that a closer appreciation of some claims of the two systems (Ortho-

dox asceticism and the quest for the roots of ethics in cognitive science) may reveal fundamental similarities, where much of the fierce debate between evolutionism and creationism, thus believers and atheists, on questions related to morality, may be off the mark.

For an Orthodox Christian, morality cannot be separated from faith, as the main goal of human life is to reach transcendental salvation after death. To achieve this, however, the person is not expected only to believe. Rather, he or she is called upon to live a life of ultimate self-control and ascetic feat: depending on the level of his or her spiritual achievement, the practitioner is expected to perform incessant, rigorous control of actions, desires, and thoughts, thus abstaining from 'sin', which is defined rather broadly, as any glimpse of egoistic motivation separating the believer from the union with God. An important accompanying element in this process is the quest for 'love', the ultimate renouncement of desires for the sake of spiritual perfection, as manifested in various forms of 'blessing', often mystical sensations of unity with the Supreme Being. Blessing or God's 'grace' may follow after the rejection of sinful thought and behavior, but this is not mandatory: quite commonly, especially in the beginning of one's 'spiritual path', grace is received 'for free', as a gift from God. Thus, while substantial effort by the believer is encouraged, blessing is not fully dependent on human actions, even if most devout, as the 'ways of the Lord' sometimes remain inscrutable to man. God works in the believer's best interest (salvation), and the believer must be aware that his or her judgment on the matter, including the idea that he or she 'deserves' blessing at a particular point of the spiritual path, may often be flawed. Hence the need for ultimate faith, which makes the Christian world of values more transcendental, and arguably more profound, than 'worldly' ethics.

The principal sources of Orthodox Christian morality, as I have attempted to succinctly describe it here, are the Scriptures, patristic literature (especially the four volume collection of monastic texts known as "The Philokalia", or "Love of the Good/Beautiful"), and customary practice. In all of these, three tiers of human moral intuition seem to constantly reappear: pagan values, the values of the Old Testament, and "New Testament morality" (cf. Long 2010, 13 et passim for the overall Christian conception, Jerotić 2007 for a more specifically Orthodox view). As it may be, in the historical development of Orthodox faith, but also in the individual personality of modern man, the three layers act simultaneously, often 'struggling' with one another. In pagan hedonism morality is, at best, an attempt to 'reconcile' man's destructive and creative desires by sequentially venting out one or the other; this later slowly turns into 'biological' morality, based on experiential evidence (such as the revelation that children born from incestuous marriages have a greater risk of disease, e.g. Wolf & Durham 2005); then follows the external coercion of the Old Testament, as best exemplified in Moses' Tablets of the Law, where it is largely fear of an external authority, whether God or state, that constrains the range of human hedonistic actions and desires ("Thou shalt not kill"); and finally, there comes the 'perfect' stage: the internal imperative of the New Testament, where a person puts in maximum ef-

fort to consciously renounce his or her flaws, not out of fear, but for the sake of *agape* – the unquenchable desire to remain united with God and fellow man, through love.

Quite certainly, from a Christian perspective, it is the third layer that really matters, as it reflects human morality at its most sublime, the unity of man and God through Christ (“God became man so that man could become a god”, St. Athanasius the Great, *De Incarnatione*, 54, 3). Still, the classification into three levels may be found in numerous original sources. For instance, one can nicely uncover it from a paragraph attributed to St. Anthony the Great, a 4th century hermit venerated in the Orthodox Church as one of the first known ‘desert ascetics’ (*Philokalia*, Vol I, my translation and italics):

“It is not unknown to you that enemies of the truth are making incessant effort to deny the truth. *Since the very beginning of times*, in each period, God visited His creation and those who approached Him as Creator with all their hearts, and *taught them how to venerate Him*. However, when people not only failed to deliver themselves from sins and return to the primeval condition, but also became *incapable of understanding* what their natural and original features had been, God was merciful and taught them true respect *through the written Law*. Yet, when this did not help, having seen that the wound was spreading and required radical treatment, God decided *to send His Only Son, Who is Our One True Healer.*”

For all good and bad consequences of the tendency, open religiosity does not seem to fare well with modern science in general, and cognitive science is no exception. One of the reasons for this may be found in various forms of religious fundamentalism, with their all too familiar tragic consequences in history. Today, fundamentalists occasionally aspire to exert political influence. For instance, many of us have found problems with attempts to banish the Darwinian theory from public schools (e.g. the 2011 Tennessee Creationism Bill) or insist on the literal interpretation of dogmatic texts, such as “the seven-day Genesis” (e.g. Stambauch 2003). As these actions do not seem to do genuine religiosity much favor, modern cognitive science often acts in stern opposition to them. The problem is that this opposition often implicitly presupposes the open rejection of the very concept of religiosity. Thus, on matters of personal faith, and in public writing, prominent cognitive scientists discussing the origins of human morality either remain somewhat taciturn (e.g. N. Chomsky, S. J. Gould, R. Lewontin, R. Jackendoff, M. Turner) or openly declare themselves atheists (e.g. E. Wilson, R. Dawkins, D. Dennett). This tendency irrespective, their profound interest in the nature of human morality may unwittingly make them write about the same phenomena that Orthodox theologians have long discussed, and sometimes in a quite similar fashion.

In terms of the three-level classification that can be inferred from much of Orthodox Christian teaching, the interest among cognitive scientists is noticeable. Thus, ‘pagan’ morality, as exemplified by egoistic hedonism, animistic beliefs, and later very basic, ‘experiential’ taboos, has been of interest for many proponents of evolutionary theory, sometimes as one of the



clearest arguments in support of a biological ethics. The ‘Law’ of the Old Testament may be related to the rapid expansion of human symbolic capacities, resulting in various forms of ‘social contract’, which many approaches to cognitive development, e.g. the Conceptual Blending Theory, allocate to the period of roughly 50,000 years ago. The self-denying care for others of the New Testament is most closely connected to studies of empathy that many cognitive scientists have been pursuing in recent years (V. Ramachandran, P. Churchland). While the Orthodox Christian concept of radical struggle for self-perfection goes much beyond the traditional psychological definition of empathetic behavior, and may require additional coverage in the cognitive sciences, the connections as proposed here may still be relevant to further discussions.

Therefore, while of course different in ontology, the question for the atheist (‘Whence morality in a godless world?’) and the believer (‘How did God given morality develop in human beings?’) do not need to receive radically divergent answers. Along that line, the next chapter describes five contributions of cognitive science which can shed additional light on the three phases in the development of human morality, as discussed in many Orthodox Christian texts.

### **THE EVOLUTION OF MORALITY – APPROACHES FROM COGNITIVE SCIENCE**

The relatively new field of evolutionary psychology (Tooby & Cosmides 1992), and its accompanying movement known as ‘Universal Darwinism’ (Nelson 2006), postulate that most, or all, human cognitive capacities have evolved by means of a ‘Darwinian’ evolution. Thus, just like the thumb (needed for manipulation) and the pelvis (necessary for an upright stance) have likely developed ‘accidentally’, through hundreds of thousands of years of random genetic mutation, resulting in increased survival rates, numerous human psychological capacities might have come about the same way: this includes the knowledge of language (Pinker 1994) and even the sense of morality (e.g. Wilson 1975; Schermer 2004).

Where some cognitive scientists studying morality remain silent about a “primary motivation” behind this type of evolution, others openly claim that “moral development” may ultimately be attributable to chance. While the undertone is often anti-religious (cf., for instance “the evolution of religion” – King 2007), many authors in the world of cognitive science seem to at least implicitly agree with the Orthodox view that there could have been ‘three stages’ in the development of human moral norms. In this section, I draw the reader’s attention to five theories of modern day cognitive science which, in their own jargon, attempt to track the origins of ‘pagan’, ‘Old Testament’, and ‘New Testament’ morality: sociobiology, memetic evolution theory, conceptual blending theory, ‘braintrust’ theory, and mirror neuron theory.

What I presented as “pagan” morality in the previous chapter roughly coincides with an egoistic need for the immediate fulfillment of bodily desires and physical survival. On such a view, moral norms would not ex-

ist at all were it not for directly observable biological constraints preventing the survival of the individual and/or group. This is a typical position of *sociobiology*. Although Darwin himself was wary of making far reaching connections (Darwin 1871, chapter 4), the need for physical survival seems to be the most straightforward option in explaining morality in evolutionary terms. “Our deepest intuitions of right and wrong are guided by the emotional centers of the brain, which evolved through natural selection to help the human animal exploit opportunities and avoid threats in a natural environment” (Wilson 1975, 1). Pagan practices, of course, significantly vary both historically and culturally, yet authors stress at least nine traits encouraged in a polytheistic value system: courage – the ability to face both the joys and the challenges of life fearlessly; truth – honesty and integrity in one's words as well as one's actions; honor – strength of character as reflected in one's behavior and trustworthiness; fidelity – loyalty and faithfulness to family, tribal, and spiritual commitments; discipline – consistency in effort toward reaching one's goals; hospitality – kindness to strangers, travelers, and those who are in need; industriousness – willingness to work hard toward excellence in productivity; self-reliance – pride in the ability to care for one's own needs; perseverance – refusal to admit defeat or to let obstacles thwart one's efforts (Malherbe 1989). In this regard, some authors vouching for a *biological theory of morality* claim that the clearest connections with animal behavior can be made exactly on these points. This could have started to develop rather early in the human evolutionary line, perhaps early enough to account for St. Anthony's phrase “since the beginning of time”. Some examples are the well-documented case of the biomass of ants having emerged from their intricately social behavior and partial sexual abstinence (Holldobler & Haskins 1977) and numerous connections with humans posed between the apparent proto-moral behavior of higher primates, commonly bonobo monkeys (de Waal 2006).

In addition to these earliest forms of moral behavior, sometimes also noticed in animals, the most striking argument for a ‘biological’ (or ‘pagan’) morality can be found in the connection between incestuous practices and the birth of children with psychological or physiological impairments. Here one gets into the territory of the Old Testament already, since Leviticus (18, 6) clearly bans incest. Among the cognitive scientists of sociobiological affiliation, the proverbial position is that the moral rule was not God-given, but that it developed *a posteriori*. In other words, the risk of inherited diseases is too high for society to tolerate this kind of behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond mere incest taboo, the Old Testament provided a rapid expansion of moral norms. The Ten Commandments, for but the most striking example, already seem to transcend the purely biological realm. What could have happened to human beings in the period of early history so that they started to develop complex systems of moral behavior, from the relatively

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<sup>1</sup> How big this risk is remains unclear to the present day. Interestingly, as few would suspect, Darwin himself was opposed to this view, perhaps largely for personal reasons (he had married his first cousin some time before the debate started to rage in 19<sup>th</sup> century England: cf. Arnhart 2005).

straightforward “not killing and stealing” to the much subtler renunciation of “idols” and “images” of God? If anything, increased brain size, tool use, and development of language, along with the enlargement of human communities, may have required increased social organization, and thus more complex moral norms. Yet, the use of the verb “required” seems to already imply teleology. Is such language that we often use enough to assume the transcendental origins of morals, or could it be just a matter of our metaphorical vocabulary, where the development of a moral code was still a consequence of “aimless” evolution? Some interesting approaches in cognitive science may be of assistance here. One of them is the theory of *memetic evolution*, an elaboration of a proposal from Dawkins’ (1977) *Selfish Gene*, today mostly supported by Daniel Dennett (e.g. Dennett 1995; 2005). The principal thesis of this theory is that social constructs spread through society in a way comparable to the way physical genes are ‘handed down’ from parents to their offspring. Thus, at the point in which the human mental apparatus reached sufficient complexity and sophistication, the purely biological mechanisms of adaptation started to become superseded by their corresponding social principles. This is where ‘cultural time’ started, likely anywhere between 50,000 and 80,000 years into the past. For instance, when members of a tribe realized that sparing the lives of their fellow tribesmen could increase their chances of preserving territory and resources, norms such as those forbidding murder slowly started to set in. Such prohibitions might have become early ‘moral memes’: bits of information spreading through the group and causally influencing the behavior of other group members. ‘Social evolution in cultural time’ started.

Along the same line, the veneration of a single deity, one not to be presented by images, may have been a consequence of the rapid development of symbolic thinking and increased abstractization of the human conceptual system. A prominent theory in cognitive science touching upon this phenomenon is the *Conceptual Blending Theory* (Fauconnier & Turner 2002). Briefly, this approach claims that a novel form of “conceptual integration” called “double-scope blending” rapidly developed some 50,000 years ago, resulting in complex symbolical systems, such as language, art, sophisticated ritual and religious behavior, and increasingly complex moral norms. According to Fauconnier and Turner, the most peculiar capacity that human minds have (and animals do not) is that of “blending”, i.e. integrating information from diverse conceptual domains (called “mental spaces”) into a single conglomerate image, which now contains previously unavailable, emergent attributes. For instance, when a university poster says “You always miss 100% shots that you don’t take”, the mind needs to “put together” the apparently contradictory images in which an athlete (say, a basketball player) *takes* and also *does not* take shots. A complex mental representation develops, containing some segments of *both* conceptual packets, and creating a novel interpretation – that one needs to try one’s hand at something (“take the shots”) in order to have any chance of success. The mechanism does not occur just in linguistic puns, but works on more complex narrative levels, too. For a typical Biblical example (Genesis 3, 1), the very possibility to imag-

ine a snake with human properties (speech, hidden evil intentions) is a classic instance of double-scope blending (Turner 2003). Indeed, to merely understand the story of the Fall (not to mention do something about it, as is required in the Orthodox ascetic practice), one needs to mentally ‘put together’ things that do not commonsensically go together (a snake and an evil human being), and then create a ‘blended’ mental space (that of a deceptive snake, and everything it stands for, being responsible for man’s metaphysical torment). In a very important sense, were it not for such a mental capacity, practitioners of religion, including Orthodox Christianity, would not be able to understand, let alone act in accordance with, their faith.

Human beings seem to make blends all the time. Complex numbers, grammatical rules, the conceptualization of time, mathematical operations, artistic symbolism – if one looks at the anthropological record, all these started to occur roughly 50,000 years ago, and have developed ever since. On even more abstract levels, we may hypothesize that it was exactly this kind of mechanism of putting together ‘things that don’t go together’, that was responsible for the development of ‘heteronomous’, ‘externally imposed’ morality. The capacity for double-scope blending made room for the metaphorical language, images such as talking snakes in gardens and fiery deities providing tablets in mountain caves. As these became fully comprehensible to the ‘moral intuitions’ of cognitively modern humans, further double-scope blending started. It now combined this imagery with early societal rules known to members of tribes, and transforming the worldly systems of crime and punishment into their transcendental counterparts: abundant images of heaven and hell and reward or penalty in the afterlife. How exactly this process occurred in the human mind(s) remains a matter of serious controversy. It seems, though, that the Conceptual Blending Theory may provide some useful tools for cognitive scientists in their further study of the origins of externally imposed moral behavior.

And what about “New Testament” morality, as succinctly prescribed in the Biblical quote: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength; [and] love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12, 30, 31)? This relatively simple principle (straightforward in tone, but tremendously difficult to live by) seems to go way further than any prescriptive rule. For a cognitive scientist, the ideal of selfless love, praised by many monotheistic religions, most notably Christianity, may be largely based on what psychologists call “empathy”: the peculiarly human need to care for others, which sometimes results in utter self-denial, even sacrifice. Whence empathetic behavior? Two modern theories in cognitive science provide some suggestions as to how empathy may have developed, one from a biochemical, the other from a neurophysiological perspective. In the former, Patricia Churchland (2011) proposes that empathy is largely responsible for the development of all moral behavior in human beings. Yet, its origins are purely biological and can be traced to the “neurobiological platform of bonding”, coming from the typical trait of all mammals – care for their offspring. The evolution of the brain resulted in peculiar chemistry that has made humans fight not only for the preservation of their own

lives, but also the lives of their children, then mates, then next of kin, etc, in ever wider, concentric “circles of care”. Caring for others is in many ways perceived as caring for ourselves, instilling many moral intuitions in us. Biochemically, this type of behavior is strongly correlated with the molecule of *oxytocin*, which decreases the stress response, allows us to start trusting one another, and ultimately helps us create our bonds of kinship, social institutions, and all morality.

The call by some Orthodox theologians and philosophers to “transcend the boundaries of our own ego” (Berdyayev) may be strongly assisted by oxytocin: through it, mammals (including humans) tend to view their young as they do themselves, and then further extend this attitude to more distant relatives and acquaintances (“Love thy neighbor...”). A more neurophysiological explanation of virtually the same phenomenon is found in V. Ramachandran’s account of *mirror neurons* (esp. Ramachandran 2004). Mirror neurons (e.g. Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia 2008) are located in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain. They fire *both* when an agent performs an action *and* when the agent perceives someone else perform the action. For instance, moving one’s hand and seeing somebody move their hand will incite about 20% of the same neural activation in particular areas of the pre-frontal cortex. Ramachandran especially claims that the development of mirror neurons was the key reason behind the sudden increase in human symbolical capacities in the period of 50-100,000 years ago, as mentioned in the paragraphs above. In many ways, this neurophysiological change made empathy possible: if we observe someone experiencing pain, and have, in part, the same neuronal activation as if we ourselves were experiencing the pain, this indeed helps us ‘feel’ like others do. Ramachandran sometimes calls these mirror neurons ‘Gandhi neurons’, stressing their empathetic nature, and makes a connection between the Eastern religions calling for ‘the oneness of all’ and high-tech research of modern neuroscience.

Even though causal links remain unclear (e.g. no one knows why exactly mirror neurons were installed in the first place), theories of cognitive science seem to provide parts of the missing link between the biological properties of our bodies and our resultant moral behavior. The most far-reaching question of Christian Orthodox morality, however, still remains unanswered: the ultimate renunciation of selfish desires, in search of love. In the experience of practitioners, this longing for ‘perfection’ goes much beyond the classical psychological definition of empathy. For illustration, let me quote another excerpt from the *Philokalia* (St. John Cassian, VI, 96):

“Fasts and vigils, the study of Scripture, renouncing possessions and everything worldly are not in themselves perfection, as we have said; they are its tools. For perfection is not to be found in them; it is acquired through them. It is useless, therefore, to boast of our fasting, vigils, poverty, and reading of Scripture when we have not achieved the love of God and our fellow men. Whoever has achieved love has God within himself and his intellect is always with God.”

In plain words, the saint is hardly satisfied with the observance of the Commandments and practical empathetic behavior towards our next of kin. Rather, in just one paragraph, he requests from practitioners (primarily monks, but, as much as possible, every Orthodox believer): abstinence from food and sleep; renunciation of all physical possessions; the study of the Bible; the mental effort not to boast about these spiritual achievements (as it leads to vanity, a sin much graver than gluttony or greed); finally, once they are all there, these hard-won feats will be mere *tools*, enabling one to only *start* walking along the path of true love (of both God and fellow man).

A formidable path to tread. From a more cognitively-oriented perspective, one could then ask: what is it that happened around Anno Domini, that changed the system of morality this dramatically once again? A believer would reply that “God decided to send His Only Son, Who is Our One True Healer”, and that He (has) healed us by showing us the Way, the Truth, and the Life, through virtues such as humility, willful suffering and unconditional love. Cognitive science, on the other hand, has not yet paid enough attention to this most recent change in the ‘evolution of morality’. Perhaps in the last two thousand years we have witnessed (and still are) another wave of double-scope blending: the slow realization that true happiness (or salvation) can be achieved only by transcending our egoistic desires, to the very limit of our capacities. The task is difficult, but commendable. While everyone is called to attempt to achieve it, a cognitive scientist may have an additional task: to try and understand its biological basis.

### UNACKNOWLEDGED CONNECTIONS

Is there any room for dialogue? The ontological question of the existence of God is of course unanswerable (hence the requirement of *faith*) and would hardly represent a venue where Anglo-American cognitive scientists would agree with Orthodox theologians. In no way am I trying to understate the divide: the problem is crucial in all relevant respects, not the least as it means a very different starting position, from which an entire worldview emerges. For instance, an evolutionary scientist would consider the “pagan” phase a beginning – human beings are first egoistic and only later become aware of the “need” to become altruistic, as much as they can. An Orthodox theologian would defend a radically opposite interpretation of the Creation Myth: before the Fall (which started already with the egoistic, “pagan” phase) people were perfect, living in unity with God. What has detached them from God ever since has been sin, and sin is a deception imposed by the snake and everything it stands for. For an evolutionary scientist, there is no deception: by reorganizing our system of values to adapt to new environmental circumstances, we are becoming better, albeit perhaps all too slowly. For an Orthodox Christian theologian, sin is so omnipresent that the rare moments of ‘seeing through’ the deception, and even rarer ones in which we try to reject it, always with some Divine Assistance, are top-notch spiritual achievements in themselves.

This paper of course does not attempt to suggest a metaphysical reconciliation. Yet if the two parties should agree to put the question of the 'beginnings' aside for a moment, there seems to be some room for a truce. In the rest of the text I try to look beyond the different ontology, focus, and metaphorical vocabulary, and pose some questions for proponents of both positions. I end by proposing that much of the fierce debate on morality, which often rages between evolutionary cognitive scientists and Christian creationists, is quite unnecessary as the targets of their respective criticisms are often erroneously chosen.

As has been seen, both Orthodox Christians and cognitive scientists acknowledge the difference between pagan and Old Testament moral codes. For Christians, the change coming with the Old Testament was God-given, in the sense of God's revealing Himself unto man and the world; for cognitive scientists, it was more likely a matter of the evolution of human cognitive capacities. Regardless of this fundamental difference in ontology, the practical ramifications of the two positions need not be so radically divergent. The observance of moral rules is equally expected from a decent person – whether Christian, atheist or adherent of another religion. Yet while an atheist may be content with just being a 'law-abiding citizen', the real Orthodox practitioner claims that this is not enough. Rather, he or she will adopt a much more stringent program of self control and ascetic enterprise. Even more, while doing so, he or she will believe that for final salvation an element of God's grace, fully beyond human control, is required. This is a phenomenon worth noticing and studying, by religious and atheist researchers alike.

While practicing so, the Orthodox Christian should be careful when deciding on the version of the creationist doctrine to adhere to. In the modern world it would be naïve to plainly ignore scientific discoveries, such as the role of neurophysiological mechanisms, perhaps mirror neurons, or biochemical reactions, maybe those involving oxytocin, in human higher cognitive capacities. But this should hardly pose a problem for an Orthodox believer. A common misconception about Christianity is that, being a religion and hoping for an afterlife, it somehow dismisses the body in favor of the soul. Nothing is farther from the truth. Orthodoxy only preaches that the body should not be *abused* for purposes not intended by the Creator. For a most down-to-earth example, eating is fine unless it becomes overindulgence. How far one should go in abstaining from this 'abuse' is a matter of degree: everyone should try their best, but of course more is required from an experienced ascetic than from an average person in an urban environment. The 'prize' for this self-control, if such a concept makes sense at all, is 'grace', the feeling of unity with God. This mystical state that results from abstinence is often described by Orthodox ascetics and, as a psychological phenomenon at least, it may be both interesting and acceptable for cognitive scientists. Most importantly, Orthodox Christians believe that one can get God's grace *here*, on earth, while even for the most devout, transcendental salvation remains a *hope*, rather than established fact (again, this last position is usually perfectly acceptable for atheists). While non-practitioners are often familiar with these concepts, the one that follows confuses even some people who call

themselves Christians: the bold (Schmemmann, 1980) idea of the resurrection *includes the body*, not just soul. In the end of time, people will rise the way Jesus did: he appeared to the Apostles in his body, was able to eat, drink, and was touched by doubting Thomas (John 20, 24-29). Of course, how, when, and whether this is going to happen are difficult theological questions. But they do not preclude the fact that Christians are (or should be) expecting to return to New Jerusalem *in their bodies*. Thus, the fact that there is a connection between oxytocin, mirror neurons and empathetic behavior should not pose any anti-scientific sentiments among Christians at all. There is a correlation between oxytocin and morality. An Orthodox practitioner should say “Fine. Now that we have morality, can we do something to become better persons?” For some perspective, there is a link between the fullness of the stomach and hunger. The average believer of course accepts this. It is not this physiological fact, however, but rather the tendency of human beings to often want to eat *long after they are no longer hungry* that relates to the belief system of an Orthodox ascetic.

On the other hand, proponents of evolutionary theory should always be painfully aware (most of them are) that the idea of the “accidental beginning” cannot explain *primum movens*. The proverbial catch phrase is “What happened before the Big Bang?” and physicists usually claim that the question does not make any sense: before the Big Bang there was neither space nor time, so physics cannot discuss this state even in principle<sup>2</sup>. If there was indeed a Big Bang, it happened so long ago that radical creationists should not exult, and science should not feel inferior for not being able to resolve so hard an ontological issue. Note, however, that evolutionary theory has problems explaining causal links on numerous “smaller” levels, and this often goes unnoticed in the scientific community. The explications are all too commonly mechanistic. For some examples, *what exactly* happened 50,000 years ago when morality ‘took off’? What was the trigger, other than the increased complexity of the nervous system, from which the complex cognitive capacities just ‘emerged’? And if they emerged, how so? In other words, how does added computational complexity result in *radically new* forms of thought? Or, for another problem issue, *What exactly is the nature of the connection* between neurophysiological and biochemical findings and the *introspective quality* of human mental states, including moral norms and empathy (philosophers call this the problem of *qualia*)? Viewed this way, the ‘brain-trust’ theory of P. Churchland, for instance, provides a *correlation* between the levels of a chemical substance and behavioral signs of empathy. In itself, this is a huge step forward in neuroscience and should by no means be undervalued. In terms of causation, however, it only opens up new questions.

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<sup>2</sup> For some more unexpected agreement, let me quote not Einstein or Edwin Hubble but St Augustine (City of God, 12.15): “Where no creature is, whose motion may bring forth time, there can be no time”. Interestingly, according to some sources, the Big Bang concept (and the fact there could have been neither space nor time before it) can be attributed to the Belgian Catholic priest and physicist Georges Lemaître (e.g. Lemaître 1931).



I'd say that, for an impartial observer (and it's difficult to be impartial in issues of highest relevance for human fate), God and Accident as causes can be at least equally viable options here.

But there is another misunderstanding in the debate, and it has to do with God's supposed role. For an Orthodox believer, God is not just a "Divine Mechanic" ("an impoverished idea of a Christian God", cf. McGrath 2011, 17), one who originally set the scene (perhaps exactly "before" the Big Bang) and has not interfered with human affairs since. For an Orthodox Christian God is not the Supreme Controller either, the all-seeing Eye of Providence (famously presented on the one-dollar bill), capable of catching us when we are up to some mischief. Much more than this, the (Orthodox) Christian God is the Perfect Person exhibiting perfect Love, total, unchangeable, inexplicable and unfaltering Goodness, Whose Essence (though not all manifestations) are beyond human comprehension. This sounds like just a new set of words for an entity which is supposed to be perfect anyway. Yet one should be careful: the more elaborate description comes from a significant change in approach. If one wishes to apply this changed doctrine consistently, then nothing bad can come from such a God, not even punishment. He is always there, waiting for us to address Him, and it is solely on us to decide if we choose Him or something else (for the Orthodox Christian, this "else" by definition equals sin). In fact, that one decision, posed before us time and again, is all the freedom that we have, and all the freedom that we will ever need. So the purpose of the ascetic feat is to put in all the effort, all the energy, all the resources that we have to get rid of the unnecessary load that we are carrying (fear, anger, aggression, pride...) so that we can get as close to Him as possible (and, hopefully, stay in such condition). This is where the idealism of Christian moral norms comes from and this is why we are called upon to wage an incessant struggle against ourselves. For a Christian, it became clear to us that we should do this after God finally revealed Himself through God-Man Jesus Christ. For cognitive scientists, the 'revelation' may as well have been just another wave of evolution of morality, perhaps a new instance of double-scope blending, which occurred roughly around the beginning of AD. Whether or not one believes in this changed idea that Christianity preaches, originally it was so powerful that it (1) spread in a matter of decades through a world that was very slow for today's standards, (2) many were willing to die for it, and (3) to the present, many have been eager to 'sacrifice' a lot of their 'natural', egoistic urges for it. To paraphrase Dennett (1995), "Christ's dangerous idea" has certainly changed the way we look upon morality. Thus it seems rather strange that cognitive science, to my knowledge, pays relatively little attention to it. Perhaps the phenomenon is not easily explicable as a biological adaptation and so remains relatively uninteresting to Darwinian theorists. My take is that approaches operating with the concepts of 'cultural time' and 'cultural evolution' may be more successful in trying to explain what happened (and how) so that Christian ethics became as powerful a concept. The Conceptual Blending Theory could provide some new ideas on this in the years to come.

More generally, the ‘fierce battle’ between evolutionists and creationists largely misses the target anyway. This is especially conspicuous in the more radical, sometimes politically motivated, forms of this debate. Evolutionary theory often criticizes the idea of God as ‘the Primary Motivator’ of the development of human morality (Dawkins 2006). Yet, to my knowledge, cognitive scientists rarely even notice the role of God that Orthodox Christianity considers much more important: that of ‘the Invisible Assistant’ helping *a particular person at a particular point in time* make morally right decisions. To do this, we have one perfect mechanism available – *conscience*. Little has been written on it in cognitive science (Lawson&McCauley 1993; Taylor 2009), while patristic literature is packed with suggestions as to how conscience is the best indicator of the will of God (for but one example: “If you want spiritual health, listen to your conscience, do all it tells you, and you will benefit”, St. Mark the Ascetic, *Philokalia*, VI, 115). There is almost no discussion between the two teams on this most relevant of topics.

The same confused target of criticism applies to radical creationists, who hardly do their belief any good by insisting on the literal interpretation of Biblical texts (“the seven day creation”). As Joseph Campbell (1988) was all too wise to remark, interpreting myths literally means ruining them. It is easy for evolutionary theorists to attack such exaggerated stances, but the lack of dialogue causes misunderstandings here, too. Proponents of an evolutionary theory of morality are often unaware that many prominent theologians simply do not favor such literalist interpretations. Bishop Irinej Bulović, now Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade, for instance, lectures that the six days may stand for six geological epochs. This sounds to me like a position which would be perfectly acceptable for evolutionary theorists.

Accordingly, in my opinion the biggest stumbling point is related to the misinterpretation of the “essence of religion” as having to do with issues such as the duration of genesis, the impossibility to put all those animals in Noah’s ark, or the exact number and wording of “externally imposed” moral norms, notably the Ten Commandments. My take is that the essence of religion is not to be sought in dogmatic positions (even less in attempts of their literal interpretation), but rather in man’s eternal need for self-perfection. Centered on this phenomenon, Christian theologians and evolutionary cognitive scientists do not need to be on opposing sides: the former will keep trying to achieve this perfection through incessant ‘unseen warfare’ (St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite), a struggle they shall wage against themselves, with or without the need to rationally explain its grounds; the latter will have the task to empirically, perhaps evolutionarily, situate this longing (ideally taking the self-perfection feat themselves, as, I must add, such personal effort would be extremely useful along the way). If they go hand in hand, both tasks can be commendable, as long as the seekers acknowledge that the effort requires *all three* skills of the psychological system (cognition, emotion, and connotation).

Just like in the case of morality, modern psychologists could be surprised to learn that this three-partite division is not new, either: already St. Maximus the Confessor (7<sup>th</sup> century) proposed “the three forces of the mind:

the *nous*, or inner heart, the will, and the passions. With the *nous* we ask to know what is good; with the will we long for the good that we have known; with the passions we perform a feat in fighting for the good. Those who love God use the three to strive towards Divine Virtue and knowledge, using the first to ask, the second to wish, and the third to struggle. Such people receive the incorrupt food and knowledge of things Divine, filling the mind.”

Let us therefore explore the human mind further, but not forget that we have a responsibility for it as part of Creation – with our intellect, will and hearts. As this is no easy task, for either Christian ascetics or cognitive scientists, for starters, it would be good if the two teams could talk with more respect for one another. Unless they do so, the only one who can win – is the snake.

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**RELIGIOUS AND FOLK CUSTOMS  
ON THE BORDER  
I**



**RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS IN THE  
BORDER AREA – CASE STUDY KOLESHINO\***

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**INTRODUCTION**

Religion is a complex and multidimensional category, publicly integrating the religious convictions and numerous specific practical actions that properly profile the religious community itself (Berger 1960; Hamilton 1994; Casanova 1994). The religious life of a community, besides the firmly established doctrinal foundation, shaped in the religious conscience, consists of many customs, rituals, celebrations, ceremonies that are determined as a religious practice, which are essentially inspired by the faith (Davie 2000; Hervieu-Leger 2000). Religious practice of some, particularly minority religious communities is usually lead and controlled by international referent communities (Mehl 1970). However, it may happen that particular forms of common activities in the community gain a character of folk customs, disassociating themselves more or less from the religious foundation and gradually modifying themselves during the time. The long practicing, the various localities and environments leave their mark on the religious practice (particular habits acquire pagan features, for example). Certain folk customs that repeat for a long period of time gradually become a tradition. The traditional forms significantly contribute to the development of the specific identity of the community itself, reflecting its distinctiveness.

Yet, what makes a particular community distinctive and what identifies it as a particular one is the sum of practices developed through the common practices, and especially their interpretation and the importance their inhabitants assign to them. The collective practices provide information on the community itself, on its cohesion, solidarity and they do not represent only an aggregate of individual activities that express the deepest individual sentiments and convictions. The joint weekly services, the celebration of the most important days for the believers or their families and the community on the whole, the participation in the community life, their cooperation or rivalry, the knowledge of others' religion, the respect of the other's religion, significantly color the religious life of a particular community or collectivity.

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The presentation of the religious life, that is, the affirmative elements represented in the media, complement the image of the specificity of the religious life.

The distinctiveness and what was my drive to make a case study for Koleshino, is exactly the myth<sup>1</sup> on Koleshino that becomes recognizable in the numerous conversations with both its inhabitants and the people originating from Koleshino, those who are indirectly connected to Koleshino, the contacts with the believers and their management, the articles in the media, the historical documents and data. Indeed, what distinguishes Koleshino<sup>2</sup> is the existence of the specific religious diversity, intercultural framework of their living, determination of their common interest that is obvious at every step in the village. The spirit of dialogue, the power of the Gospel is transformed in the everyday life and it is reflected in the authentic religious life of the community. Such a high degree of knowledge of the Biblical texts by the local population can rarely be found elsewhere. The significant preoccupation with the issues of the religion and especially the comparison to their neighbors' religions can rarely be found elsewhere, as well as, of course, the clearly profiled interest of all religious communities on the whole.

The historical framework of the religious life in Koleshino, the gradual infiltration of "other faiths" as well as their permanent existence, their contacts with their own basic centers in the country, and especially out of its borders, the missionary activities and their influence on the development of the religious life, describe the distinctiveness of Koleshino.

The main research issues underlying the case study are as follows:

1. What is the religious identity of the population like? Which are the basic characteristics of their religious life?
2. What are the major customs that compose the religious life of the Koleshino inhabitants (celebration of holidays, fasts, rituals, prayers)?
3. Whether and to what degree the border location of the village influences its distinctiveness, especially its religious practice. What is the connection between Koleshino and its religious "centers"?
4. What stands out as a special and genuine feature when we refer of the religious life in Koleshino? and
5. Do the articles properly reflect the specificity of the religious life in Koleshino?

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<sup>1</sup> By myth I firstly understand the impressions and descriptions communicated by many people on what Koleshino represents, what is "the magic" attracting its inhabitants and those originating from it.

<sup>2</sup> A legend is mentioned according to which Koleshino got its name in the memory of the fierce battle at the Belasica Mountain (1014). According to another legend, Koleshino is named after the sheepfold owned by the man called Kole located at the place of today's Koleshino. When the people went past the sheepfold they usually said, This is Koleshino, that is, Kole's sheepfold.



### **Methodological Frame**

The draft research of the defined questions is a case study. It is about a unique case, which emphasizes the distinctiveness of the case (Bryman 2012). For the purposes of the study, the data are collected by semi-structured interviews, both face- to- face and interviews by phone with representatives and believers of the religious communities in Koleshino. Representatives of all religious communities were interviewed. In total 14 interviews were conducted (10 face- to- face interviews and 4 telephone interviews) in April 2012.

### **Location and Some Characteristics of Koleshino**

Koleshino (see the photo in the appendix) is located in the southeastern region of Macedonia (in the vicinity of Strumica City), near the Greek and Bulgarian borders. Koleshino extends at the foot of the Belasica Mountain, at an elevation of over 600 meters. Three kilometers far from Koleshino is located the well-known Banja BANSKO (thermal bath BANSKO). The village became very famous for the 19.5 meters high Koleshino Waterfall, flowing from the mountain river Baba, just above the village (see photos in the appendix).

According to the historical data, this village is for the first time mentioned in the 1519 Census (20 Christian and 1 Muslim family). The historical data further mention mostly the Christian population. When describing Koleshino, it is often mentioned the number of around 1,300 inhabitants, recorded in the 1961 Census. However, the economic processes, that is, migration movements have significantly contributed to the reduction of the number of inhabitants, which number according to the last official 2002 census was 845. The most of the houses are modern, but they are empty and locked during the most part of the year. In search of better life, the Koleshino inhabitants settle down in Australia, America, Canada, Italy, Switzerland, Germany...

There are few economic facilities operating in the village; it is famous for its agricultural production, especially of melons and peanuts. Koleshino is recognizable by its Boulevard<sup>3</sup> (see photos in the appendix) that makes its inhabitants especially proud, by its hydroelectric power station, by its Darevitza fountain (built in 1939), by its cultural center, by the first solar school in Macedonia, by its new refining station, ecological culture and by the entire environment of the village. The infrastructure built in the village is a significant indicator of their distinctiveness, of their way of live and their projections for Koleshino.

When we speak about Koleshino, we cannot avoid seeing it through the prism of multi -confession, as well as through the prism of the religious dialogue and tolerance. The orthodox population is dominant, followed by the Methodists; the Adventists and the Jehovah Witnesses are less numerous. The religious map of Koleshino also mentions the Baptists and Pentecostals. However, only the above four communities have religious temples. According to the last census, data show that three families have come out for atheists.

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<sup>3</sup> The construction of the Boulevard costs 15,000 EUR.

## RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN KOLESHINO

### **The Macedonian Orthodox Church – Sveti Spas – Koleshino**

The most prevailing religion in Koleshino is the orthodox one, which included about 150 households; however, according to the words of the orthodox priest, and on the basis of the religious affiliation of the husband, there are 118 orthodox households. If any misunderstandings occur when orthodox person gets married with a believer of other faiths, those are solved according to the religious affiliation of the groom. The priest says that recently two families returned to the orthodoxy.

The religious life of the orthodox people is manifested through the regular Sunday liturgies in the Orthodox Church – Sveti Spas (ph. 1), celebration of Christmas and Easter, not so striking celebration of Ascension Day (Spasovden), the celebration of the major dates and events in the human life, such as baptism, wedding (in the recent years group weddings are being organized at the Koleshino Waterfalls) (ph. 2).

At the Sunday liturgies there are usually more than 50 believers. The priest regretfully speaks about the reduced number of inhabitants of the village, about the migration movements, empty houses in the village and the rapid reduction of the number of pupils in the school...

A professor of the Theological faculty in Skopje, who had given service in Koleshino at the time, recalls „Two things one could notice on Sundays in Koleshino were: ‘plows left in the field and whole families, formally dressed, leaving their houses and going to the services of their own religious communities“.

The characteristic feature of the orthodoxy in this area is the atypical absence of celebration of Saints days, name days... No one orthodox believer in Koleshino, and in the neighboring villages as well, has domestic day. Only the major religious holidays (Christmas Day, Easter Day and Ascension Day) are celebrated, and the other days are common days that are not celebrated. The village has its own rural celebration day – the Ascension Day. It is celebrated not only by the orthodox believers, but also by the Methodists, and the Adventists mark it.

The reading of the Bible is very important for the orthodox believers, which the orthodox priest especially emphasizes: „I usually advice the young people to read 20-30 pages every day“. When they finish one reading, they go on... There are inhabitants in this village who have read the Bible even 60 times; they know the Bible even better than some priests do. Thus, it is not unexpectedly that biblical discussions are run; very often, the verses of the Bible are being interpreted and retold.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church has paid a special attention exactly to the religion in Koleshino. The Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia His Beatitude Mihail has left significant imprint to this. I recall the very inspiring conversation<sup>4</sup>, the impressions and especially the pointing out the

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<sup>4</sup> I had a conversation with the Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia His Beatitude Mihail at the Orthodox Theological Faculty in 1998. He considered the operation of

importance of the orthodoxy in Koleshino, the need of increased knowledge of the faith, which helps us to better understand the others (to understand why some of our brothers have left their ancestor faith). The operational strategy of the Orthodox Church is especially supported and developed by its highest authorities. A number of theologians from Skopje had held service in the Koleshino church. A professor at the Orthodox Theological Faculty “St. Clement of Ohrid” in Skopje who had served liturgies in Koleshino in the 1980-es was interviewed for the purposes of this paper.

Since two or three years ago, there were chairs placed in the middle of the church “Sveti Spas” which of course represented “certain approach” to the neighbors’ religion, which further refer to the post-liturgical long conversations between the believers and the priest...

The Orthodox Church practices to distribute gift packages for the children in Koleshino. The children recite religious poems or verses from the Bible in front of all and are awarded a gift package. Sometimes there were more than a hundred gift packages, but recently that number is almost halved.

The fast is practiced by numerous believers who afterwards take a Communion. The practice of the village is to light bonfire for the Old New Year (January 13) and to crush bread in order to determine the “godfather” (sponsor) for the next year that has to provide trees. Koleshino cherishes the customs of the disguised orthodox believers (survars). After midnight, on 13 January, they knock on and sing before the front doors of all inhabitants of Koleshino. They neither practice Christmas carol, nor there are girls singing traditional songs on the eve of Lazar’s Saturday. They practice Tutija. That is, to light bonfire on Forgiveness Day (Prochka).

However, the most characteristic for the orthodox believers in Koleshino is the continuous reading and interpretation of Bible. Both the seniors and juniors have very high level of religious knowledge. The everyday reading of Bible, which cannot be found in such a scope in other parts of Macedonia, represents the main specifics of the local believing population. Their knowledge of the orthodox teaching significantly contributes to the religious dialogue and tolerance, induce the knowledge of other religions, especially the religions that exist in that area. The priest who has served there for 33 years says that he cannot recall any religion – based clash. It happens that representatives of the other religious communities attend the Sunday services, and often discuss particular issues, commented one of the interviewed orthodox believers. All inhabitants of Koleshino have participated into the renovation of the bell tower of the Orthodox Church “Sveti Spas”.

The orthodox believers do not communicate with the orthodox believers from the neighboring countries because the Macedonian Orthodox Church is not recognized in those countries. The media mainly report on the religious life in Koleshino, say the interviewees.

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the Orthodox Church in Koleshino to be very important, because many other faiths are active in that area. In his opinion, it is only through a kind of dialogue, self-recognition, conversation and cooperation with those who are of different faith, that we could more easily recognize and correct our misunderstandings.

### **The United Methodist Church – Koleshino**

There are about 60 households adherent to the United Methodist Church. According to the statements of the interviewees, the Sunday services are usually attended by around 60, out of which 25 are regular, and the rest of them are baptized members and friends (followers). On Sundays, they hold both morning and evening services and, on Wednesdays they give classes in Bible and prayer. The Church is located in the center of Koleshino and its preacher is settled in the village (ph. 3).

The origins of the protestant movement in Macedonia are connected to the American missionaries who had performed missionary work in this region through the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions<sup>5</sup>. The mission in Macedonia is entered from Bulgaria. On 6 August 1868, the first evangelic community was established in Bansko. A missionary post was opened in Bitola in 1873-74. In Koleshino, the evangelic church was established in 1899. The first sermon was delivered by the pastor Kimov, from the church in Strumica in the home of Mane Izev, on 19 May 1890.<sup>6</sup> The first Evangelical Church was built in 1906, on a lot given by Dimitrush Itzev as a gift. The church was burnt down and a new one was built on its place<sup>7</sup>. However, the greatest and the most sensational world attention were paid in 1901 when the American missionary Miss Ellen Stone, who had been in Bansko at that time, was kidnapped.

The United Methodist Church in Macedonia represents a certain “cumulative” of the protestant “process”, because, at the Annual Conference in Vrbas (1922) the established churches and communities were integrated to the southern district region of the Methodist Church. These periods are also marked by the withdrawal of the protestant missionaries from Macedonia. The Protestantism in Macedonia has its deepest roots in Strumica, because this town was in the middle of the missionary triangles of Samokov,

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<sup>5</sup> The American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions was established by the Congregational, Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in America in 1810-11. The most active in the Balkans was the Congregational Church, which establishes a large number of evangelical communities and churches.

<sup>6</sup> The contribution of Mane Izev and Trajko Kovachev is of great importance for the Evangelical Church in Koleshino. At that time, Dimitar Kardalev was selling biblical literature; he spent the night in Izev's home. He gave a Bible to Izev who began to preach in Macedonian language, because only few knew the Greek language, and they were neither Greeks, nor Bulgarians. Due to such convictions, Izev and his cobelievers faced severe reaction of the authorities at that time, but they were not dissuaded from the evangelical ideas.

<sup>7</sup> The missionary post in Thessaloniki was opened in 1894 under the leadership of John House. An evangelical community was soon established in Kukush. Numerous of evangelical communities are also founded in the vicinity. In 1899, John House, Miss Ellen Stone and Edward Haskell managed the operation of the united conference of the evangelic workers in Macedonia. John House had founded the agricultural and industrial school in Thessaloniki. In that school, besides the regular evangelical services, that is, the religious education, continuous education in agriculture was performed. Not surprisingly, the first tractor in the Balkans was brought in the agricultural and industrial school in Thessaloniki.

Bitola and Thessaloniki. Today the missionaries who visit this area also clearly notice the difference between this area and rest of the cities in Macedonia, especially Skopje. Here, it is very easy to make a contact and to start a conversation about the religion.

The United Methodist Church in Koleshino was built on a new parcel in 1967 (see photos in the appendix). In the past eight years, this church has its permanent preacher who is settled in Koleshino. Sacraments of this church are Baptism and Communion. The regular Sunday services of the believers – Methodists are open for all people interested in it. My interlocutor from the Methodist Church explains to us that they celebrate Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Thanksgiving Day, Mother's Day, the World Day of Prayer (every first Friday in March)... They jointly celebrate Easter, for example, gathering for Service. The central point of the Service is the sermon based on the Holly Scripture. On Easter, they sing songs and tell prayers celebrating the Christ's resurrection, and later they have family lunch, explained my interlocutors – Methodists. On Christmas and Easter, the United Methodist Church distributes gift packages for all children who tell verses from the Bible. They cherish the spiritual work with the children, preparing special programs comprising songs, recitals and plays. Every Sunday the Methodists give classes to the children (simultaneously with the Morning Service), youth (after the Evening Service) and teens (usually Saturday afternoons), explain my interlocutors – Methodists. The children are baptized on their early age. Every Friday sisters' classes are held, and every first Friday during March, the women celebrate the World Day of Prayer. The United Methodist Church maintains close contacts and cooperation with the Adventist Church in Koleshino.

When asked about their knowledge of the religious customs of their neighbors, they say they know them and some of them respect those customs. They indirectly participate in the customs of the orthodox believers, opening the door, to the survivors, for example. Two believers described very precisely the customs of celebration of Easter in the orthodox believers, clearly dividing and emphasizing the differences compared to others. As a result of the long-lasting joint life and especially of the periods prior to 1970-es and 1980-es, characterized as periods of intensive cooperation between the both churches<sup>8</sup>, mixed marriages between Methodists and Orthodox have contributed to transferring a part of the customs or the culture of the Orthodox believers to the religious practice of the Methodists. For example, the Methodism has a fast commandment, but it is not so formulated such as the case in the Orthodoxy. Part of the believers of the United Methodist Church are practicing the fast upon their own conviction (in secrecy), especially prior to the major holidays, says one of the interviewees. On Easter the practice is to

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<sup>8</sup> In these periods of intensive cooperation, the priests of the Orthodox Church held services in the United Methodist Church, and vice versa. Methodists maintained close relations with Adventists, as well. They cooperated more intensely because the social and political conditions "prescribed" so, which generally speaking were "hostile" toward the religion at all.

dye eggs, to give eggs to the children, to eat meat of the lamb and alike. However, it is not a sin if somebody does not practice it. Due to the periods of intensive communication common cemeteries are organized, which is not the case in the Strumica area, say the Methodists. The believers – Methodists accept the rural celebration of Ascension Day, organizing a Service when the believers talk about the meaning of the holiday, sing songs and welcome their guests.

Analyzing the contents of this church's website one can notice its active communication with the foreign missionaries<sup>9</sup> who often stay in Strumica, and also visit Koleshino. It is usual for the foreign missionaries, volunteers, friends and visitors to visit the church in Skopje, Strumica, and often to drop in Koleshino. The United Methodist Church regarding its operation and structure, operates within the international reference framework.<sup>10</sup>

Part of the believers emphasize that the media presentations were more extensive during the period of presidency of Boris Trajkovski.<sup>11</sup> In essence, according to the Methodists, the media present the peaceful mutual religious life and the proper celebration of the religious customs in Koleshino.

### **The Adventist Church – Koleshino**

In the distant 1947/48 two believers – Adventists from Bulgaria had spread the seed of Adventism in Koleshino.<sup>12</sup> After their departure, the inhabitants came in contact with the Adventist network of Yugoslavia. Soon, Adventist Church is being established and opened in Koleshino (ph. 4).

The New Adventist Church in Koleshino (see photos in the appendix) is built some 40 years ago in accordance with the standards applying to that purpose. There are a number of rooms in the church, as well as a pool for baptizing. In Koleshino there are ten Adventist families, with approximately 20 believers. According to the structure, those are mostly aged believers, thus, there are no youth groups. This Church belongs to the Strumica district, and the pastor from Strumica is in charge for organizing the Saturday services. Once a month he delivers a sermon, and for the rest of the time the believers themselves deliver the sermons.

The Adventist Church in Koleshino organizes services on Saturday; of course, Saturday is not working day. As a result, they are known as "Sabbatarians", although in the village they are usually named Adventists. They practice baptizing of adults, when they perceive the truth of the existence. The last new believers in the Church in Koleshino were baptized some ten ye-

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<sup>9</sup> At this moment an American missionary is staying in Strumica who occasionally visits the church in Koleshino.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding the international reference framework, the Methodist believers explain that "the Church has unique teaching in the whole world, that it is about one organization one body and that the connection with the whole is due to the essential determination tending to become united and to cooperate with other Christian confessions, as well, especially from 1968 until today".

<sup>11</sup> The President Trajkovski's wife origins from Koleshino and he also used to visit Koleshino very often.

<sup>12</sup> The first Adventist in the village of Koleshino was Mito Pashaliev, previously orthodox Methodist. Today, his descendants are Adventists and they manage the church.

ars ago. The Adventists cherish spiritual music and take Communion every three months. They are known by their healthy way of nutrition.

One of the believers of the Adventist Church points out that once when Christmas carol was practiced, he participated too. All of them attend the weddings of their neighbors, but they stick to their own religious convictions. The village celebrates Ascension Day and they welcome their guests in their homes and celebrate the holiday. All of them attend funerals. The village has only one cemetery, and there are no separate lots for each religion; however, regarding the funerals, each religion practices its own customs. On Easter, for example, the Orthodox and the Methodist believers dye eggs, and the Adventists do not practice it. They consider this custom to be pagan and not Biblical. One of the interviewees enthusiastically speaks about his contacts with the believers of Jehovah Witnesses. He admits that he knows and obeys the customs of his neighbors, but everybody has the right to believe according to his / her convictions. The practice in Koleshino is that during the celebration of the major religious holidays, official representatives of the Adventist Church visit the other religious communities. And, vice versa.

There have been and there are still mixed marriages in the Adventist Church. Part of the mixed marriages gradually becomes pure Adventist. It is important to respect the diversity, but it would be simply better if all belong to the same religion.

When asked whether they can recall of some incidents connected to the different religions, the interviewees decisively answer – no. They say they study the elements of other religions and try not to offend the others' feelings and customs by their acts. What makes Koleshino distinctive is, certainly, good knowledge of the Gospel, which guides them in their everyday life. The religious life is reflected at every step in the village, recognizable not only to the local populations, but also especially visible to those in their closer and further vicinity.

Due to the fact that the Adventist Church is very important, efforts are permanently made to preserve its distinctiveness and to affirm it through organizing lectures, sermons, excursionist camps and alike. Recently, for example, the Adventist Church has organized evangelization, and other communities joined it; so the children' group in this program was headed by a believer of the Methodist Church. The church in Koleshino, for example, in March this year, realized short education for scouts, and then complemented by relevant religious teaching. The church in Koleshino actively participates in the realization of the teaching of the Correspondence Biblical school. There are plans for organization if collective baptizing in Koleshino in May this year.

The Adventist Church from Koleshino is a part of the Strumica district, and regarding its operation, it has direct cooperation with the leadership in Skopje. The international referent entry come out, first of all, from its organization and structure. And here, we should not miss the fact that foreign missionaries often stay in the Adventist Churches in Macedonia. Their operations significantly influence the operation of the community, sending a message that it is not about some kind of a minor local community, but that its real magnitude is reflected within the world frameworks.

Regarding the media presentation of the religious life in Koleshino, the interviewees consider it to be correct and reflect the specifics that are part of its uniqueness.

### **Jehovah Witnesses – Koleshino**

The beginnings of the Jehovah Witnesses in Macedonia, according to their sources, date from around 1880, and are connected with the name of Vasil Stefanov. In 1958, in Veljusa, the Jehovah Witnesses open the first Hall of Kingdom, and next year, they established the first Assembly in Koleshino. The first Congress of the Jehovah Witnesses in Macedonia was held in Koleshino, in 1973. By the 1980-es, the congresses of the Jehovah Witnesses were held in Koleshino. The actual believers recall that even 200 guests have attended the congresses and all of them were accommodated in the few homes of their brothers Witnesses in Koleshino. Around 50 believers attend the regular services on Thursdays and Sundays who have eagerly witnessed their faith. They have operated as an Assembly for a long time, but due to the migration movements when especially the youth has left the village, today they operate as a group of believers. They hold services once a month in the Kingdom Hall in Koleshino (ph. 5), and the seniority in Strumica was in charge of their organization. A lecturer comes from Strumica to elaborate the main topic. Today the number of believers in Koleshino is small (around 10) and they are senior citizens (their average age is over 70 years). According to the 2002 Census data, this community in Koleshino includes 7 families. The present Hall in Koleshino is built in 1990-es and is in use since 1992.

The religious practice of the Jehovah Witnesses is unified for all of them; it is based on everyday reading and interpretation of the Biblical verses and on prayer. The Jehovah Witnesses do not celebrate the religious holidays celebrated by numerous religious communities because they are not grounded on the Bible. The only celebration the Jehovah Witnesses practice is the Memorial of Christ's Death. They announce it in their annual calendar through directing to everyday reading and study of the Letter. In that period, they are devoted to more intensely study and preaching of the truth for the Christ's death and redemption. The Memorial is celebrated on the date after the vernal equinox when the moon is full for the first time.<sup>13</sup> On the occasion of this holiday, the Jehovah Witnesses and their close relatives gather in the halls and they jointly follow the service in solemn atmosphere, they distribute the symbols, they pray, sing the relevant songs and later on they have their family dinners.

The interviewed believers point out that they have solid knowledge of the others' religion, because they are their neighbors, while a part of them is also members of their wider family. They have also knowledge of the holidays and the customs the adherents of the other religions celebrate. When they were young, they took participation into the performances when the members of the Orthodox Church or the United Methodist Church donated gift packages, and they are also familiar with the other customs such as the visits of the survivors, Christmas carol, Tutija... However, the Jehovah Witne-

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<sup>13</sup> This year the celebration was on 5 April.



sses themselves do not participate in the practicing of the customs of other faiths, they do not support those customs and they clearly elaborate their point of view. For example, “when the Christmas carolers sang in front of the houses, the parents opened the doors; but did not give them presents, telling them that this custom does not exist in the Bible, and because of that, they do not celebrate it, but, if they return another day, they would be given gifts and food”, explains one interviewed female Jehovah Witness. “During the local celebration of the Ascension Day, my parents would have finished their agricultural work, and if they had guests, they would have served them, but they clearly expressed their own religious conviction. The death of any believer of Jehovah Witnesses is not announced by the church bells and there are no crosses on their graves”, says the interviewed female Jehovah Witness.

The interviewed Jehovah Witnesses vividly recall the time when His Beatitude Mihail came, distributed miniature crosses and they particularly recall his conversations, the attention and respect he gave to the members of the other religions. They also recall the previous priest and the members of his family, with whom they used to have close relations. They cannot forget the long-lasting conversations about the Biblical verses, their interpretation, the customs and alike.

Concerning the joint life in the village there are no significant incidents that would undermine the established peaceful coexistence. The presence of the foreign missionaries who operate in this area is of great importance for the Jehovah Witnesses. The foreign missionary who works six years in Macedonia and has a good knowledge of Macedonian language, points out that you can enter into a conversation about the Bible with unknown people in Koleshino and Strumica region much easier and faster than in Skopje. He points out the particular surrounding, which is shaped during the several decades of active existence of a number of religions in Strumica and its vicinity.

The border area has almost no influence on their work. The key for the operation of Jehovah Witnesses is their theocratic organization, which clearly determines the way of its operation. The believers emphasize the contacts they have with their co-believers, brothers from the region and worldwide, the contribution of their Greek brothers, for example, when their facility in Skopje was built, the temporary stay of numerous foreign missionaries, their influence on their operation, saying that all of that is realized under the clear organizational framework unified at world level, which is strictly followed.

Koleshino is important for their work, especially for tracing the historical development of the community, driving the younger population to visit them, to perceive the roots of the community of Jehovah Witnesses.

### **CONCLUSIVE INSIGHTS**

The distinctiveness of the religion in Koleshino can be seen through the existence and cherishing of the religious diversity. The religious diversity is united around the basic Christian matrix, that is, all religions are part of the Christianity. What makes its distinctiveness is the impressive knowledge

of their own religion, which usually results in conversations about the verses of the Bible. The solid knowledge of the doctrine significantly guides the practical religious life. The regular services are prevailing, as well as the continuous reading of the Bible, and the scope and intensity of the traditional celebration of particular holidays (as well as of admixtures, like paganism) are reduced.

The solid religious knowledge represents an important drive and foundation for shaping of the joint religious coexistence, which cherishes the spirit of dialogue and tolerance. The effort and tendency to protect one's own religion through cherishing the "own family" community in the same religion are noticeable.

Concerning the believing population in Koleshino, having in mind all religions, the main characteristic is its aging. In certain communities, the average is approximately eight decades. There is no inflow of new, young believers at all (which is due to the migration movements). The conversion of the believers from one to another religion, although mentioned in some interviews, is not a significant feature of this believing population in spite of the fact that, for example, the Methodists point out that actual Adventists and Jehovah Witnesses originated from them. It is said that a part of the believers who are adherent to other religions or do not practice active religious life, attend their services, manifest certain empathy and interest, but it rarely results in "baptizing".

The existence of the four religions does not provoke any major incidents related to the religion. Contrary, it makes the village so specific, and it is part of its distinctiveness. The active knowledge of the religion, complemented by the active religious life developed through the everyday reading of the Holy Scripture, as well as the relevant religious practices, contribute to the development of a rich intercultural framework of living. The common denominator of the inhabitants is exactly their continuous reading of the Bible as an overarching book, which is their inspiration, source of the "normative" of their life, reflexion of their living. The eternal resting-place is common for all inhabitants of Koleshino (there is a common cemetery in the village).

There are many similarities between the Orthodox and Methodist believers regarding the religious practice, which are due to the long-lasting and active cooperation, especially in the period prior to 1990-es, due to certain similarities grounded in the Holy Scripture, the mixed marriages that have intensified their communication, but also witness their mutual interdependence. Although the Methodists adhere more to their international frame determinant, they assume certain elements of the local life, which is not the case with the community of Jehovah Witnesses. Although the Jehovah Witnesses have solid knowledge of the customs of other religions, they still do not participate.

The solidarity of the inhabitants is especially visible in the rich infrastructure built, as well as in the resolution of the common problems and realization of the common needs and interests. The environmental ambience in

Koleshino is very remarkable, especially compared to the rest of the country, which many link to the religion.

In the history of the cultural life of this village, there is almost no space for intolerance, rivalry, religious incidents, and conflicts. When asked whether there are any incidents, all the respondents decisively answered – no. They point out that the thorough knowledge of the Bible, especially the application of the Biblical principles in the everyday life simply does not leave space for any kind of intolerance. Everybody has the right to follow his / her conviction, but does not have the right to impose that conviction to the others. Neither the spouses can impose their faith to each other, nor can the parents impose their faith to their children. They do not obstruct them to practice their faith, but the same religious convictions are considered to be desirable.

The religious dialogue and tolerance are based on the religious knowledge. The reading and the interpretation of the Holy Scripture represents required part of their everyday life. It is worth mentioning that they are all Christians. The knowledge, the understanding and, certainly, the respect of the other's religion, the religion of the neighbor, the religion of the members of the family, the religion of the occasional visitors and tourists, creates fertile ground for development of peaceful coexistence.

The long-lasting existence of the religious diversity, active missionary work, especially the significant connection with the centers both in the country and the region, leave very small space for development of contacts and close cooperation in the border area. Koleshino borders on Greece, but its inhabitants – believers simply do not have any contacts and cooperation. They have slightly closer contact with Bulgaria, but those contacts do not give significant tonality to the religious life in Koleshino. Concerning the operation of the minority religious communities (e.g., Jehovah Witnesses, Adventists) the international framework determinant is of key importance, which unifies their religious framework of operation. In this context, we should underline that the active missionary structure gives significant imprint to the life of the very religious communities. Due to its location, its important historical role, as well as the modern course of the religious life, Koleshino has a special and important place in the religious life of the Republic of Macedonia in general.

The media usually make efforts to follow “what happens” in the reality, referring to the importance of the dialogue and tolerance among the different religions. However, they often point out Koleshino as a role model for peaceful religious coexistence.

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1: The Macedonian Orthodox Church “Sveti Spas“ (Photo Tose Sumracki)



Photo 2: The Group Wedding at the Koleshino Waterfalls



Photo 3: The United Methodist Church – Koleshino



Photo 4: The Adventist Church – Koleshino



Photo 5: The Jehovah Witnesses – The Kingdom Hall in Koleshino (Photo Jim Rothrock)





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Ivan Markešić

**FOLK BELIEFS: ON THE EXAMPLE OF LIKA'S  
VILLAGES OF KOMPOLJE, HRVATSKO POLJE  
AND SRPSKO POLJE**

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**INTRODUCTION**

In religion, as the visible *testimony of his own belief* in the Supernatural, Paranormal, and Holy, as well as in magic, as a conspicuous *attempt to master* the Otherworldly, supernatural and Holy, man wants to make his existence tolerable and acceptable. And he really needs them. Therefore, it is sometimes very difficult to find a clear line between religion and magic. Especially because in our country, religion and magic are often based on the christian belief in one God.

This is particularly apparent in the case of inhabitants of Kompolje and Hrvatsko Polje which belong to the same religion (Christianity), but two different Christian confessions (Kompolje – mostly Catholics and Hrvatsko Polje – mostly Orthodox) (ph. 1 and 2). Usually that wouldn't be something very significant, but in the case of these villages there has been a complete identification of national and confessional. Confessional was the basis of determining nationality, and thus became self-evident that every catholic is also a Croat, and at the same time every orthodox a Serb. Mixed orthodox-catholic marriages were rare. Although they were close to each other, catholics and orthodox christians lived two separate lives. They always bordered with one another. They lived a life on the frontier.

However, their geographical location and their existential familiarity to nature and the needed ability to overcome its power, forced both – Catholics and Orthodox – 1) to an almost identical relationship towards the sun, moon, stars, thunder, lightning, rain, wind (as will be discussed in the first chapter) and 2) that both parties attached almost the same meaning to their own health and the health of domestic animals, then plants, water (which will be discussed in the second chapter). In addition, 3) to safeguard their health and the health of their livestock they have created various prayers adressed to supernatural beings and powers for help, but also a variety of religious and magical practices (divination, incantation) used by specially trained people (witches and sorcerers) that attempted to force supernatural beings and powers to intervene in their daily life (which will be the main theme of the third chapter).

Confessional-national (borderline) neighborhood of catholics and orthodox Christians, Croats and Serbs respectively, in the example of these villages shows that the solutions of current problems in life is essentially the

same, differing only in the linguistic expression (eg Ikavism – by catholics, Ijekavism – the orthodox) and very often only in emphasis. Here I'll present just one part of belief and according to the book by Jure Grčević (2000).

A wider view of these beliefs, I published the article „The Importance of the religious and magical action in the everyday life of people – the examples of the Lika villages of Kompolje and Ivčević Kosa“ (Markešić 2009).

### **THE SUN, MOON, STARS, THUNDER AND NIGHTS**

The inhabitants of the village Kompolje and Hrvatsko Polje are religious and God-fearing people. God is the sole creator of the world – heaven, earth, the underworld and man. They do not believe in other beings who are able to do this (Grčević 2000, 497). They believe that God is in heaven and that He is all-powerful.

#### **The Sun**

For these people the sun had and still has a special meaning. They feared the eclipse of the sun, which foretold misfortune that could befall them. The eclipse was an indication of God's judgment or imminent war (Hećimovic-Seselja 1985, 129). On the other hand, the sun is the source of heat, it warms them, makes life on earth possible. Therefore, they did not curse it. One who cursed at the sun was doing, according to catholic belief, the "mortal sin that needed confession." Specifically, when addressing someone with love and respect, it was said: "My Sun!", or "May you be warmed by the Sun!". It was so important in the life of these people that they attributed divine characteristics to it. Of all the creations, only the sun can be in company with God, during the night, after sunset, until the new birth (sunrise).

However, the Supernatural and Holy were sometimes used by individuals for revenge to others or to inflict hurt on them. So it was with the sun as well. When someone was to be cursed, it was said: "The Sun darkened you!", or "The Sun burned you bright!".

They believed the sun had such great power, they could not influence it. And they did not even try using any kind of magic to force it to come out sooner or go down later.

But, they liked to use divination. If the morning was sunny, the entire day should be like that. If the sun was setting in red, ruddy clouds, the next day was supposed to be nice and sunny, without any rain and wind. However, such an occurrence could have the opposite meaning, as in Kompolje, where it was said: "Red evening makes for a lousy morning" (Grčević 2000, 510). Also, it was believed that it will be rain the next day, when the sun sets in dark clouds, that will be cloudy and unstable weather, if during sunset, the sun shines through the clouds a bit.

#### **The Moon**

According to the beliefs of people from Kompolje, on the Moon Gospa (the Blessed Virgin Mary) squeezes with her foot the head of the serpent that seduced Eve and Adam to the deadly (eastern) sin, which burdens



ourselves as well. On the face of the moon one can recognize characters such as Cain and Abel fighting each other, then blacksmiths who forged nails used to nail Jesus to the cross, etc.

It was believed that the full moon affects the behavior of certain people. Catholics and Orthodox Christians have their "own" sleepwalkers – people who, at night when the moon is full, get up out of bed, climb out of the window and onto the roof and walk on it. Calling them by their name during sleepwalking had the danger of waking them up. If they are awakened, they would not be able to walk normally, they would fall to the ground and get hurt or die.

Also, the phases of the moon were a source of various divination. When the moon is full, one can not sleep well, when the moon is young, it is not recommended to cut wooden materials for housebuilding, nor to sow clover (Grčević, 498). When the moon has horns pointing upwards, the saying was: "The young moon was full of water" (Grčević 2000, 510). People started their work when the moon began to rise, because it was believed that everything they did would grow and prosper alongside the moon.

### **The Stars and the Night Sky**

The stars have always been a source of wonder. Their splendor and number filled the human imagination. They wanted to know their power, and influence them. Several stars were named: Danica, Godfather's Hay, St. Peter's stick, Vlašići, Small and Large Bears, etc. It was believed that everyone gets their own star when born. It could be a lucky or a unlucky star. Who was born under the unlucky star could not expect good things in life. If during the night, on a clear sky, a falling star was seen, it was believed that someone died and his/hers birth star was extinguished.

### **Lightning and Thunder**

People were especially afraid of lightning and thunder. It was believed that during that time St. Eliah the Thunderer was riding his horse-drawn carriage on rough, gravel road (four rampant horses pulled the carriage in which sits St. Eliah), and lightning, which can harm humans, was created from sparks when the wheels passed over rocks. They believed that during the Feast of St. Eliah, on 20 July, working with hay was not recommended. If you wanted to harm someone, then you would curse him with: "By thunder be killed!" or "By thunder be blown apart!", and to make it effective and immediate: "By thunder from a clear sky be killed!"

### **Night and darkness**

The night wasn't well liked. It was dark, and all sorts of things happened in it. During the night dark forces appeared, as well as fairies, witches, and sometimes werewolves.

## EARTH, PLANTS AND ANIMALS

God created the earth and sky. The earth is a living place for animals that were of greatest benefit, and animals that could give harm, then a place for cultivation of all crops, as well as for the growth of different trees that were of benefit. People have done everything to improve growth of plants as well as domestic animals. The cow was the major breadwinner of the family. All that would disrupt, had a negative connotation and it should be chased away from the house and the cattle. This primarily relates to the snakes and wolves.

### Animals

*The Snake.* Snakes were called by insulting names of "stink" or "bastard", because they were dangerous and poisonous. Often they would attack and bite the cattle, as well as people (Grčević 2000, 498). Thus, the snake was killed.

However, the snake, "which guards the house," was not killed. Killing the snake, meant bringing misfortune into the house. If there was any doubt where to build a new house, the baking lids (sač) was left at the point where it wanted to begin construction (ph. 3). If in the morning a "guardian snake" was found underneath, the construction could begin. Otherwise, baking lids had to be transferred from place to place until a "guardian snake" was found underneath it in the morning.

*The Wolf.* Also, neither the wolf was a favorite animal. He attacked livestock, particularly sheeps and goats. Various stereotypes were created: If, for example, a shepherd saw the wolf before the wolf saw him, then the wolf would go mute and could not open his mouth. Similar to, but the opposite happened, if a wolf saw a shepherd before he saw him.

### Plants

*Yew.* Some plants were well liked. Of all of them, yew was highly valued. It could ward off evil spirits. In order to protect cattle from curses and disease, they would drill a hole in the horn of these animals, then place into the hole three drops of holy (blessed) water, three drops of milk from those animals, three grains of incense and plug the hole with yew (ph. 4).

This would act as protection against all evil that might caused by wicked men with their curses and spells (Grčević, 500). Faith in such power of yew sprang from the belief that the cross on which Jesus was crucified was made of yew. It was therefore desirable that the cart or sled that was pulled by oxen had a yoke made of yew.

*Garlic.* Garlic has also had special magical importance in protecting people and livestock from the dark and evil forces. People believed in its healing properties, and it was forbidden to clean it with fingernails (Grčević 2000, 500).

*Violet and primrose.* Violet and primrose had a special meaning. These plants were plucked by young women on Flower Sunday, then placed in water and used for washing their faces on that morning to make them more beautiful. Same was with incense, the belief in its power was strong.

### **Water and Dew**

*Water.* Water was respected, because it was used for drinking, but not with awe, due to all the flooding of the fields in fall-winter-spring months. In water people looked for health (ph. 5).

*Dew.* Dew was collected in the morning before sunrise. It was used for washing the faces of all household members on Saint Vitus, patron protector of eyesight. It was believed that these washing their face with dew will have healthier eyesight.

### **HOW TO INFLUENCE NATURE?**

Both catholic and orthodox Christians believe that God not only created the heavens and the earth and everything in them and in them, but man as well. Their faith in God was strong. It was publicly confirmed with their everyday life and work. All of their work started out with prayer. However, there were those who, under the belief in one God, offered very acceptable solutions to life's various problems and uncertainties using magic. In order not to be accused of heresy, their magical actions were imbued with Christian symbols and rituals. They always used the cross, invoked Jesus, Mary and many saints. Therefore, in these "private" pseudoreligious rites it was often not possible to separate magic from christianity (ph. 6).

### **Divination**

Divination and other forms of popular (mis)beliefs were common and were considered an integral part of this region. People wanted to know, but also affect future events. It was performed heavily on Christmas Eve and Christmas, but in other days of the year. People have lived from the crops sown in fields. And these same fields were very appropriate feeding grounds for birds and mice. Preservation of crop yields for next year and poultry from birds of prey was of utmost importance. However, there were naughty desires. While divining to keep their own livestock healthy, at the same time divination was supposed to harm their neighbours cattle.

Everything went in a circle: house and its family members, barn and its livestock, the field and its harvest. Above them there was the sky with its unpredictable rain and clouds filled with thunder, populated by small but nasty creatures (birds). In all this, despite the dogmatic Christian doctrine, it was necessary to find forms of action that would influence the events around people and their environment in order to survive. But all of this they performed alongside Christian prayer and during the holidays, especially Christmas and when saint's days were celebrated. Details about the saint's wonders weren't well known, but people knew which of the saints acted as protectors (Grčević 2000, 528-529).

*Divination on animal behaviour and plants.* If a cat is cleaning itself (licking its front paws and cleaning its face) it is a sign that they will get guests, that lived nearby. If, however, the cat was licking under the tail, that was a sign that the guests come from afar. If the dog is howling with its head held

upwards, someone in the house will die. Black chickens song announced death, yellow chickens song announced dangerous illness. Therefore, the black and yellow chickens needed to be killed on a stump with an ax, their chopped off heads thrown far away. A white chicken crowing like a rooster meant great joy in the house (Grčević 2000, 511-512).

Finding a four-leaf clover was an accomplishment and it was a good luck sign. The lucky person could not be harmed by any kind of spell or hex.

*Divination on people's behaviour.* The behavior and appearance of people interacting with these catholics and orthodox Christians of this region is very often a sure indicator of some event. If someone hiccups it is a sign that someone, somewhere is mentioning them in conversation. The hiccups will stop if the person correctly remembers who is mentioning them. If they can not remember, it was good to scare them with something to stop the hiccups. Or, if someone turns red in the face, it is a sign that others are gossiping about him. Itchy left palm was a sign of monetary gain, itchy right palm meant monetary loss.

*Divination on days and saints.* If Monday dawned as a beautiful day, so will the whole week. Monday was the day for weddings, a day when the most important tasks were undertaken, but also the day when it was forbidden to remove anything from the house, to preserve luck and happiness. Tuesday is a bad and miserable day, Wednesday was a happy day, on that day their wives started their women's affairs. Thursday is also a happy day, a good day for getting married. Friday was a unlucky day. Who was happy on a Friday, will be sad on Sunday. Saturday could be lucky and unlucky. On Saturday evening there was no work done, women were not allowed to comb their hair, as to ward off misfortune. Sunday was the day of God. Who died on Sunday, was a holy man. Sunday "has no hands". That day is not a working day, not even for making bread.

*Weather divination based on saint's day.* It was considered that the weather for next year will be as it was during the twelve days of St. Lucy, on 13 December until Christmas, 25 December. In the summer weather was predicted by St. Medard's day (8 June). If this day is nice and sunny, the next 40 days will also be nice and sunny. If a single drop of rain appears, the next 40 days will be very rainy. Weather during the winter should be as the St. Barbara's day (December 4), or on Christmas Eve (December 24th).

The family will be blessed by good luck if the smoke from wine-extinguished Christmas candle rises straight up in the air. But if, however, it sways over the person who held the candle, it is a bad sign, because that person could die soon. Also, it was a bad sign (death in the family or some other misfortune), if during Christmas glass object were broken (glass windows, glass bottles or glasses, or some other type of glass objects or furniture) (Grčević 2000, 513) (ph. 7).

If the weather during Christmas was cold and freezing, next year is supposed to be bountiful for crops. If it rained on Christmas, it is expected that both people and livestock will be sick the next year. If, however, Christmas was on tuesday, it was believed that the year will not be happy, but it will still generate beans and potatoes.

Anyone who wanted to be a beautiful, healthy and happy person, on Flower Sunday he washed his face in a mix of water and flowers. It was believed that drinking red wine on Good Friday is very effective: the amount of wine drunk, equals the blood received.

On the Saint Mark's day (April 25th) the rite of field blessing was performed. On that day people toured the fields and sprinkled holy water. To determine the year of marriage, girls threw a flower wreath just before St John's day (June 24). If the wreath stopped at the first seam (counting from below), the girl should be married the same year, however, if stopped on the second or third seam, she could hope to be married in two or three years.

*Divination based on dreams.* Dreams have had great meaning for people. Anyone who had a dream about his tooth falling out, will have a death in the family, while the person who dreamt about toothache will have a dying relative. If someone dreams of a tooth that doesn't hurt, someone will die in the village.

If someone dreamt about a priest, he can't expect anything good to happen. If anyone dreamed that someone has died and the dead body is not seen, it was good, if he had dreamed and saw him dead, it was an indication of the coming disaster, which turned into the death of a family member if during the dream the dreamer gave something to the dead man. It was not good to dream of bears, that meant danger of death, or plowing the earth, because that meant expected bad news from afar, as there was never a good dream of a lady in white.

#### **Incantation – Removal of Curses, witch's Work and Other Evil Forces by Making the Sign of Cross**

"Crossing" was used on living people to remove consequences of a disease or condition as a consequence of the evil-eye, witchcraft or actions of other evil and wicked forces and powers. It was performed by making the sign of the cross over "sick" person with the mandatory Christian prayer, and other prayers. The procedure of "crossing" is always performed by older women-grandmothers. This demanding task was designated solely for them.

If someone felt the woes as a result of a curse, or what it looked like evil eyes then they would go with to an old woman in the village that would cross herself at the start of the removal spell, but then crossed the person who was supposedly cursed. Almost always blessed water was used and three Our Fathers, three Hail Mary's and Creed were prayed. Burning coal was extracted from the fire and submerged into holy water, one that was blessed on Epiphany. The procedure is performed mostly on Tuesdays and Fridays, the days that are not eligible for any serious work, but they are to lift the curse or the evil eye.

If there was a risk of witches then before bedtime certain prayers were intoned. In order to prevent their coming into the house, garlic was used – placed above the door, or scissors, sometimes a knife was stuck in the door, etc.

In order to preserve the children from witches, immediately after birth some colorful patches were placed around their hands. Mother would put some onion or garlic under their pillow, specifically the garlic or onion that was left over from Christmas. Besides that, the mothers sometimes even burned baby's clothes and then throw it over the house roof to ward off witches.

### **Witchcraft and sorcery**

Old women had practiced sorcery and divination. If a girl is in love with a man who would not want her, she should make coffee and place a few few drops of her menstrual blood and then give him to drink, "so he goes crazy for her" (Grčević 2000, 523). Or, catch a bat, kill it and dry it. Old woman would speak a few words over the dead and dried bat, the girl then has to scratch her nails on the bat wing and then the on the man, without the man suspecting anything. And after that, the man was hers.

The people believed in the existence of fairies, supernatural beings in human forms, as a young and beautiful girls, in white robes and long unraveled hair. It was believed they lived in the mountains. They were carefree and happy. They loved to dance in a circle, on fields when sun shone and the rain fell at the same time, with a a rainbow in the sky. Then they combed his hair. However, they appeared at night as well. They came into the stables, took horses and rode them all night and then returned them back. That the fairies rode them, men realised in the morning, as they found them sweaty and tired. The fairies braided their manes and tied their tails. They also tied the tail of oxen, and braided small pigtails on their head, close to the horns.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on this study it can be concluded that the villagers of Kompolje, Hrvatsko Polje and Srpsko Polje (catholics and orthodox Christians) living next to each other, almost always in the confessional-national borders, and protecting their own (Catholic or Orthodox) faith, built a separate believers, and in many cases, religious and magical relationship, both towards the sky and celestial bodies and the earth, water, air, fire, birds, wild and domestic animals, plants and people. However, these religio-magical rites were very similar. Differences were linguistical, sometimes only in emphasis (ph. 8).

With awe they referred to the sun, moon, stars and to everything that was associated with the heavenly heights, such as clouds, lightning, thunder, and the dark night. In addition, they had built a relationship to the earth and everything on it – the plants and animals. The specificity was divination based on people, days and holidays.

In conclusion we can say that all divination was performed in the sign of the Christian (catholic and orthodox) doctrine. People have never abandoned this practice. On such occasions they used the Christian sign of the cross. Cross had the greatest significance. On it they established their presence, in it they found solace in times of unfulfilled expectations. They used it in their religio-magical practices to protect themselves from the fairies, witches, werewolves, dragons, etc.

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

Ph. 1: Kompolje (in winter)



Ph. 2: Hrvatsko polje



Ph. 3: The baking lids



Ph. 4: Resting place



Ph. 5: Gacka Spring in Sinac



Ph. 6: Water mills on Gacka



Ph. 7: Wather mill



Ph. 8: On the road to Kompolje





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Vladimir Bakrač

## **RELIGIOUS AND FOLK CUSTOMS IN THE NORTH-WEST PART OF MONTENEGRO**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

It is interesting to study religious and folk customs, and thus it is hard to conclude that from the very beginnings till today, customs represent one of the basic phenomenon which has very important role in preserving the tradition and culture of a nation. This important role relates to sustaining the identity of some society. Unfortunately, many customs in Montenegro have survived different impacts and suffered modifications throughout longer period of time, so thus they have lost something of its importance and significance. Period of socialistic rule in Montenegro, which is known as period of intensive erosion of religion and religiosity, involves less practice of religious customs. Since this is an area with dominantly Orthodox inhabitants, not many of them celebrated patron saint's day, Christmas, Easter, etc. If it happened that someone from that area dared to celebrate religious holidays, they did it in strict confidence, i.e. with no presence of the priest in the house. So, by weakening of the religiosity, (such as going to the church, celebrating patron saint's day and religious holidays, etc.), religious customs were pushed into the background, as well.

From the 90s, revitalization of the religion i.e. reversion of the religion and to the religion is evident in Serbia and Montenegro, (which is verified by scientific research by Blagojević 1995; Besić i Djukanović 2000). By revitalization of the religion on the social scene, revival of the traditional and inherent religious practice is evident. There are much more inhabitants who come back to traditional religious customs, so, there are many of them who celebrate religious holidays, those who baptize their children, etc. Revitalization of the religion, by analogy, leads to revival of religious customs. Today, when social, cultural, civilization and situations of life have significantly differed, in the conditions of revitalization of the religion and religiosity, there is bigger aspiration that (religious) customs renew and infuse, i.e. they in weave in the context of modern way of living. It is obvious that some of the customs are practiced just to be saved from oblivion, without genuine experience about significance and importance of those customs. Celebrating religious holidays becomes more a special kind of integration because due to everyday obligations, family and friends gather only at greater religious holidays and family patron saint's days.

Folk customs have sustained with continuity, without significant oscillations, but it wasn't the case with religious ones. For example, customs that go together with engagement and wedding sustained before as well as today, so these customs have sustained without break and they preserved. Folk customs weren't pressed down or suppressed by the influence of socialistic regime, which was the case with religion and hence religious customs. Nevertheless, folk customs confront more with serious enemy personified in the process of (post)modernization, modern way of living, etc. Folk customs have sustained today as well, resisting the time, but we can witness drifting away from traditional folk customs. Thus we find specific opportunity to take a look at some customs from border part between Montenegro and Herzegovina, which we think fall into oblivion. In that sense, when it comes to folk customs, we have focused our attention to wedding customs.

### **SOCIOLOGICAL RETROSPECTION AND DEFINITION OF CUSTOMS**

Everybody who dealt with research about customs should precise and ask themselves "What is custom?" Custom is, we believe, closely knitted to tradition, i.e. custom represents specific set of rituals, which are transferred from generation to generation, from father to son, and as we said, they are tight-knitted to tradition. Customs usually represent legacy from earlier times, in a way our fathers and grandfathers practiced them. So, traditionally they are shaped and they remain in spite of the changes in a way of living, upbringing, education, culture, etc.

When we talk about customs, the first that comes into our heads are religious customs, i.e. certain religious practice that is followed by peculiarity in a way of thinking, believing and (ritual) acting which are all done according to certain need and rules that are determined by dogma. Customs emerged in order to satisfy people's needs, and as people's needs changed, thus customs changed. We find it important to emphasize that customs and its research attracts attention of numerous authors of interdisciplinary education, especially of ethnology. Sociologists, philosophers, lawyers give their contribution to the research of customs, as well.

Even though we approach the customs from ethnological viewpoint, we think that as sociologists we should look back at sociological significance in researching the customs. Thus, from sociological perspective, we connect oldest forms of regulating social relations and behavior. In the earliest periods of genesis and evolution of human society, many rules have emerged, which used to regulate people's relations and thus we find that ritual can be seen from sociological distance. From sociological perspective, society is seen and observed from the point of its wholeness; without regard to the fact that society is revealed in different forms. For sociology, society is set of different phenomena, which indicates they are mutually connected, regardless of all differences. Thus, the subject of sociology is not just *society* as something that is beyond human, but *sociability* as a way of human life, where we may include customs, as well. Because of that, custom has a great significance in sustaining cultural, traditional, spiritual and ethnic continuity. In all of this, we see signi-

fificance of sociological interest for studying the rituals, their importance and meaning.

### FOLK CUSTOMS AND FOLK RELIGION

In past discussion we differentiated folk and religious customs. We start from the supposition that more or less everybody knows what religious customs are. Here we intend to concentrate on folk beliefs and customs. Sometimes there is big difference among folk and religious customs. Thus, we think there should be made a distinction between customs that are regulated by dogmatic religion and those that originate from the people. Difference between folk and religious customs is connected to folk and dogmatic religiosity, categorically says Josef Kesler. This author calls folk religion “primitive or vulgar religiosity” (Keler 1980, 327).

In domestic literature, one of the authors who dealt most with customs, their significance and importance, is of course Dušan Bandić. This author warns that folk religion and customs have their roots in Slovene ancient homeland, even though its pagan shape disappeared. Upon arrival of Christianity and its expansion on all areas, there appears retreat and/or modification of pagan religion and pagan rituals which integrated with Christianity by time.

Change of pagan religion causes changes in pagan rituals. By expansion of Christianity, many pagan customs and beliefs have been transferred. However, as this author warns, the Serbs accepted Christianity; but it happened very often they saw it in non Christian way (Bandić 1991). That means believers started to accept and to believe in one God but they didn't experience it in a dogmatically determined way. People accepted religious holidays but they celebrated it together with magic rituals and sacrifices. Ethnologist concludes well when he says that folk religion is between pagan and Christian religious tradition in the Balcans peninsula.

What characterizes folk religion is 1) sensuality, because without this characteristic there would be no religious feeling and experience; 2) next characteristic of folk religion is achieving worldly benefits through rituals; 3) folk religion aims at naïve and self-confident feeling of “sanctity” (Keler 1980, 328-330). That feeling of sanctity is seen in all religions.

In folk customs and beliefs there are especially important objects for which it is believed they are holders of supernatural powers and they protect us from every evil and misfortune. For example, in north-west part of Montenegro, i.e. part that is on the border part with Bosnia and Herzegovina, people believe in the power of *holy water* from Ostrog Monastery. Water that is given as blessing to every pilgrim who visits this monastery and kisses the holy relics of Saint Vasilije, serves to sprinkle people, cattle, crops, apartments, etc, and it is believed that water protects from evil ghosts. Holy water from Ostrog Monastery is put on the wound as balm or it may be drunk because it is believed it will help healing or recovery of one's health.

We stated that folk and dogmatic religion sometimes contravene. In border area between Montenegro and Herzegovina, a day between Đurđev-

dan, 6<sup>th</sup> of May, and Markovdan 8<sup>th</sup> of May, is highly respected and celebrated. Between these two holidays (7<sup>th</sup> of May), Orthodox Church and believers celebrate Saint Martyr Sava Stratilat, Saint Martyr Branko and Sava Erdeljski. However, people from this area celebrate *fate day* on this day and it is believed this day is more important and “harder” than Đurđevdan and Markovdan. It is believed people should do nothing in the house or in the field on this day. It is hard to precise how and why “local” beliefs or as Bandić calls them “village saints”, took root (Bandić 2008). We think explanation could be found in historical facts. Veselin Čajkanović gave best answer to this. This author apodictically explains that difference between folk and ecclesiastic interpretations of Orthodox saints should be looked in the very beginnings of Christianity in this area. When adopting Christianity, people didn’t throw away all pagan divinities. So, this is about beings who kept pagan characteristics, or if we look it from the other perspective, pagan beings got Christian form (Čajkanović 1973, 309). For our folk religion, belief and customs, we could say they emerged from the synthesis of different cultures so that we encounter remains from previous times in many customs. We have ingenious conclusion by Bojan Jovanović (2000, 24): “Pagan like, Old Testament like and Christian like become archetype possibilities in the being of modern man in the context of multileveled religious inheritance”. It is similar with the explanations that refer to this part of Montenegro. Along with what is already stated, it should be also added this area was under Turkish rule for a long period of time and thus religious schools were abolished and forbidden and people departed from official theological creed. Dogmatic creed was converted to tradition, where such tradition experienced different modifications being transformed from generation to generation. According to the above mentioned, we may conclude that “local” saints and their esteem comes from the remains of pagan beliefs and departure between people and theological creed. If we talk specifically about this holiday “*fate*”, it could be that throughout the history something happened on this day, and thus today we have belief that *fate* is a very “hard” holiday. It is very common that people from this area don’t get married in the leap-year. This is, we believe, certain kind of superstition, because as church says that everything we do with love and for redemption for human beings, pleases God and all days in a year should serve to praise the Creator who made human being, i.e. man.

#### **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REGIONS REGARDING RELIGIOUS AND FOLK CUSTOMS**

In this discussion we often referred to the fact that certain customs are autochthonous and they relate to certain geographic area. We should deal with differences among regions regarding religious and folk customs. We find that fact very important and we should not neglect it if we deal seriously with the study of customs. Territorial differences make customs very specific and interesting for exploring and studying. We think that customs give their contribution and they have role in what makes one area so special, specific and recognizable. Thus, we could not agree with the statement if we met cer-

tain religious and folk customs, we met all of them. Regional differences, which relate to the customs, unequivocally show that. This was one of the reasons why we decided to problematize religious and folk customs in north-west part of Montenegro. This is about Piva, Golija and Banjani area, i.e. border area between Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We may agree with the well-established saying that each village has its own customs. Thus, when we talk about customs, we would rather conclude it is about whole set of various systems, and not about unique system.

Even though ethnologist Bandić (1991) thinks regional difference among regions is important, he believes that regardless of differences in a regional sense, customs are usually founded on the same dogmas. However, unique view of the world is hidden behind all differences among customs from area to area, warns Danijel Sinani. This author brilliantly explains that customs may be different in a regional sense but the essence in their meaning remains the same. Author gives example about significance and importance of fairies, who are differently treated from one region to another (even from one village to the other), but in its essence, the fairy represents personification and spiritualization of natural forces (Sinani 2010). So, ethnologists agree with the fact that some customs (their significance and the way in which such customs are performed, whether it is about religious or folk customs), differ from one region to another, but the essential meaning of such customs often remains the same. To illustrate, all Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas and they all have the same or different rituals when celebrating this holiday, but the reason for which it is celebrated, is the same in all areas, and that is the birth of Jesus Christ.

Analyzing difficulties which appear while studying religious customs, we focused our attention on Christianity or to precise we focused it on Orthodoxy, since the area we took for the subject of interest is dominantly Orthodox area with dominantly Orthodox inhabitants. This, we find, should be emphasized because customs are not the same in every Orthodox region. Differences are usually seen in the worship of the saint (I will say something more about this later in this discussion), according to the holy secrets, respect for relics, customs, etc. Thus, there are certain differences in customs in regional sense, in Orthodoxy itself. Customs that are related to the celebration of Christmas, family patron saint's day, etc. may serve as an example, where in a way they are different depending on the region and sometimes they vary from the rules regulated by dogma. In that sense Bandić conceived term *folk Orthodoxy*, which is, as author explains, simplified ecclesiastical Orthodoxy where unconventional version of Orthodoxy is revealed, and which may be designated as "adopted" Orthodoxy in ethnical sense (Bandić 2010). Making differences between regions on the basis of the customs is necessary because customs that are familiar in one region represent the great unknown in the other region.

### **WORSHIPPING SAINT VASILJE OSTROŠKI**

So far we have emphasized that certain saints are not emotionally experienced in a same way, in Orthodoxy. Saint Vasilje Ostroški is one of the saints that is respected in whole Srpska Orthodox Church. This saint is even respected by the believers from other non Christian religions. However, the function, significance and importance of Saint Vasilje is especially emphasized in the north-west part of Montenegro. This saint has woven into the life of people from this part of Montenegro as a saint and a miracle-worker. The significance of saint Vasilje is firstly charismatic, which means significance of this saint should be first seen on the basis of its presence in spiritual life of people in former centuries.

As “miracle is the dearest child of the creed”, it is easy to comprehend why this saint weaved into spiritual life of Orthodox people. In manuscript, which is kept in Ostrog Monastery where saint’s relics are laid to rest, many miracles through which God helped this people are noted down. However, saint Vasilje is highly respected in this part of Montenegro, in a part that is on the border with Herzegovina. Saint’s this-world life and work as an archpriest somehow explains why this godly person was so respected on this area. Saint Vasilje was born in Popovo polje in Herzegovina in 1610. This saint moved from Tvrdoš Monastery to Ostrog Monastery so that his *archier-eus* and missionary work gravitated on this area which is the subject of our discussion. There is a church erected in his honor in Niksic, town which was visited by this saint for his lifetime and saint Vasilje is worshipped as a protector of this town. Thus we find explanation for certain customs which represent characteristic for this area, which refers to giving promises or as a confirmation we’re telling somebody the truth, and then we say “so help me saint Vasilje”. Sometimes, pilgrims who visit this place use a small piece of paper to write a wish or a request and they leave it in the crevice of a wall of the monastery or rock fence so as the saint may answer their prayers.

### **WEDDING CUSTOMS IN THE NORTH-WEST PART OF MONTENEGRO**

Wedding customs are the most luxurious customs of all. Not even one event in the life of people from this part of Montenegro has saved from oblivion the luxury in the customs, as it is saved in engagements and weddings, and thus such gaiety takes a special place in the tradition of this people. Describing wedding in Piva, Milun Tadic explained that people accustomed many customs to their needs and and because of the wide variety of wedding customs, because of the influence of different cultures, by expansion of Christianity, etc, it is hard to determine with precision which customs are autochthonous and which aren’t. However, there are certain customs for which it could be stated for sure they are autochthonous for this part of Montenegro and they may be set apart.

Asking in marriage usually precedes the wedding. In this part of Montenegro it is a custom that a bridegroom and his father (or an uncle if

there is no father) and mother's brother ask a woman's hand in marriage. When suitors arrive to the bride's house, it is a custom to play jokes on, so called outwitting and which usually refers to the thing of giving a bride or not. Nonetheless, the bride has the last word. Many authors are unique in statement that Montenegrin and Bosnian wedding irresistibly looks like Kosovo myth. In other words, it is familiar that in border part between Montenegro and Herzegovina every wedding guest has its role. First there are the head persons going who symbolize Kosancic Ivan and Toplica Milan according to Kosovo myth. The leader goes behind them, usually the oldest son-in-law of that family. The leader symbolizes Bosko Jugovic. Bridegroom's chief attendant has the most important role. He gives orders about organization of the wedding and everything has to be under his control. The most respected person in the family gets this role. Bridegroom's chief attendant is a symbol and memory on prince Lazar. This group goes in front. Husband's brothers are in between together with the bride. Husband's brothers symbolize Ivan and Milos, and the bride symbolizes Kosovka djevojka. Wedding guests without a role and dukes are behind them and by custom they are usually bridegroom's uncle who at the same time represents bodyguards for the wedding guests. Duke symbolizes Milos Obilic and he sits at the rear of the table with bridegroom's chief attendant. Of course, a marriage witness takes a special place on the wedding where he enjoys high reputation.

Custom says there is a head of the house. When the wedding guests have gathered, it is a custom to go for a bride. At the entrance of the bride's house, there is sweet bread on which money is put, in order to buy a bride. Having finished that, everybody sits down the table. After some time, wedding guests ask to see a bride. First, there appears some other girl so as to check whether husband's brothers will recognize the "right" one, i.e. their future daughter-in-law. Then, two brothers hand over the sister to the husband's brothers and decoration of the wedding guests starts. Decoration is done by white handkerchiefs where this handkerchief is put on the left side for those who are not married but on the right side for those who are married. Flag is decorated by a shirt and an apple. Having spent some time in bride's house, wedding guests get ready to leave, and then by custom bride's father says prayers with a glass of wine and blesses his daughter. This is the most touching moment during the wedding. When leaving her house, bride throws an apple to some girl or she pulls someone's skirt, because it is believed this one will be next to get marry. It is interesting that while leaving the house, a brother calls his sister and if she turns it is believed that her kids would look like her family.

Having taken bride's presents, they all head toward the bridegroom's house where they are welcomed with a song. Mother-in-law gives young boy to the bride on the doorstep; she turns around three times in the direction of Sun, kisses him, gives him a shirt or piece of gold and gives him back to the mother-in-law. After that, bride is given a sieve with corn which she sows all around and at the end she has to throw the sieve over the house. The result of throwing the sieve over the house, whether it will be thrown over or it will stop somewhere on the roof, shows how lucky the bride is. Also, bride is expected to

open the barrel, which is full of water, by her teeth and to strew whole water from the barrel. After all these customs are finished, bride finally sits down the table. At the end of the wedding, bride strews the wedding guests with water to wash their faces and after that all guests feasts the bride with money or piece of gold, which is called "poljevacina".

### EASTER CUSTOMS IN NORTH-WEST PART OF MONTENEGRO

Not only that Easter is the merriest Christian holiday but it is also the oldest one. It is even mentioned in the second century and it is the continuation of the biggest Jewish holiday-Passover. Easter is celebrated in the first full moon after spring equinox, and it is celebrated in the name and memory on suffering and Christ's Resurrection from the dead. If it was hard to find someone who celebrated this religious holiday during socialistic period, today it is even harder to find someone who doesn't celebrate it.

Big Easter fast (the 6<sup>th</sup> week) precedes this big holiday. Church and believers celebrate Lazarus's Saturday as a memory on Lazarus resurrected whom Christ resurrected just before he died. This happens in the last Saturday at fast. Next day, believers celebrate Cvijeti holiday, as a memory on Christ's entry to Jerusalem. There is a custom cherished in this area that one should get up early in the morning on that day, go to the field and pick up first spring flowers and sink them in water and when the household members get up, they all wash their faces with that water. A week before Easter is suffering week which is celebrated as a memory on betrayal, catching, crucifixion and Christ's suffering.

Friday before Easter is a day of Christ's crucifixion and suffering. People should fast on that day, eat only bread and drink only water. Among people this day is known as Big or Black Friday among people. A mantle (linen where Christ's laying down in the grave is embroidered) is put in front of the altar and believers kiss the mantle. The custom says believers should crawl beneath the table where the mantle is, making a wish and believing it will come true. One of the nicest customs that are done on Big Friday and which is characteristic for all Christian regions is painting the eggs. People do nothing on that day and every thought aims at Christ's crucifixion. Eggs are painted to serve as memory on the event when Maria Magdalena traveled to Rome to preach the Gospel and then she visited Tsar Tiberius. She gave him a red egg as a present and greeted him with *God is risen*. Eggs are colored in red as a symbol of spilt blood of Jesus but red color is a color of resurrection, as well<sup>1</sup> Those who fasted receive Communion on Easter morning and then later they celebrate Easter with their families and they crack eggs and greet each other by Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! The strongest egg is kept in the house as protector till next Easter.

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<sup>1</sup> More about painting Easter eggs and its symbolism in: Čajkanović 1973.



### CHRISTMAS IN BORDER PART BETWEEN MONTENEGRO AND HERZEGOVINA

We've already said that Christmas is the merriest Christian holiday. However, Christmas and nice customs by which we celebrate Christ's birth represent the most solemn period throughout the year and that's why we want to describe customs that relate to this holiday. The fact that Christ's birth is celebrated, new child's birth, paternal and maternal holiday is decorated in the north-west part of Montenegro by the most luxurious customs. All those customs aim at the prayer for the God for salvation of the family, for health, harmony and love. Verses from the "Mountain Wreath" show how much Christmas is important.

*"Would any man enjoy the day,  
Then surely he must taste its light;  
He who would make a merry feast,  
Must also know what Yuletide means!  
In Beth'lem Yuletide I have kept,  
And in Mount Athos Christmas I have kept,  
In Holy Kieff, too, Noël I've kept;  
But quite apart this Yuletide stands  
For merriment and good simplicity.  
The heart's bright flames burns best of all the year,  
The straw is spread upon the household floor,  
While crosswise flame the logs on cheery fire;  
The rifles crack, and roasts on spits do turn.  
The kolo singsthey strike the gouslé's chord..."*

Njegoš 2001, 123.

Christmas was celebrated just the way Njegos described it in the "Mountain Wreath", with the straw spread upon the household floor, with the logs crossed, with roasts, gouslé, songs and toasts. In this work, we focus on the customs that were used when celebrating Christmas in traditional way.

Two days before Christmas is Tucindan, day when people sacrifice a lamb for Christmas (that's why it is called Tucindan). There is a custom that all household members apply lambskin to their faces for good luck and health. It is also believed that on this day people should not beat their children for children will have ulcers all around their body. Tomorrow is Christmas. People cut logs on this day.<sup>2</sup> Early in the morning, before the sun has risen, head of the house goes to the wood together with his son to pick the logs. They cut three logs and it is either oak-tree or Turkey-oak tree. It is believed that oak-tree is the most sacred tree with godlike spirit. This belief, as scien-

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<sup>2</sup> According to some explanations, word log comes from word stay up, or stay awake. Thus Christmas Eve is night when people should stay awake, by which they pay honor to Jesus, and visitor should not find household members asleep.

tists say, has kept till today. Hence there is a custom which says that when a head of the house cuts the logs, he talks to them, strews it with wheat and pours wine<sup>3</sup>. Log is cut from eastern side diagonally and must be cut down after third blow. The broken part of the log is called chin and the chip of the log is kept because the custom says it should be put in milk-setting bowl so as to make cream thicker. Log is put on the front door and stands upright until the evening on the right-hand side. Log symbolizes the tree which righteous Joseph used to light a fire in cold cavern when Jesus was born.

People usually fast on Christmas so housewives prepare fast food. When logs are brought inside the house, straw is usually brought as well, according to the custom. Straw is put on the floor and the food is laid on the straw. Straw symbolizes the straw on which Christ was born. After logs are brought inside, household members should stay in the house and they shouldn't go anywhere, nobody should visit their house and people shouldn't borrow things from the house on Christmas Eve.

A visitor is the first who enters the house on Christmas morning. It is usually young male person. He brings the logs inside the house, approaches the fire which was lit on Christmas Eve and says a toast: "So many sparkles, so much luck, money, sheepfold and lambs, happy children, love, harmony and merriment. Amen." Visitor symbolizes philosophers from the East who came to bow down before the Christ. Visitor usually puts money and an apple on the log and then he sits down the table. Housewife gives a visitor a robe because it is believed it will make cream on milk better. Then he breaks the sweet bread, turns it around three times saying the Lord's Prayer, he crosses with black wine and he breaks the sweet bread making enough number of pieces for the household members. It is believed that the one who gets the piece of the sweet bread together with the coin will be happy whole year. When leaving, a visitor is given a present, usually a towel or socks. Second day after Christmas is Scepan day, and on that day young women who are married gather in their parents' house, as it is said in the Mountain Wreath: "Married young woman visited me on Scepan day". During these three days, while Christmas is celebrated, people visit their cousins, friends, their godfathers and godmothers, and Christmas is greeted by Peace of God, Christ is born.

### CONCLUSION

Whole this discussion about customs from the life of inhabitants from north-west part of Montenegro is just one small piece of a story from rich opus regarding usual things that are cherished in this area. Here we mentioned only those that are autochthonous and the most important cus-

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<sup>3</sup> Cajkanovic explains that log is strewed by wine because wine is red just as blood is, and the wine has the godlike force. Wine is called *grape's blood* in Semiotic languages. Old biblical tribe said that grape originated from blood and Alexander the Great thought that wine is *earth's blood*. When Jesus formed an alliance between the Israelites and God he used wine: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you".

toms that are connected to this region. Domestic literature says a lot about folk and religious customs, so our goal wasn't to say something new but to get acquainted with customs that are neglected from border part between Montenegro and Herzegovina. When talking about customs we have also emphasized importance of difference among regions. In region itself is hidden the attraction for studying the customs because even though their essence is the same, they differ from region to region. That's where our desire comes from, in order to focus on the customs that are connected to the north-west part of Montenegro.

In order to convey more precisely such customs and beliefs which are related to this area, we have emphasized the importance of Saint Vsilije Ostroski, who is especially celebrated and worshipped. There are many beautiful customs that are connected to this region, but we focused our attention to the wedding, Easter and Christmas, i.e. to the gaiety we think is autochthonous for the border part between Montenegro and Herzegovina.

Customs that are autochthonous and that are connected to the border area of Montenegro deserve much more space for further and thorough analyses than we could realize in this discussion. We are sure we would draw readers' attention if we talked about great customs that relate to hospitality, celebration of the patron saint's day, as well as customs that relate to the funeral. However, we believe that thanks to this work we managed to get some information about those which are the most frequent and which may present specific quality and autochthony of the customs from this part of Montenegro.

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**ON CERTAIN CHRISTIAN AND CHRISTIANIZED  
CULTS IN SOUTHEASTERN SERBIA  
(An Example of Fostering the Cult of Miraculous  
Springs and the Cult of the Mother of God the Source  
of Life among the Inhabitants of Dimitrovgrad and the  
Surrounding Area)\***

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The extent to which conducting a research involves dealing with serious difficulties, especially when the research is stimulated by narratives which are difficult to verify<sup>1</sup>, without any written evidence to justify a certain belief, was testified in the research of particular traditions and material heritage in the village of Donja Nevlja. It is a village that is now under the jurisdiction of Niš Eparchy. Territorially, it belongs to the municipality of Dimitrovgrad, of whom it is some fifteen kilometers away, and is situated near the border between Serbia and Bulgaria. In terms of the standards of geographers, the village is located on 536th meter above sea level, or at 42° 55 '45" latitude.

The reason for our visit to Donja Nevlja was the church of St. Elias, which was erected, as the inhabitants of Donja Nevlja say, between the two world wars on the foundations of a church dedicated to the Mother of God the Source of life. Everything would be less incentive if there wasn't a spring in the vicinity of the church whose waters are believed by the local population to have healing powers, especially effective against the ophthalmological diseases. Hence the faithful honor the spring by dropping coins in it to this day. Therefore, the spring became a spring of desire. Many consider the described custom to be non-Christian or pagan, although both in form and in content it resembles the Christian custom of gifting icons and churches with

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that methodological difficulties in studying certain problems are not unique to social sciences and do not appear only when a researcher is faced with the examination of phenomena that are "resisting" the standard scientific tools is testified by the words of prominent scientists in the field of exact science. Einstein and Infeld, for example, argued that "the mere formulation of a problem is far more often essential than its solution, which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle requires creative imagination and marks real advances in science", Einstein and Infeld 1938, cited by: Vujević 2006 57.

securities and coins. Hence arose the thought on the forms of religiosity and piety (not only that of the visitors of the aforementioned spring), if the terms are not considered synonyms (Biškup 1983, 183-193; Hohnjec 1983, 103-106; Црква - Календар 1974, 38, 39; Јеротић 2000, 91-98; comp. Благојевић 2011, 45-51; Драгана Радисављевић-Ћипаризовић 2011, 76-81), bearing in mind that, in today's Christian man, the pagan, the Old Testament and the New Testament (Јеротић 1994, 143-161; Јеротић 2005, 7-32), exist in a relationship which is difficult to disentangle, placed in the same time, between the popular and diffuse (Јukić 1983, 137; Јukić 1989a, 83-86; Matruško 1984, 175-184; James 1990, 1-52, 343, 354; Keilbach 1942, 75-95).

This, of course, does not mean we should disregard the assertion that in the religious life of the Orthodox "not everything can be reduced to paganism [...] and every Christian holiday [and ritual] be brought down to the pagan roots and pagan beliefs" (Терзић 1985, 277). The quoted text recalls the view that a pagan, and thereby a magic approach to the Christian way of life, "is created by adopting the satanic conception of freedom as a rebellion against the good in oneself [...] and against the absolute good in God" (Данило, епископ марчански 1985, 159;<sup>2</sup> Јанић 1985; Vereš 1987, 278-281). Such a stance seems to be neglecting the work of Gustave Le Bon (Л'Бон 1995) and many others who have studied the causes of belief as a possible escape into the world of mysticism.<sup>3</sup> The last citation may induce a thought on the standpoint which claims that high-sounding and often unfounded appeals to God have nothing to do with God or with Orthodoxy and its legacy, that is, with the tradition of the Orthodox Church and the Church authorities (Јовановић 2011, 43-51, 81), often reducing themselves to a paransis or perhaps a maxim or a proverb saying that "there is no worship without trouble"). In terms of the sociology of religion, the aforementioned would imply that we should keep in mind how it needs to avoid a triple threat: to become an ideology, not to turn into idolatry, and to cease to exceed its limits (Јukić 1989b, 444; comp. Ćimić 1970/1971, 487-502), without taking into account considerations which belong to other sciences or scientific disciplines, which is often the case.

Although, in spite of our thorough research, a number of uncertainties related to the church of St. Elias and the cult of the mentioned source will remain, the fact that the site lies at the foot of the hill called "Lečevište" (health resort) since the Middle Ages indicates that there is "something" there. The fact that there is "something" in the wider area is confirmed by the fact that there are several "healing waters" nearby called "holy waters" by the locals. Among them are those above the old cemetery in Staro selo in Željuša and at locations known as "Karakondol" and "Svetenjak". There are some located in courtyards of monasteries, such as the monastery of Holy Trinity and St. Mina located on a hill near Dimitrovgrad. Actually, there are about

<sup>2</sup> Compare also: Сујеверје – клањање ђаволу. Свети Оци Цркве о сујеверју-празноверју 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Уп. Zašto savremen čovek beži u mistiku? Diskusija sa okruglog stola, Psihologija, 1-2 (1973): 157-179.

ten springs in the municipality of Dimitrovgrad which are still believed to have healing power and to treat most eye diseases ("diseases of vision").<sup>4</sup> Zvonačka Banja, however, is the only official medicinal spa resort in the area, with the source of water which has a beneficial effect on the diseases of the nervous system and the inflammatory changes of the eyes, as stated in the official presentation of the resort. All of them, visitors of Zvonačka Banja and the visitors of other sources in the area which are said to be medicinal, are linked by the goal of pilgrimage, but for the ones who visit Zvonačka Banja the religious element may not be decisive. For the sake of the truth, when it comes to religious pilgrimages as a unique form of religious tourism (comp. Maća 2009), a health-religious one in the case of Donja Nevlja, it should be noted that the theory offers an abundance of meaningful conceptual definitions of the phenomenon of pilgrimage. All of them describe a pilgrimage as a journey and the quest of individuals or religious groups to a holy place, or a place they would like to have the sacred status, and for the pilgrims visiting the springs and churches in the Donja Nevlja, miraculous powers. Incentives for those visits, if believed to be primarily religious and only secondarily secular, are easily denied by reality because the motive of a pilgrimage is a consequence of the anxious desire for mental and physical healing of the pilgrim. Therefore, the unhappy and the crippled gather near churches, icons, relics and tombs and seek the grace of healing with a lot of hope. They all want to become like "ordinary people" (Jukić 1987, 115-127). From the Middle Ages they were gathered in the group scenes in the representations of the Mother of God the Source of Life, which is particularly important in our case, if it is true that the Church of St. Elias is built on the foundations of a church dedicated to the Mother of God the Source of Life.

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Owing to modern technology, one can reach every corner of the earth from the point of view of the "divine eye". With the help of Google Earth, the search for a church near the village of Donja Nevlja is much easier. However, since a photographic record is not enough even if it was made for

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<sup>4</sup> The reasons why the majority of sites with healing waters are dedicated to treating eye diseases can be interpreted in light of a very old understanding of blindness as one of the worst kinds of disability, as terrifying tragic experiences of individuals. This is contributed to by great ancient legends about the blind, in which the lives of the main protagonists, such as Homer, the poet, prophet Tiresias, King Oedipus, are presented as special and frightening. In the case of the ancient hero last mentioned, the disability is interpreted as a consequence of a divine punishment. Therefore, the blindness in the understanding of the ancient Romans and Greeks was often interpreted as worse than death. Although such views should not be generalized, it should be noted that the lack of vision is one of the greatest misfortunes of life to the modern man as well, leading to huge changes in everyday life. In such circumstances the pursuit of a cure, often of an alternative type such as the faith in the power of "holy water", is not uncommon. More on the notion of blindness in the ancient West in: Hudson 2005. [http://www.sage-ereference.com/disability/Article\\_n406.html](http://www.sage-ereference.com/disability/Article_n406.html) Accessed: 19 Nov. 2008).

the needs of a universal Internet search engine (Google), it was necessary to make an effort and come to the village, now almost abandoned, since in 1948 there were 509 inhabitants, and in 2002 there were only 31 (P3C 2004). Today, the situation is unchanged and the demographic image is even bleaker. This means that the possibility of obtaining information on the church of St. Elias and the "miraculous spring" is reduced in comparison with the period immediately after the Second World War.

To make things even more layered and more difficult for researching, the data collected on St. Elias opened a new enigma. For, thin records could not confirm that the church was undoubtedly built on the foundations of a church dedicated to the Mother of God the Source of Life, which was determined on the basis of oral evidence. Moreover, there is an opinion that the church was built on the foundations of a medieval monastery known as "Mžaj", which, upon arrival of the Ottomans, belonged the Pirot and Sofia kadiluk. The study was thus unexpectedly shifted in a direction that led to different thoughts and revelations. Some came from the records on the monasteries in the area of Pirot kadiluk from the last Turkish cadastral registration of the Sanjak of Sophia in relation to the name of Sultan Mehmed III or the first year of his reign (1595-1603). The information source, however, includes only the monasteries and not the places of worship with the status of village churches. It is not characterized by an abundance of material on the listed monuments. Information on the monastic estates are extremely scarce. Based on it, however, it was determined that the monastery "Mžaj" was in the village of Donja Nevlja (Тричковић 1981, 84). Radmila Tričković believes that the monastery was dedicated to St. Peter! Additional confusion comes from her explanation that it is located beneath the summit of the hill called "Lečevište", and that "the hill itself resembles the treatment of eyes." On these premises, the mentioned art historian concludes that "the name of the old monastery would be: Mžaj. This phrase – слыпь есть, мжай – is taken from the Second Epistle of Peter" (Тричковић 1981, 84). This meant, according to Tričković, that the monastery Mžaj was probably dedicated to St. Peter! The connection in this statement is hard to find, especially if we bear in mind the words of the Apostle Peter (2 Pet. 1, 9) referred to by Tričković: "... But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins".<sup>5</sup> It is surprising that, to her knowledge, the present church of St. Elias in Donja Nevlja is located in Manastirište mahala, and that it was built in 1921 (ph. 1). If one can believe the *Journal of the Serbian Orthodox Church*, however, the temple was built and consecrated on the day of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1930 (without mentioning that it was built on a church or a monastery site which was usually done for all churches under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church of Serbia built or renovated since 1920. [According to: Лечић 1971, 82]).

Despite our dealing with conflicting information about the temple in the available records and those obtained from the oral evidence, the belief in

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<sup>5</sup> Свето писмо. Нови завјет Господа нашег исуса Христа, (у преводу комисије Архијерејског Синода СПЦ), 1998.



the healing power of the water from a spring near the church has been preserved to this day. In its power, or perhaps in the power the pilgrims' belief, the researchers were convinced by the votives – coins at the bottom of the spring, as well as "traces" in the form of red threads wrapped around the vegetation directly above it. (That this is a case of a widespread custom of pilgrims leaving a trace was confirmed to us by the informant who testified that, as a part of the visit to "holy springs" and a part of an obligatory ritual of "healing", in addition to the ritual of washing in the spring water, the visitors leave a "trace" of a red thread or the parts of the clothing of the diseased (which based on ethnographers' studies can be understood as a form of gifting (Bjeladinović-Jergić 1987, 55). According to the testimony, in time of frequent visits to the spring, it is easy to find pieces of clothing, which is also a kind of a ritual, which in particular form has the properties of the votives.

Regardless of whether this is a so-called authentic subjective perception of Christian symbolism or a pragmatic practice based largely on pagan beliefs, it is important to point out the fact that at the time of the existence of a complex modern society and the extraordinary progress of medicine a "simple and universal explanation of life and death, sickness and health" functions, which originates from certain types of religious beliefs (Кишјухас 2007, 370).<sup>6</sup> The final judgment on the nature of such beliefs would require further empirical study of subjective feelings which motivate the practice of healing with waters that are believed to have healing powers and rituals at their sources, the so called "holy springs". Hence it is very much essential to analyze numerous past studies of pilgrimages and today's studies<sup>7</sup> in terms of the pursuit of health in the earthly life and not just reaching the eternity in the afterlife. Therefore, a pilgrimage, from a phenomenological point of view, should be understood from a psychological standpoint on experience (of the individual) as well, and with much cultural- anthropological- ethnological understanding of its structure, and eventually brought all "hermeneutically into a comprehensive relationship and a coherent philosophical and theological relevance to the individual and the community" (Чајкановић 1973, 47, 48).

The origins of popular beliefs about the healing properties of "holy waters" (ph. 2), the prevailing practice of their use for treatment, the survival of the legends of the miraculous cases of healing, primarily lead to the determination of the symbolism of water sources and recalling certain customs and cults, in this case, the votives and the cult of the Mother God as Our Lady of the Way (for the blind) and the Source of Life (health, as well as the eternity [in Christ]). Remembering all of them is directly connected with the locality, which is the subject of our work.

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<sup>6</sup> A broader interpretation of the alternative forms of treatment from the viewpoint manaistic world view, therefore, from the discourse of sociology of religion, read more in the mentioned text, 367-396.

<sup>7</sup>A scientific meeting in the organization of JUNIR (2010) dedicated to this subject testifies on the actuality of pilgrimage in our environment. Read more in: Radisavljević-Ćiparizović 2010.

While discussing water, it is important to emphasize that it has many symbolic values in Christianity (Јовановић 2009, 9, 204, 205). Since the ancient times, it was considered the center and the renewal of life – the source of life, a means of purification; its negative connotation comes from its destructive power, as God's punishment, such as the Old Testament flood (1 Mos 6, 17, 7, 10-24, 8, 1-8 ). According to the Bible, God created it separating "the water under the vault from the water above it" (1 Mos 1, 6-7), to spread prosperity (Ps 104, 11-18), as a sign of God's blessings to those who serve him faithfully (1 Mos 27, 28), denying it as a sign of the curse of the wicked (Is 19, 5), protecting the just from the destructive waves (Ps 32, 6). It is an essential element in the holy secret of baptism and the holy water, the so called agiasma, is given special properties (in terms of exact science, that means that "taking the waters inside and out has been long recognized as a therapeutic, which the wealth of many countries certifies" (Halrojd 1995, 157).

In connection with the cult of water, popular beliefs in its healing power were developed based on the Christianized interpretation of water. The ancient custom of immersion in cold water which was recommended as a form of suffering is known in Christianity, and in its early stages an immersion in cold water was considered a method of "taming the way " for virtues. Christianity received the Eastern custom of drinking (consecrated) water as a basic element of purification, although among the people (in addition to the ritual bath, which is present in different ways in all monotheistic religions), the washing of sacred items, usually crosses and icons, is present (Чажкановић 1973, 47, 48). Consecrated water had a very important place in Christianity from the very beginning. Its consecration was performed on various occasions, so that with the blessing of God it would gain the power to cleanse the body and soul, forgive the sins, heal diseases, banish visible and invisible enemies, cleanse the nature of all evil and demons, which gives it an apotropaic character. The rituals of the consecration of water, alone or as a part of the holy secret of baptism and various prayers, have been applied with certain changes to this day.

As Christ is seen as a source of "living water" (Jn 4, 10; 1 Cor 10, 4), because on the cross on Golgotha "the river of living water" flowed from his body (Jn 7, 38; 4, 14), over time the Mother of God became "the Source of Life", which deserves our attention later.

In the context of our interest, it should be pointed out that the belief in the curative and healing power of water is very old and dates back to ancient times. The cult of water is also a part of the old Slavic mythology. Procopius recorded in the sixth century that the Slavs worshiped rivers and nymphs. While fairies have the gift of prophecy and heal the sick, sources called "fairy waters" have healing properties as well. The Old Slavs purified themselves with prayer, cleaned and washed themselves in the "pure living water". By washing in it, they prayed for the purity of their souls and bodies. These prayers, in their belief, were established by Svarog himself. They had no specific place designated for prayer, so the Slavs prayed in front of "the wells and springs where the living water flowed". Over time, the belief in the healing power of water gained the support of the official teachings of the Church. Thus, the healing

of the blind was associated with the citation from Gospel of John, where it was said that Christ gave sight to a person who was blind from birth, "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam. So the man went and washed, and came home seeing". The cult of water was contributed to by the official medicine, so the legacy of antiquity passed a long way from ethnomedicine to the scientific medicine, which confirmed that ethnology and medicine have a "common core of ethno-medical" (Dragić 1991, 32, 33). From the standpoint of Christianity, this is, but it does not have to be, contrary to the belief that "a miracle is the dearest child of faith" (Keler 1980, 344), and thus brought into the context of the miraculous water.

Springs (and wells) are directly associated with the symbology of water and its properties. The origin of all meaning in Christianity is derived from the Book of Genesis. In the Christian symbology, a source is in a direct relationship with the symbolism of water, while the "source of life" (Ps 36, 9), "the spring of living water" (Jer 2, 13, 17, 13) applies to Christ first, because "whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4, 14). The spring of "living water" is mentioned in the Bible, with the meaning of the eternal bliss of Paradise, which John the Theologian in the apocalyptic vision mentions: " They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore [...] for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters" (Rev. 7, 16-17). In early Christian exegesis, the theme of the source of life is located within the meaning of the Garden of Eden, as a "walled garden of heavenly bliss", with the starting point in the allegorical interpretation of the verses in the Book of Genesis where in the description of the Garden of Eden there is a mention of a spring which is divided into four rivers. The source is an attribute traditionally ascribed to the Mother of God, originating in the Song of Songs (4, 12), expressed in the church painting through the illustration of the theme - the Mother of God the Source of life, but from the early Christianity the source of life equated with it – source as the Church.

Some Old Testament verses have, directly, as a literary model of early Christianity, influenced an especially frequent theme of a deer or a hind, and often a peacock, on a source of living water, with literary inspiration in the first words 42nd Psalm: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

The relationship: Christ - the source of life, however, based on the theological interpretation, has its prefiguration in the Old Testament, and a primordial image in the event when Moses broke the rock in the desert from which water flowed, saving, by the will of God, the chosen people (2 Mos 17, 1-5) in a way in which the source of life was put in a special relationship – an Eucharistic one, and a moralizing one in the Baroque proclamation, with the encounter of Christ and the Samaritan woman near the well (John 4, 5-27).

In the presentation of Heaven in Christian art, since the Middle Ages, a source from which rivers "that spawn world" spring is traditionally

portrayed in accordance with a paradisiacal landscape which is watered by perennial rivers near which the just lead a serene life. The heavenly life is wished for the dead in songs and ancient epitaphs in the Byzantine world and its spiritual circles and among the Orthodox (the virtue of water that purifies is given in Ezekiel in the Old Testament [47, 7-12] and in the Revelation of John the Theologian [22, 1-2]).

A well is a source of water - with the same or similar meaning, for which a cult has also been cultivated, often based on mythological and pagan beliefs and hydromancy (while researching the cult of water springs in the Balkans, a common belief was observed that each source and the water flowing from it have their invisible master or protector, which is common to other pagan peoples in Europe, and it is common practice to build a drinking fountain "for the soul").

The Christianized cult of springs and wells is expressed in the example of sacred waters. Thus it should not come as a surprise that many churches and monasteries have "healing waters" on their property i.e. "miraculous water" or a "miraculous spring". Such places have become not only the centers of cults and the goal of pilgrimages, but also healing places.

The treatment "at the spring" was often combined with the ritual incubation, followed by a ritual bath, "cleaning" (which, admittedly, is not remembered by the inhabitants of Donja Nevlja, but not impossible). Many temples and monasteries became well known precisely for that reason. Some monasteries were the gathering places for people of different religions, due to the existence of healing springs, which means that "when a disease strikes, it does not matter whose God it is". Thus the famous "acid water" at Dečani, for example, that the pilgrims drank after the Divine Liturgy, has been tasted by many Muslims. In fact, "they drink it, and wash with it especially if their eyes hurt". The reason for washing is based on the belief that it was this water that Stefan of Dečani "cured his eyes with". A well known example are the healing waters which spring up from under the altar of the katholikon of the monastery Banjska near Kosovska Mitrovica which was built by King Milutin, and where a "sulphurous spa" exists to this day. The names of some monasteries, such as a Banja in the Bay of Kotor and Banja on the river Lim, etymologically point to their healing properties.

The history and origin of the monastery Bođani in Vojvodina is quite interesting for our topic, as well as the narratives about a Serb named Bogdan, from Dalmatia, who, on returning home from Hungary got sick and "distorted his eyesight". On encountering the location of the present monastery where a spring was located he washed his face "and healed". Then the traveler vowed to the Mother of God that he would build a church or a monastery out of gratitude, and so "Bogdan built the church and the cells" – the monastery Bođani in 1478.

Later thoughts on the reason the monastery was dedicated to the Mother of God are associated with the narrative about the Mother of God Our Lady of the Way (Hodegetria, Greek), because according to the ancient tradition, the Mother of God led the blind to the healing spring. The monastery Bođani is important since it can be understood as a form of a votive, as it

might have been the case with the Church of the Mother of God the Source of Life in the village of Donja Nevlja, if it really existed. If it existed, it could be compared in the same way as the church of St. Elias to the so called sacred waters and the cult buildings in their vicinity, even as a form of votives – sacrificial prayers and forms of gratitude. Hence it is important to remember that holy waters are peculiar cult places based on a Christianized belief in special qualities of certain sources or wells whose water is believed to have medicinal and healing properties. They are considered to be sacred places, or "holy wells" or "holy waters". Serbian people call them the "source", "healing water", "healing well" and they are named after the patron (folk belief links them to the stories from the Bible and the lives of saints through various legends).

At the same time, the concept includes the spring and the objects that are directly connected to the cult. In the beginning, springs were marked by placing a cross and hanging an icon on a tree next to the source, which was also considered holy ("record"), so that, eventually, a fountain would be built, often protected by a canopy, or a chapel with accommodation for the pilgrims was built just above the source or next to it. Sacred waters are encountered in various places: near monasteries, in the churchyards, settlements, near rivers, streams, and even cemeteries. Today they are known to the general public primarily owing to the study of sacred waters in Vojvodina (Влајић 1994, 154, 155; Ђекић 2001; Прица 1993, 94-96; Прица 1995, 97-104), although they exist throughout Serbia, including Dimitrovgrad, but under different names (we point out our confusion over the fact that the sources to which miraculous properties are attributed are being studied mainly by experts in Vojvodina, although they exist all over Serbia).

An organized (mass) pilgrimage "to the sacred waters" usually takes place around important church holidays, and especially on the day of a village's slava. As it is the case with other holy objects, such as the relics of saints and miracle-working icons, people say prayers next to sacred waters, they pray for health or give gratitude for the recovery, gift metal and other forms of money, that is, various votives. The belief in the healing power of the sacred waters is expressed by incubating the sick near the spring, or in the chapels above the source.

It is easy to conclude from the previous discussion that all sites are gifted some sort of votives, even if they are in the form of a prayer. Therefore, it should be recalled that votives mainly include different objects which faithful, as an addition to their prayers – as a vow or in gratitude for an answered prayer (ex voto), gift to monasteries, churches and cult objects, such as especially venerated icons, relics of saints and other relics including sources (in some cases they have been interpreted as a sacrifice of a vow or a sacrifice of gratitude). They may be in the form of money, jewelry, liturgical objects, icons (or the so called enchirions for icons), but also buildings, chapels and churches built near sacred places or in their memory (Пантелић 1988, 109; Цветковић 2001).

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. There was a custom of leaving a variety of aids that the cured were using (crutches, stretchers, cane). In addition to the desire for personal health and the health of the loved ones, votives-plates in the shape of animals or property, such as a ship, for example, were gifted in caring for their protection from accidents.

When it comes to worshipping sacred sites, a special way of expressing faith in their miraculous properties is a form of incubation near a spring or in the vicinity of the relics of saints.

The custom of votive-giving originates from the earliest periods of human culture; it is present in all religions. Christian votives have ancient heritage. *Ex voto suscepto* was taken over from the ancient Romans by the church as a sign for votive gifts.

Votives in the narrow sense are objects of craftsmanship, shaped in a symbolic or associative manner, which are being attached as a visible appeal or gratitude for the healing or deliverance from an accident. They are usually in the form of a human figure or diseased body parts – eyes, nose, hands, feet, heart. They are made of metal, wax, wood, plaster. It is characteristic for our region that votives are primarily attached to icons. A particular form of votives are coins that are gifted, i.e. thrown in a spring or a well. It is a tradition that dates back from the European pagan folklore. The origin is associated with a belief that every spoken (imagined) wish will be answered, which means that it should be paid for. To put it in less severe words, the coins are understood as a gift to the deity who will answer the prayer. In other words, it is a special contract with the deity, that eventually focused only on God, "the Christian God, the One and Only".

The idea that the wish will be granted comes from the belief that the gods lived in water, because water is "a source of life and often scarce commodity", so special value was attributed to it, evidenced by the symbolism of water that is taken over by Christianity. This means that springs and wells were considered to be sacred places since the ancient times (which will, due to the climate changes and other phenomena, soon become independent of the religious situation, for example). In the pagan era, the spring locations were marked with statues of deities associated with it. These statues were replaced by Christian icons and places of worship near the source or over the source. Due to all that was mentioned, it should not be surprising if there was actually a church dedicated to the Mother of God the Source of Life over the spring in Donja Nevlja, which does not mean we should disregard the ways of the Christianization and "channeling" the cult of water among the Serbs, since there are indisputable examples of when the popular piety of Orthodox believers (deriving from the pagan world, from mythology and folklore tradition) was to be institutionalized and put under control, which gave the cult the pragmatic function of propagating the Church. If today's church of St. Elias was really built on the foundations of a church dedicated to the Mother of God the Source of Life, it will be one of the few places of worship with such dedication, regardless of the extent of the worship of the Mother of God as the Source of Life throughout the Christian world, mostly the part of it which belongs to the Byzantine world and its spiritual circle in which the

border area of the southern and southeastern Serbia belongs. The strength of the cult is evidenced by church painting, as well as rich iconographic concepts, which in many instances may represent the true picture of the events at the spring in the village of Donja Nevlja (Габелић 1998, 172-174; Јовановић 2009, 110-113; Магловски 2003, 181-191; Медаковић 1958, 203-211), since the representations of the source with gathered patients of all ages and social status are quite famous; they are curing their disease by washing their faces, swimming in the water or drinking it, while there is an image of the Mother of God with her Child above them, as a visible testimony of her power in the name of the Son.

The question remains to what extent would the population living in the area of Donja Nevlja in the modern age, marked by a variety of difficulties, be pleased if the healing water turned into wine, since in that part of the world there is a widespread belief that the water sources "turn into a great wine", though only the day of the Baptism of Christ (Зажковски 2000, 51). Everything discussed so far inspires us to think about why today's church in Donja Nevlja is dedicated to St. Elias the Thunderer, because in the Orthodox religion, the original dedication of a church is rarely changed. Uncertainties regarding the dedication of the temple and the time of its construction and eventual reconstruction can probably partly be explained by the fact that it is located in the territory which represents the borderline between Serbia and Bulgaria (Pavlica 2002, 7-23). It is an area where the daily life (including its religious segments) occurred under the influence of more or less dramatic events between Bulgarian and Serbian people, and not only them.<sup>8</sup> This was contributed to by the Church, in this case primarily the Ecumenical Patriarchate with Phanariots heading it, acting contrary to their mission (Поповић 1999, 122-126, 130, 131; Лиличић 1993, 181-186), not caring about the inhabitants of Donja Nevlja and their shrines. If it were not the case, maybe the research would point to a greater certainty in the origin of the folk belief in the healing properties of the spring in Donja Nevlja as being based on Christian cults of the Mother of God the Source of Life and sacred waters.

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<sup>8</sup> In the analytical observation of the present time, which is weighed by a variety of "tails" of the past, one should not disregard the events in the Balkan wars and the First World War and the interwar era, that is, until the Second World War and the years that marked the last world war (Јовановић 1998, 136-145; Јовановић 2004, 33, 34, 60, 61; Koljanin 2001, 55-63; Kuljić 1977, 141-173; Митровић 1989, 21-38; Stojiljković 1989; Stojčev 1994, 177-193).

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

Ph. 1: Th church of St. Elias in Donja Nevlja (J. Petrović 2011)



Ph. 2: "Holy spring" near The church st. Elias in Donja Nevlja (J. Petrović 2011)



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## THE GREAT DAY (EASTER) IN PRESLAP\*

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### INSTEAD OF AN INTRODUCTION

The authors aim to consider the content and processes related to Easter celebrations in the village of Preslap (Crna Trava). Although the authors have largely focused on the research of traditional patterns of celebrating Easter, some emphasis has been put on contemporary socio-cultural processes which have contributed to the transformation of traditional forms of celebration. Apart from direct research in the field and conversations with elderly inhabitants of the village of Preslap, our analysis also includes research results of other authors who have pursued this topic. The conceptual and methodological approach is in line with our intention to shortly present the basic characteristics of Easter (Great Day) celebration. At the same time, we discuss the transformation of the way this holiday is celebrated, as noted in the sociological field work in the borderline village of Preslap.

„In the modern context, Serbian folk religion is characterized by numerous changes, differentiated positions and imagery, incomplete revitalization, and (globally viewed) a situation in which further currents of development and transformation of folk religion are uncertain, given the contemporary multitude of events, suggesting the process of dissolution or restructuring (Todorović 2008, 56).”

Research results suggest that the traditional custom of Easter celebration has been handed down and preserved in some aspects. In some other details it has assumed a new form (egg painting with industrial dye), while some elements have become marginalized or fully forgotten (joint celebration in a meadow above the village, in the presence of a priest).

This is yet another proof that rites create, but also preserve current social reality. In some social circumstances, rites may establish and encourage some social expectations and relations. However, the opposite may happen – they can weaken, or even extinguish these expectations (Engelhardt 2012). Certainly, rituals reflect the community's view of social reality, social values and social relations (the expressive function) (Solomon et al. 2012). They exert influence on forming these people's values, assessments, emo-

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tions, behaviors. As stressed by Engelhardt (2012), religious rituals can transform reality in themselves (the transformative function). At the same time, they can instruct members of a community as to how they should respond to the moral, social, and metaphysical reality (the educational function). If we take all of this into consideration, we will realize how important the study of rituals is – because the performance of rituals or lack thereof is the projection of the reality in which one lives. In any case, traditional rituals pose a challenge to the modern age.

### GOOD FRIDAY IN PRESLAP, ONCE AND NOW

Easter or the Great Day (Veligdan, as it was once known in Preslap) is one of the biggest Christian holidays<sup>1</sup>. Locals claim that earlier the feast was celebrated as the Great Day, and not Easter. They state that, under the influence of television and other mass media, and also that of younger people coming from the cities, the term Easter is more broadly accepted today.

„In our people this is called the *Resurrection* and *Easter*, in farther eastern areas *the Great Day*, and in the western parts (especially among the Christians) *Vazam*. The feast is as great as Christmas (Stefanović Karadžić 1964, 171).”

Easter is related to the custom in which painted eggs are given. They are a symbol of the renewal of nature and life. In that sense, the red Easter egg is a joy for both the one giving and the one receiving it. Joy is a positive emotional state, to be shared with others. This emotion is a constituent part of the process in which we express a positive attitude to other people. When expressing it, we show our favor, acceptance, social support, warmth, commitment, and joint participation with others. Joy is an internal condition of a person, but it also reflects a need to awaken the same positive feeling in another.

According to the well-established tradition, in Preslap Easter eggs start to be painted on Friday (Good Friday), when there are otherwise no activities<sup>2</sup>. The lady of the house makes the sign of the cross and prays to God, then adds color to the bowl with water (which had been sanctified during the Easter lent). Then she carefully adds eggs to the mixture, making sure they become evenly dyed: the first color is red, and others follow. The first egg dyed red, with no pattern<sup>3</sup>, is called the “housekeeper”. It is kept separated from the others and preserved until the next Good Friday, when it is replaced with a new one. It is considered the guardian of the family, health and children, a symbol of fertility and life, and, accordingly, it is paid specific attention. In Preslap, the old “housekeeper” egg is thrown into the Preslap river (Prepesnica), while the new one is put in a special punnet and kept until

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<sup>1</sup> On that day Jesus Christ conquered death and bestowed eternal life on all people. Easter is a moveable feast, celebrated after the Jewish Pascha, on the first Sunday after the full moon, on or immediately after the vernal equinox, but never before it.

<sup>2</sup> All thoughts are directed to the horrible event: Christ's innocent passion and humiliation.

<sup>3</sup> The red color symbolizes the Savior's innocently shed blood on Golgotha. It is also the color of resurrection, which is impossible without the passion.

the next Easter (Great Day). This is also an expression of the incessant need for protection in all important phases of human life.

Earlier, eggs<sup>4</sup> in Preslap were largely dyed in the mixture containing outer layers of onion. The onion layers were soaked a few days in advance in order to drop enough color, so that, on Good Friday, the eggs would assume a specific, reddish-brown hue (as if made of earth), symbolizing progress, good fertility and fruits of the earth, as well as people's genuine dependence on the earth. Today, the eggs are put in a light linen, together with leaves of specifically selected flowers, plants, and grass – mostly moss. Then they are dyed with industrial color or onion. After the removal of the leaves and cloth, interesting marks/images remain on the eggs, testifying to our connection with nature (ph. 1).

In addition to this “patterning” the eggs are also ornamented with wax: the melted wax is applied to the egg by means of a quill. Since the wax does not absorb color during dyeing, white figures (crosses, flowers) remain on the egg. More recently, paper or plastic images, bought in the market or in shops, are pasted to the eggs. Housewives are very proud of the quality of the colored eggs, and they often show them around as a result of their effort, as testimonies of their dexterity and skill.

However, Easter eggs are not dyed in all Preslap houses on Good Friday. Older inhabitants of Preslap<sup>5</sup> point out that, due to deteriorating health and loneliness, some people do not dye Easter eggs. Naturally, the feelings of sorrow, despondency, isolation, trepidation, fear, bad mood, do not correspond to the symbolism of glittering, happy red Easter eggs. People from Preslap also stress that in their village it is customary not to paint eggs or bake bread buns in cases in which a family member has deceased (until one year has passed). In that case, boiled, but not painted, eggs are taken to the cemetery. This custom testifies to the need to express sad feelings for the loss of close individuals, whom we have not forgotten, of whom we still think, and whose departure has caused an emptiness that cannot be compensated even during a joyful holiday.

On Good Friday fatty meals are not offered. It is the time of lent and people fast.<sup>6</sup> There is usually home-made flatbread, eaten alongside ajvar (a red pepper, eggplant and garlic relish), salad, beans, fish, and onions. A few shots of home-made brandy are drunk, too (ph. 2).

Older people from Preslap nostalgically mention what preparations for Easter once looked like. In particular, they stress how the many children present in the village at the time were excited about the painting of eggs and other preparations for the feast. They could hardly wait to get the painted eggs, show them to friends, exchange and “tap” them, or measure and com-

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<sup>4</sup> Dyeing eggs carries some symbolism with it. It reminds us of the event in which St. Mary Magdalene the Myrrh-bearer traveled to Roam to preach the Gospel. There she visited emperor Tiberius, presented him with a gift – a red egg – and greeted him with the words: “Christ has risen!”.

<sup>5</sup> Milenko Stojković (aged 70), Nada (72) and Stanko Jocić (72).

<sup>6</sup> “Now we fast, we don't want to be lenient, we can do that later – tomorrow, and the day after that we bake cheese pies and fatty food (Nada Jocić).”

pare them, test their endurance and strength. However, today, when there are no children left in Preslap, there is no particular excitement among the older people in the wake of the coming holiday. They perceive this as but another day, one in which they will probably be contacted by their grown-up children who now live far away. These telephone calls are eagerly anticipated. We may notice that the partial or complete loss of elements of traditional rituals – in particular, the way Easter is celebrated in this village – is a reflection of the loss of previous life forms, changed social organization, new expectations and values, a different social reality of the inhabitants. A bitter taste of scantiness.

Today, in Preslap, Good Friday is filled with some kind of sadness, immediately after visitors leave the inhabitants' homes. Old, isolated, sick and impoverished people, longing for contact and conversation, in a village from which many have gone, in which there is no hope for anything better or joyful. Indeed, there is something that visitors notice immediately, and which remains imprinted in their memory. On the one hand, the obvious, clear joy on these people's faces, when someone enters their home; on the other, indisposition and sadness when the visitor even mentions that he or she is about to leave (ph. 3). The temporary, quite short, exchange and feeling that you are interesting to someone, after all. And then, things go back to the usually gloomy reality...

Due to the smile on their faces, the visitor (in this case, one of the authors of the present text), feels the need to stay with them as long as possible, talking about everything that troubles them, as they have no one to describe it to. As a token of their gratitude for the visit and understanding, these hospitable people offer you warm home-made flatbread, for a "safe trip". Is there anything more valuable than meeting another human being, especially when you have long stopped hoping for it?

### **THE EASTER FEAST IN PRESLAP**

On Easter Sunday, the people of Preslap go to the cemetery and carry their offerings – painted eggs (or just boiled, but unpainted ones, if less than a year has passed since the death of a family member), cheese pie, buns, roast lamb, cookies, coffee and drink. When they come back from the cemetery, neighbors and relatives gather to celebrate Easter together. Milenko Stojković (70), an older villager, tells us what the Easter festivity in Preslap once looked like. "Years ago, neighbors would visit us, and we celebrated for three or four days, and you didn't know who was drunk and who was sober. You took all kinds of things to your best man. Coffee and cakes in addition to the eggs. You baked bread, muffins and a bun, separately for everyone. Along with the eggs, you took bread with eggs in the crumb. You did this exactly on Easter. You gave five pieces to this person, another three to that person – your best man's wife. Whoever visited you brought over their food, and you also took it to other people. Someone would put three eggs in the bun, another one five. And then, the lunch and drink would start."

Milenko points out that in earlier times, in the 1950s, when he was a child, all residents of Preslap celebrated Easter together, in the location known as Del (ph. 4). In this place, not far away from the center of the village, on a hill, older and younger inhabitants, and also people from nearby settlements, usually the village of Strezimirovci, got together, feasted (roast lamb, pork), drank, to the sounds of live, typically brass-band music, singing and dancing until early evening hours. "Here above the village is where people gathered. The place is called Del, it was enclosed with stone, as in the times of the Turks. There is something like a foundation stone over there. We went there and each of us carried a flatbread, cheese pie, fresh cheese straight from the strainer, "a full lunch". Then the priest would cut the food and gave me, the landlord, some meat, sirloin, and each one of us gave him as much as we could. Everyone went up there, the men, women, children. We started early in the morning. The priest would also sit together with the people, joining us, and then left on his horse. The Gypsies played, this was "brass music", singing and dancing, and also the kolo dance. People used to come from around the area, mostly from Strezimirovci. For me, it was much better before, now it's like a prison."

Milenko's recollection of how Easter was once celebrated contains a nostalgic undertone, taking him back to his childhood, full of happiness, friendship and joy on this day. We do not believe this is an idealization of a past experience. The current celebration of Easter awakens in him a negative connotation, suggests the few, and meager events, different relations with people, some sort of social enclosure and exchange with fewer people.

The village of Preslap does not have a church. It is therefore logical that its inhabitants once gathered at a "sacred" place to celebrate Easter together, "in a group, as a family, as neighbors". It was a time of relaxed conversations among relatives, friends and neighbors who exchanged their experiences related to farming and plowing. On the other hand, the women attended to Easter eggs, food, and cakes. During this time, the children would run around, rejoicing about the eggs they'd been given, and competing with their friends in egg tapping, trying to preserve their own egg, and break that belonging to another. For the children, this was a joyful moment. On meeting one another, people would utter "Christ is risen!" and "Truly he is risen!", exchanging painted eggs, and starting a feast. An idyllic image of social and emotional exchange in the traditional framework.

"On Easter, they tap black and red eggs, i.e. hit the tip of one against that of the other, and the one who broke the egg takes the broken egg for himself. This they do near monasteries and churches, even when they do not know each other. But they should first check each other's eggs: because sometimes they pierce the egg from below, let the yolk and white out, and fill it with wax so that it becomes harder. In Dubrovnik, Easter cakes are prepared with a white egg in the crumb. On Easter, these are given to priests, as are other things brought from the village. From Easter to Ascension, when two persons meet on a road, or when someone visits someone's house, they say '*Christ is risen!*' (instead of *good morning, God bless, and good evening*). The answer is '*Truly he is risen!*'. This is also used when people drink, instead of *cheers, or here's to your health* (Stefanović-Karadžić 1964, 171-172)."

Young people, boys and girls, had fun, enjoyed themselves, but also observed one another and talked, looking for their “chance” during Easter holidays. The category of youth, girls and boys, quite certainly made this holiday particularly dynamic. This festivity was very important for all villagers, and particularly the young. Girls wore their best dress, clothes they saved only for the most important days, i.e. holidays, when young men could notice them dancing in the *kolo*. On the other hand, young boys attempted to show their strength by “fighting” against each other and organizing various competitions: stone throwing, tug-of-war, and the like. There were interesting, unique ways to attract the opposite sex. Obviously, girls tried to draw boys’ attention to their ornamented clothes, femininity and dancing skills, while boys presented their masculine characteristics – physical strength and dexterity. Quite certainly the adopted masculine and feminine roles were all but expected in the given environment.

The elderly looked on, observing the events in the *kolo* and around it, retelling love-related events and accidents. It is expected that older people, with more life experience, should monitor and control the social interactions of the young and inexperienced, explicitly or implicitly influencing what will happen, using the jovial atmosphere of the holiday as a framework. Therefore, in this celebration everyone had a preassigned role, and joint celebration of Easter only made the roles more transparent, justified and acceptable by members of the village community. In that sense, this particular custom had a strong integrative function.

However, in time significant changes occurred in the way Easter is celebrated. With the social and economic crisis, which reached its peak in the 1990s, the celebration slowly started to be modified. Some customs were transformed, joint celebrations ceased. In particular, there were no longer festivities in the open, attended by everyone, on certain feasts (Easter, St. Mark’s Day, St. Elijah’s Day). Older Preslap dwellers deny that the joint celebrations were halted due to such “directives” from “the party”. Rather, they stress that this occurred quite spontaneously, since the village “became deserted”, as young people and labor-capable population left it “for the world”, looking for better conditions in the cities (Marković Krstić and Jovanović 2012). This change of the economic situation resulted in changes in all domains of life. When young people left, this changed the entire dynamics of life in the village: specific interpersonal relations disappeared and specific contents of village life vanished, too.

Additionally, the difficult economic situation, the impoverishment of a major part of countryside population, life on the verge of existence, have contributed even more to the lack of desire among the villagers to celebrate just anything. Indeed, locals have no one to celebrate Easter with (their children live in other towns in the country or abroad). Those left are old and, mostly, sick. People of Preslap are so poor that they have no resources for any celebration.<sup>7</sup> Human motivation is rarely realized only in behavior, inde-

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<sup>7</sup> “We don’t celebrate anymore since people have nothing – we don’t keep sheep, we have nothing, our children have left” (Nada Jocić).



pendently of the circumstances or other people, which means that the loss of motivation is a consequences of the situation itself (Maslov 1982). Quite certainly, physiological needs are more potent than all other needs. This means that people lacking food, security, love and respect will be more hungry for food than for respect. If many needs remain unsatisfied, physiological needs prevail and all other requirements may practically cease to exist, i.e. they can be pushed aside. The same applies to interests.

This is also confirmed by Milenko Stojanović: “When did it stop? As people left the village, activities stopped one by one. The time has come in which there is not enough bread for people to live on. I was a communist in the party, but they did not forbid this – I pray to God even today. In the nineties it all died down, due to the inflation and lack of money. One reason is also that there are no young. There were 74 pupils in Preslap at one point, now we are dying out. I have three children, my son is in Vlasotince, one daughter is in Belgrade, one is not married. You have nothing, you have no money, so we stopped celebrating Easter that way. We celebrate only with the family, but not like before. Now there is almost no music, no weddings, no birthdays.”

Today, Easter is celebrated in a family circle, the entire pig or lamb is not roasted. Rather, smaller quantities of meat are prepared, such as hamburgers or chicken breasts. The celebration is modest, with godparents, best man and his wife, neighbors and friends, who exchange Easter eggs and buns with eggs. Guests stay for lunch, sometimes till evening hours. Mira Miha-jlović (aged 53, ph. 5) says:

“I have daughters, one lives in Belgrade, the other is in Vlasotince, they called me this morning to wish us all the best on Good Friday. I have four grandchildren. We just ate beans, and this evening we have ajvar and salad. Tomorrow we fast still, and on Sunday we eat something stronger, roast, hamburgers. I’ll be visiting our best man’s wife, she will make lunch, roast the meet, make wafers. I’ll sit there all day. On Monday is the second Easter. Then I take some eggs to those I didn’t meet on Sunday. On Tuesday we do nothing. It’s just like any other day.”

Today in Preslap Easter celebration has assumed other forms as compared to times before the 1990s. This provides an opportunity for one to remember earlier times when houses were filled with children’s hubbub and laughter, rich dining tables and happy, satisfied people. Recollection of earlier times puts smiles back onto these people’s faces and glittering into their eyes, especially when they mention their children who are now far away. For them, Easter is just another day on which they will certainly hear the voice of their children, at least over the phone. They are left alone, with painted eggs and the housekeeper, hoping that, perhaps, on Easter their children will pay a visit. As parents, they will of course accept and justify all possible reasons for their children’s failure to appear (ph. 6).

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

We have studied the changes in the celebration of Easter in the mountainous village of Preslap, near Crna Trava. The village is now impoverished, young people have left, looking for a better existence in other locations. Lonely and ill elderly villagers tell us how Easter was once celebrated here. Memories are a bit melancholic, nostalgic. The image of current festivities cannot make up for the lost, in spite of the reasons that have resulted in the change (justifiably so, they say). However, the key elements of this rite have been preserved, although everything is now reduced to a smaller scale, from the number of people celebrating together (relatives and neighbors) to the food on the table.

Is this just an image testifying to the change of some aspects of Easter celebration in Preslap? Or is it an image that we can find in numerous poor villages with no young population? Perhaps this is just a natural transformation of a rite which has lost its old glittering form, but still preserves its essential message – that of joyfully connecting a smaller number of people.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Ph. 2: Easter Eggs



Ph. 2: The Good Friday Dining Table in Preslap



Ph. 3: Nada Jocić in her Home



Ph. 4: Del – The Location where Easter was Once Celebrated Together



Ph. 5: Mira Mihajlović Preparing for Easter (Housekeeper)



Ph. 6: Snow on the way to Preslap on Good Friday





Zoran R. Jovanović

**CHILDREN'S RISEN SMILES:  
INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S EASTER EGG  
TAPPING FESTIVAL IN BOSILEGRAD \***

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“A man sees perfectly only with his heart.  
Important things are invisible to the eyes.”  
Egzepepy

**ABOUT THE TRADITION**

About the largest and most joyous Christian holiday, *Easter*, a lot has been written and almost everything is known. Yet, still remain interesting facts, curiosities and details that opens up new areas of research. They are especially grateful where the tradition of *Easter* celebration link with modern civilization and general social trends. Naturally, in order to understand what are the demands and needs of the contemporary life which is in a good way merged with something that is an ancient tradition requires a solid knowledge of it and a solid knowledge of such a tradition.

As the *Easter* religious holiday symbolizes the birth of the new life, it is not accidental that this holiday is celebrated at the beginning of the most beautiful time of the year when the nature begins to emerge and appears in the most varied colors. Similar celebrations and myths are known from ancient times. From it has remained the famous legend of the god of *Tammuz* from the Semitic people of *Syria* and *Babylonia*. This beautiful story took over the ancient *Greeks* and has allocated to their god *Adonis*, a beautiful young man in whom goddess *Aphrodite* was in loved. When he was still a boy, *Aphrodite* has hidden him in a crate, nobody to hijack him, and he was guarded by her friend, the goddess of the underworld, *Persifona*. But *Persifona* couldn't resist the irresistible charm of *Adonis* and fell in love in him, and she didn't want to bring back *Adonis* to *Aphrodite*. The conflict between these former girlfriends had to be resolved by *Zeus* himself. So he decided *Adonis* to spend half of the year in the underworld and the other half in the upper world. As *Adonis* was a god of birth and fertility, it was believed that all nature dies when *Adonis* goes in the underworld and the nature begins to flourish again with his return to the upper world. If this and similar myth stories, carefully, without ruining its authenticity, connect with *Easter*, we can see some stri-

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king similarities. *Orthodox Easter* is not just a holiday that is celebrated during the period when the vegetation starts but in its celebration as a most important symbolic feature is an egg. Myths about the origins of the world from the egg are known from *Phoenicians*, *Babylonians*, *Egyptians* and *Celts*. Also, in ancient *Chinese* legends the initial chaos precisely has the shape of an egg. When this chaos cracked, from its solid parts was formed the earth, and from the soft parts were formed the air and the water. There are historical traces, as evidenced by statues of *Persepolis*, that, 2500 years ago, during the celebration of the beginning of the New Year, which, according to their calendar, began during the spring equinox, the Persians were painting eggs. These colored eggs were brought on a pilgrimage to the Emperor *Darius I*, in the ceremonial city of *Persepolis* (dating from 515 BC and it was included in the *UNESCO World Heritage* as object of 1, 3 and 4 category). In the *apadana* (buildings composed of a series of halls with pillars and towers on the sides) at the ceremonies attended by up to 10000 people.

What symbolically binds the egg to *Christianity* is a tradition (commitment) in which, the stones that were thrown on *Christ* by the mob and assaulted Him in *Golgotha*, turned into colorful eggs.

According to another legend, guards at the tomb of *Christ* ate fried chicken and one of them expressed fear that *Christ* will revive but other replied that this is going to happen when the chicken which they were eating starts to fly and lay red eggs.

Similarly, says the legend in the *Orthodox religious reader „Religion at home”* (1982, 84):

“When the Christians on Holy Friday claimed that Christ will rise again, the Jews sneer saying that it would happen when hens begin to lay red eggs. And behold a miracle, on Sunday, hens did laid red eggs... On that day Christ was resurrected. In memory of that, eggs are dyeing till nowadays.”

However, the most important tradition (commitment) is associated with *Mary Magdalene*, who first saw the risen *Christ* and started spreading the news of his resurrection. The news was spread even to *Rome*. She managed to speak with the Emperor *Tiberius*. Holding regular white egg she told him the *Good News*. The Emperor laughed and replied that it is true as the claim that there is a red egg in her hand. That same moment, on astonishment of those present, the egg did blushed.

Another version of this story is related to the mother of *Christ* and *Mary Magdalene*. Under the cross where *Christ* was crucified, they put cart with eggs. His blood painted the eggs and after the resurrection of *Christ*, *Mary Magdalene* brought one of the eggs to Emperor *Tiberius*, as a symbol of *Christ's* new life.

“This kind of gift from *Mary Magdalene* explains what in *Rome* and other nations, was a custom of giving eggs for the New Year, which then usually began at spring time (Ibid).”

However, in *Christianity*, the fact of dyeing eggs is mentioned since XII century and in Serbia since XVI century.

Orthodox Christians dye eggs on *Holy Friday*, the day when, otherwise, nothing and no one should work. The first colored egg, named "house-keeper", is separated from the rest of the eggs and it is kept as a protector of the home till the next *Easter*.

Otherwise, customs of *Easter* celebration are very different and diverse. In *Spain*, *Easter* is celebrated by organizing hilarious, colorful fireworks; in *Greece* on *Holy Friday* people buy *Easter* candles; in *Bavaria* on that day, people put small crosses in the fields and in *Vojvodina* guys pour Cologne water on girls in order to be beautiful and healthy.

In *Serbia*, on *Easter*, the man in the house is taking the first *Easter* egg and then the rest of the family members in the house. Then *Easter* egg tapping starts and the strongest one it is kept in the house until the next year. It is believed that the winner of the egg tapping competition will be healthy and happy during the whole year. In some parts in *Serbia*, the house-wife gets up early and wakes up the rest of the family members so they can wash themselves with water in which flowers and *Easter* red colored egg float, in order to be ruddy and healthy. In some areas, if the *Easter* egg is buried in the soil, it is believed that it will improve the fertility of the soil.

For the egg dyeing are determined ritually pure person. Usually they are moral and worthy girls or good old woman. The colors are initially obtained from natural materials. Thus, the red color was obtained from smoke-tree and mint leaves, or bark from plum and cherry tree. Brownish color is obtained from the bark of walnut or oak tree. Green – from nettle seeds or tomato roots. Blue is obtained from *Muscari botryoides* flower and bark of terebinth. Wax, foliage, ribbons, wire, wool is used in order eggs to be colorful and decorated with illustrations, notes, various holy messages and applications. Also, while eggs are still warm, thin layer of oil or fat is applied.

Eggs, as symbol of new birth and new life, are colored because it is believed that color gives to eggs power. Also, each color indicates and symbolizes specific semantic meaning. Thus, white color symbolizes purity and sinless soul. Red color symbolizes the blood of *Christ*. Green – youth, hope and new beginning. Gold – *Christ's* divinity. Yellow color symbolizes light and sunshine. Orange – strength and persistence.

The most famous eggs were made by Petrograd jeweler, *Karl Faberze*. He worked at the castle in the period since 1885-1916, and every year at *Easter* he brought into the palace his art made eggs. These eggs made of gold and other expensive materials today represent unique rarity and art objects of great value.

### FROM IDEA TO REALIZATION

If *Easter* holiday, spring and *Easter* eggs symbolizes birth and new life, then it is natural that in such symbolism children are most close to it. Of course, there is no need children to be convinced in that and in this festival and all its features, they participate with sincerity and undivided joy. On

April 1994, young student of economy from *Bosilegrad*, *Aleksandar Dimitrov* (ph. 1), paid attention on the children's joy on the streets while tapping eggs. He called them and promised that if they gather more of their friends, he will organize big Easter egg tapping competition. Soon they gathered twenty four of them and the first winner as a reward won chocolate *Kinder egg*. Everyone was happy and they all promised to meet again on a new competition for the next year. Even than was everything ready to step into the realization of a great idea.

Next year, Easter egg tapping competition is organized in the center of *Bosilegrad*, and overtime, because of the great number of participants, this event is moved in front of the hotel building in *Bosilegrad*. In 1997 at the egg tapping competition, 87 children were participating. Already in 1998, the whole idea emerges into great event and it is supported by the *Municipal Council of Sofia*. Although the next year was suggested canceling of this manifestation, because of the bombing of *Yugoslavia*, many people do not accept canceling the already established tradition and that year participate 100 children. Since 2001, the Easter egg tapping festival begins to take place in the hall of the *Cultural Center in Bosilegrad*. Because of the large number of participants at the festival it is extended for two days. The festival begins to attract big attention, especially, from media in *Bulgaria* and receives financial support from the people who live in *Bosilegrad*, and people throughout *Serbia*, *Macedonia* and *Bulgaria*. The Easter egg tapping festival takes on an international character and the ambitions of the organizers are growing into the idea *Bosilegrad* to become the "center of children's kingdom of love and understanding in the *Balkans*" (*Bosilegrad* before and now). The next year, 2004, *The International Children's Easter festival* brings together 502 participants from *Serbia*, *Bulgaria* and *Macedonia*. As the festival financially supported by the *National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria*, the first four winners of the competition as a reward gets holiday in the Turkish resort of *Kushadasi*. In 2005, at the festival are participating 600 children from 30 towns in *Serbia*, *Bulgaria*, *Macedonia* and *Montenegro*. The *Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Bulgaria* starts to provide financial support for the festival. The festival becomes more massive and with more diverse programs. It is organized rich cultural program and the local TV channel *Kodal*, provide the festival on the small screens into the homes of many people of *Bosilegrad*.

The festival is becoming widely accepted by the citizens, regardless of their cultural, political and other differences and beliefs. Its participants traditionally visit the *Rila* monastery, the fortress of *Christianity* in *Bulgaria* and *Blagoevgrad*, one of the most beautiful cities in southwestern *Bulgaria*. The number of participants is increasing from year to year and for the first time children from *Bosnia and Herzegovina* also participate. Since this manifestation, more and more, is declared as most appropriate modus for educating children to grow up as citizens of *Europe*, living in the spirit of peace, love and tolerance, the event exceeds the local level. In addition, the event is followed from local TV channels, large TV channels in *Bulgaria* (*BNR* and *BNT*) and the Serbian *RTS*. Stars of the show night are popular Bulgarian



person. The seventeenth festival was marked by the visit of *Nevena Coneva*, music idol from *Bulgaria*. The festival sees its majority in 2011. At eighteenth festival the number of participants is 770 from six countries: *Bulgaria*, *Macedonia*, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, *Croatia*, *Moldova* and *Serbia*. The star of the night is *Poli Genova*, who represented *Bulgaria* on *Eurovision Song Contest* 2011. All this enriches a special shine and value to this noble mission initialed of one tradition.

### FROM TRADITION TO NEW COMMUNICATION

When you drive from *Vlasina lake* towards the Bulgarian border, from 1000 m. a. s. l. downwards, you arrive in *Bosilegrad*. You encounter inhospitable but pretty interesting nature, which somewhere in its depth hides probably in *Europe* only remaining herd of wild horses. After the bridge over the canyon, you can notice the peripheral houses of *Bosilegrad*. From there, for short time you reach the very heart of this rather small town, which is part of *Serbia* since the creation of the *Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians*. It is located at 730 m. a. s. l., near the borders of *Serbia*, *Bulgaria* and *Macedonia*. It is on distance of 415 km from *Belgrade*, 115 km from *Sofia* and 200 km from *Skopje*. *Bosilegrad* today has less than 10000 inhabitants generally from Bulgarian nationality. Within the municipality of *Bosilegrad* there are 36 villages, and what makes this municipality interesting, are many sacred objects, antiquities and cultural heritage. To these interesting things has joined another thing which lives for 19 years – *The International Children's Easter egg tapping festival*. It has emerged by traditional Easter eggs tapping and each year brings together an increasing number of participants from neighboring countries. With the lucidity of one of the organizers, this beautiful tradition grew up into an event of children's joy and love through building multiculturalism. Although such event is already organizing for one century in the *Mokrin* village in *Vojvodina*, the organizers of the festival in *Bosilegrad* claim that theirs differ in two important facts: avoiding any kind of commercialization and that it is organized and placed on the basis of a strong desire for direct spiritual game based on a tradition to get closer the children of different ethnicities. Perhaps this means that the local people are aware of what *Jeromonah Seraphim (Rouz)* had preached:

“... once you accept God's disclosure, than you are much more responsible than other people. He who accept the truth of God's incarnation but doesn't live up to it, he will went much worse than a pagan priest or similar to him (Rouz 1995, 54).”

*Ivan Nikolov*, the president of the *Culture Information Centre of the Bulgarian national minority in Bosilegrad* (ph. 2), poet and author of several books, the story of how the festival started, tells that at the beginning it was spontaneously and eventually turned into a "real center of joy in the *Balkans*". Of course, such event quickly attracted great attention and one of the capital municipalities in *Sofia* has started donating shirts and sweets. Soon people who have emigrated abroad from here began to visit the festival. They

also offered their services and donations. Unfortunately, the *Ministry of Culture of Republic of Serbia* didn't had enough hearing for such an event, which based on Orthodox tradition tried to send a positive message throughout the world, says *Nikolov*. That is why this great enthusiasm, responsibility and risk often faced with many technical problems, encountered on lack of understanding of the customs authorities, attempts by some individuals to favor their children and by utilization of the full story for personal promotion. However, says categorically *Nikolov*, all funds for example necessary for fuel, for organizing an excursion, no one has abused and everything stayed in the domain of the idealistic round robin life. *Bulgarian state* has funds intended for the Diaspora, through which implements policies to preserve the identity of national minorities. And *Bosilegrad* from these funds receives between 5000 and 10000 Euros per year. It helps bring people from the home country with those in other countries but also people of different ethnic origin.

"It's all very well," – noted our interviewee, adding – "I still remember some horrible times when some of our friends or relatives who came from *Bulgaria* were treated as spies of the *Warsaw Pact*. But the local border passes through villages, cutting yards, sharing water taps. That policy has left deep traces also in current generations and unfortunately prejudices are living in *Bulgaria* and *Serbia*. This generation that survived the madness of the nineties on one hand is completely sober, and on the other hand is not. That's why the main obstacle for further rapprochement and cooperation between people is the dominant cultural model. Namely, here is still an image of Bulgarians as bad people. Imagine, how far some people can go in their beliefs who are even people who graduated, people with great knowledge; they have tried in the school yard to build a monument for the victims of Bulgarian fascists. Apparently, they shot 20000 Serbs here. All right, if there are arguments for it, it should be proven but consider the fact that this municipality has never had more than ten thousand people. Creating a monument of someone's madness, not human suffering, would feed new strife. Therefore, decades before, I was speaking and writing about the truth which is concealed from the Serbian public. Now I can see some positive developments and that all my hard work is not meaningless" – says *Nikolov* and continues – What is now evident in *Serbia* is that two opposite tendencies dominate. One aspires the European Union and the other one goes to new strife, divisions and closing. Therefore, I think that it would be of utmost importance the two governments to sit down and seriously talk about all kinds of cooperation: cultural, economic, development, sport... To be engaged scientists, poets, writers and to be seen that reasonable people and people of credibility think in different but yet positive ways. That's why by offering this festival we educate young people to leave their old beliefs and prejudices that this border is separating the enemies.

Hundreds of children, who have attended at this festival ten years ago, now are adults, open minded and willing to respect diversity. Through such respect we strive to achieve cooperation on a higher level. The very fact that people came here and attend at the event where greet each other with „*Christ has risen*“, to learn good and valuable things, sug-

gest me that these people are willing to connect. That is how we found in the tradition something which is familiar and common to everyone. Based on Christian values we show that it is possible different present unlike the past. Tradition does not have to separate but on basis of close, similar things tradition can link. In addition, young people of different nationalities link to the same tradition and realize that the world is not just computerization. Well, we manage to capture one harmless thing based on Easter egg tapping and we have created a new cultural model." – Ends his narrative *Nikolov*.

In the evening in the hall of the *Cultural Center in Bosilegrad* there is no even place to stand. First, one folk group, students from Sofia is dancing and then powerful brass band is playing from *Surdulica*.

The next day, in the yard of the elementary school, everything is prepared for the opening ceremony of the festival. In *Bosilegrad* is coming important guest from *Bulgaria*, it is the *Bulgarian Vice President, Ms. Margarita Popova*. The *President of the municipality, Mr. Vladimir Zaharijev* (ph. 3), welcomes her in the municipal building. He tells us how proud he is of this event even he inherited it as president. He does not hide his pleasure for today's visit guest from *Bulgaria* and shows us the icon prepared as a present for her. Obliging he invite us to be his guest and after the festival opening, together with him to go to visit the *Holy Trinity Church* in the village *Izvor*. We accept the invitation and at that moment in the municipality starts commotion.

The delegation from *Bulgaria* has arrived. After the greetings and getting to know, conversations are starting between the representatives and guests.

The President *Zaharijev* says: "I thought we are forgotten. Although we are separated by one border, we are one."

Vice President, *Ms. Margarita Popova* continues: "We could not forget you. *The Children's Festival* is a unique event and good opportunity to celebrate together. It is important to keep the fireplace warm. Let others see how culture is preserved. Your role here is to integrate and those who keep working to closer *Serbia* to *European Union*. Therefore, compliments to you for your effort of approaching the *Balkans* to the *European Union*."

*Vladimir Zaharijev*: "We are the same people who are only separated by one border. *Europe* should learn from us and from you, because words are words, but acts are acts. We love our mother *Bulgaria*, and *Serbia* which gave us the right to live. Because of that there is no nationalism here. "

*Margarita Popova*: "In 2009 we started with great optimism. What you could not finish in the first, you can finish it in the second mandate. Therefore, we will organize presentation of your municipality in *Bulgaria*."

The conversation continues for the possibilities of economic cooperation and assistance from *Bulgaria* for the municipality of *Bosilegrad*, and

then everybody headed to the primary school where the festival is attending. On the wide field, between the school and the *Cultural Center*, the children's squeal and joy calms down. The main organizer of the festival, *Mr. Aleksandar Dimitrov* appears on the stage and announces the presence of the municipality President and the Vice President of *Bulgaria*. Applauses and shouts of approval, decent speeches, and after that the High Representative of the Bulgarian government officially opens the festival (ph. 4). Before the priest read a prayer and consecrate the hundreds of Easter eggs, ready for the competition, the main organizer, *Mr. Aleksandar Dimitrov* addressed to the audience with the words: "You, the most important, loved ones children. You, beings of beautiful spirit, you make this holiday bright, I bow in front of you because you speak one same language, you have one common way and one faith. This is your project and it's very important because it keeps our culture and art."

That was the moment when hundreds of eager competitors could start the big competition in Easter egg tapping and the representatives with guests from *Bulgaria* went to the *Izvor* village.

In the former municipality area even now dominate old and rich houses, with abandoned verandas which as silent witnesses of the past life are hanging over the silent streets. At the clearing above the village is impressive mansion, the *Holy Trinity Church*, from 1834. *Ms. Margarita Popova* with large iron key unlocks and opens the heavy door. The whole delegation enters downstairs and walks on the spacious stone floor of the sacred building. The present light candles and make images for the common memory. We take this opportunity and start a conversation with the extremely humble and friendly Vice President (ph. 5).

"I am delight to be here" – says *Ms. Popova*. "And that is for several reasons. First, today is big holiday. Second, we celebrate it on same way and finally *Bosilegrad* proved to be truly spiritual and cultural center. That is the essential bridge for the people who lived through centuries together. Therefore I think it is important we all to be part of the *European Union*. Because together we will be able to represent our tradition. This is an example how centers and provinces could pull the strings of *Europe* and you, here, by gathering the children create good future through celebration of the holiest Christian holiday."

The evening is fun again – the cultural program in the hall too small to accommodate all interested. On stage, interchange brilliant musicians, singers and magician from *Bulgaria*, followed by cheers and applause from the audience. Participants in the program, obviously surprised of the amount of heartfelt emotion, give the best.

After the event, at the cocktail party, we approach the extraordinary musical duo from *Sofia*, *Gergana Dobrevoj* and *Svetislav Kolev* (ph. 6). Guitarists and solists of the *Sha-Sha* group, authors of two music albums. Expressing their impressions, happiness and excitement they are jumping on each other in words:

"We are here for the first time and we are surprised by the well organization and experienced indeed a pleasant evening. We didn't expect that the audience will be completely ready for our show and would have well and warm reaction. We think they really enjoyed in every track and rewarded with sincere applause. It is natural that young people love holidays. This is a religious holiday and that is what makes people even more attracted to it. It is very difficult to awake such emotions when there is no tradition and therefore it should be organized more events like this one. Especially with life music, because this kind of music young people like" – says *Gergina* and *Svetislav*, assuring us that next year, the twentieth, the jubilee festival will be here again.

Before the final competition we face the *Ivan Vazov high school* director *Maria Krestnikova* (ph. 7), from the *Stojanovka* village, located in the *Kancemir* region of the *Republic of Moldova*. *Ms. Maria Krestnikova* says that she's also for the first time here. She brought 18 boys and girls, students from forth to eight grade.

"Here is beautiful, calm, we have forgotten all negative and stayed with pure souls." – says *Ms. Krestnikova*. "I was mostly afraid of the accommodation and for the children. But I saw that everything is normal and the owners truly care for the children. At the festival we participated with Bulgarian folk customs. We presented some Bulgarian folk songs, folk dances, recitals and jokes from the *Stojanovka* village. I think it is significant that many children can see how people live here and to meet other children. This is particularly important because there are similar traditions in *Moldavia*, *Serbia* and *Bulgaria*. In *Moldavia*, at our school we educate children about tradition but here they were able through national customs to get closer to each other and to realize that borders do not separate people".

The finale day has arrived. The town was awakened by national group from *Pernik (Bulgaria)* (ph. 8 and ph. 9). Dressed in lambskin, with colorful and unusual masks on their heads, decorated with many bells on their body they walked, ring and danced through the streets in *Bosilegrad*.

In the crowded hall at the *Cultural Center* is great excitement, on the stage, lots of awards and excitement of the finalists. It starts cheering, squeak, squeal, hand of the winners are lifted in the air, hugs, kisses, congratulations but some sad faces too... Finally, the winners are declared: the best painted egg, the best decorated egg, the strongest egg,...

Here all are winners! There are no losers!

*Mr. Aleksandar Dimitrov*, closes the festival with the words: "For peace, love and understanding among the people!" (ph. 10)

We are in the car and move from *Bosilegrad* where still resounds with joyful sounds. But we doesn't go to *Belgrade*, we headed to *Kyustendil*. We feel some discomfort because the media from Serbia did not show more interest for this beautiful event. But here, during the election campaign, people in media are also too busy. However, it is interesting that none of the local political option didn't found great motto to promote their ideas?

We cross the border and pass through the places *Donje Ujno* and *Dragovishtica*. Half of the houses are tumbledown and the other half is lifeless. Empty streets, abandoned yards and abandoned arable land brings us back in thoughts of the festival in *Bosilegrad*. They cruelly assure us in the fact that where there is no youth, where nobody cares and support young people, life disappears and it is recognized only in some traces from the past. Therefore, we are certain of the key reason why these festivals should be created preserved and respected.

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

Ph. 1: Aleksandar Dimitrov, the founder and main organizer of the festival



Ph. 2: Ivan Nikolov, president of Culture Information Center of the Bulgarian National Minority in Bosilegrad



Ph. 3: Vladimir Zaharijev, President of the municipality in Bosilegrad



Ph. 4: Festival opening and consecration of Easter eggs



Children's Risen Smiles: International Children's Easter Egg...

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Ph. 5: Margarita Popova, Bulgarian Vice President in an interview with the author



Ph. 6: Gergana Dobrevoj and Svetislav Kolev, members of the *Sha-Sha* group from Sofia



Ph. 7: Maria Krestnikova, director of Ivan Vazov high school in the Republic of Moldova



Ph. 8: National group from Pernik (Bulgaria)



Ph. 9: National group from Pernik (Bulgaria)



Ph. 10: Closing of the *Easter* festival in Bosilegrad







**RELIGIOUS AND FOLK CUSTOMS  
ON THE BORDER  
II**



UDK 398.332 (497.11-18)

Danijela Voza

## **CARNIVAL PRIVEG – THE CUSTOM OF THE VLACHS IN THE NORTHEASTERN SERBIA\***

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Located at the crossroads connecting Europe to Middle East and Asia, a multinational state of Serbia is an exciting testimony of well-preserved folk customs, religious ceremonies, family celebrations, architecture and life diversity. Ethnologists agree that Serbian folk religion (nowdays recognized in rural areas) was formed in the Balkans and on the border of the two different religious traditions – pagan and Christian (Zamurović 2002). That is the base of religion of the Vlachs of the northeastern Serbia.

In almost every ethnographic analysis of Vlachs stands out great presence of the religious-magical culture elements. Although the Orthodox, Vlachs retain many before Christian, Indo-European and Paleobalkanik elements in their religious and ceremonial life. Recent studies have defined this religion as animatistic-fatalistic, which also makes it to be one of the most archaic religions in modern Europe (Durlić 1995). Success of the Vlachs in preserving the customary norms in their original forms is often explained by the fact that they are surrounded by a society that is characterized by different culture and spiritual tradition. A long-time existence of Vlachs' religious and magical traditional forms is conditioned by the following: 1) personal experience, experience must take place in the holy, sacred, supernatural and 2) the nature and form of experience are appropriate with phenomena that match the traditional patterns.

### **CULT OF THE DEAD IN THE VLACHS' RELIGION**

Cult of the dead can be extracted from the Serbian religious complex as one of the prevailing cults. Through the history, various stages and forms of this cult have greatly influenced the burial customs and beliefs, as well as the psyche of people. Dying in our nation means the separation of the soul from the body. This would mean that death is not a definite „end“, but just approach to the different place – the place of eternity and permanence (Ivanović-Barišić 2005). The cult of the dead was one of the most powerful cults of the old Serbian religion. This is evident by the fact that the funeral customs and beliefs are similar in all regions of Serbia (Zečević 1982).

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It can be said that the cult of the dead, as the central cult, is especially cherished and preserved in the most archaic form in the religion of northeastern Serbian Vlachs. Therefore, it can be one of the easier ways to explore old beliefs of other ethnic groups. A special kind of respect for the dead as well as using every opportunity to mention the dead (especially on large, family gatherings) is a characteristic which sets Vlachs apart from all other people of our country and beyond. Permanent contact with the dead was considered as the sacred duty of alive people, because it was believed that in that way the deceased will have a safe residence in their new environment (Zečević 1966). It is well-known and so called "servicing the deceased" (Durlić 1995), by which closer and further relatives are trying to satisfy all the needs that the deceased may have by offering food, drinks, light etc. Specific relationship to the dead is reflected in many rituals related to the funeral rites even with the pagan elements. One of them is the custom of lightening fire in honor of the dead.

### **PRIVEG IN THE NORTHEASTERN SERBIA**

Priveg is very significant Vlachs' custom which takes place during the seventh week before Easter – Poklade (engl. „carnival“). The word „priveg“ is derived from the Latin word „pervigilium“ which means pious vigil. This characteristic of this custom is lighting a fire dedicated for those who died without a candle.

Priveg may take one of a two forms – family and rural. Family variant of this custom is some kind of regular, annual „pomana“, followed by a ceremonial fire (ph. 1) and feast which is prepared and served at the deceased's home. It is attended only by close family members. In rural or carnival Priveg, the village, as a kind of „ritual-religious and social community“ (Durlić 1996) organizes the ceremony and lighting a fire intended for all the dead in the village.

The ethnologist Paun Es Durlić was analysing the matter of existence of the two different Priveg forms. During field researches conducted between 1990-1996. in the villages of Upper Pek, Porec river, Zvizd, Homolj and Vlachs' villages of the Golubac municipality, this ethnologist made this conclusion:

“this case of ritual deforms is caused by the settlement type: carnival Priveg takes place in the compact type of settlements and family Priveg only in the mountain villages of northeastern Serbia (Durlić 1996).“

Today, Priveg is associated exclusively with the Vlach-speaking population. However, its roots should not been looked at Vlachs. According to Zecević (1966) „lighting fire for the souls of dead was known since ancient Slavs in almost identical form...“. This is corroborated by the fact that there are similar forms of this cherished custom throughout our country even today, but under different names (olalije, privej, rana, marga).

In the period between World War II and the end of the 50's this ritual stopped running in many Vlachs' parts. It left only in Rakova Bara near Kucevo. However, in 1991. village Debeli Lug near Majdanpek carnival Priveg was renewed after a break of thirty years.

### CARNIVAL PRIVEG IN DEBELI LUG NEAR MAJDANPEK

Below is presented the sequence of events on the Priveg day in the village Debeli Lug near Majdanpek. The text is based on testimony of residents and visitors of this village feast who comes from Majdanpek. How Durlić (1996) states, rural Priveg can be divided into several phases: 1) rites at the cemetery; 2) family feasts; 3) collecting firewoods and set bonfires; 4) lighting and dedicating the fire; 5) „kolo“ (kind of a dance) for the dead; 6) celebration and 7) „marga“ and other games around the fire.

The rites associated with Priveg begin early in the morning. Each house performs the last preparations for the festive table and guests welcome. Break is taking because of going household members to the cemetery. Purpose of going to the cemetery in the morning is to „invite“ the dead who died during the past year to the feast. For the deceased whose forty-days „pomen“ has not expired yet a special song is dedicated.

After the cemetery ceremonies, families return to their homes and open the doors for all their guests like relatives, friends, acquaintances... Number of guests of a home is indicator of prestige and honor and it contributes to its reputation. Before the lunch which starts at two o'clock in the afternoon, it's necessary to say the words of dedication to the dead. In the humorous and cheerful atmosphere, guests stay at their host until the evening, when all together are moving to the village center to the main event of the day – lighting the fire.

Preparations for ritual custom of lighting the fire on the Priveg day start at noon when the village boys go from house to house and collect wood for making bonfire. Each family provides approximately three meters long tree. In the past, it was used even the wood remained from making a funeral equipment (Zečević 1982). When the necessary quantity of wood is collected, it transports to the center of the village, where the main event takes place. Priveg chief is responsible for organization of making the bonfire of collected material.

At dusk, families go out from their houses. In front of each family is woman with baskets of food and drink. When there are enough people, the chief gives a sign for lighting the bonfire and this moment is followed by sad music. Fire provides light and heat and it have always been tied to wide range of different stories (Zamurović 2002). Vlachs' Priveg considered that light and warmth of fire transfers to the souls of deceased. Accordingly, there is individual dedication. When the fire flare or when the flame reaches bonfires' highest peak, women of every family which have dead person, come up to the fire one by one and light candles and incense burner which they have brought from home. After that, they rise their hands and dedicate the fire, light and heat to their deceased. Upon completion of individual dedication, the names of the all deceased in the village are pronounced. In this way, they are invited to visit the feast. These moments are very emotinal and dedicated to the memory of deceased.

When the ceremony of dedicating ends, dance and merriment begin (ph. 2). One of the famous Vlach orchestra strikes up „kolo“ and all present people immediately play around bonfire. Vlach „kolo“ is known as very long and heavy dance, so Vlachs see it as unique way of proving and competition. When „kolo“ starts it lasts three to four hours without stopping. Other participants eat and drink for the souls of dead, for which is believed that eat and play with them on Priveg, too (Zečević 1982).

Before dawn, when the fire is extinguished, young men get together around it to play ritual game called „marga“. First of all, it's necessary to spread the zeal and form a circle with it. Around the hot circle strong guys are caught in the round while holding tightly each other around the waist. This dance is played without music. The task of the first and the last player in the circle is to cause its' bending to the fireplace, which is the way to withdraw the weakest player towards the fire. Sometimes, it happens that somebody runs over the embers. While leading the snake form circuit, leader is speaking buzzword loudly. When he commands „nuvéři“ (clouds in Vlach) players crouch without stopping the dance. At the command „sěín“ (clear in Vlach) they continue their strained „serpent“ twisting around the glowing circle (Dragić 1999). After a few rounds, players are putting out and organizing a competition in jumping fuzzy embers.

This game ends the Priveg. People are going to their homes, in silence – as from the cemetery, especially taking care not to look back because it is believed that in that way they can drive away souls of the dead. In the next days, the main topics of conversations among village people are the events which took places at the carnival. The success of the manifestation is judged by the number of attendees. For example, Priveg in Debeli Lug was widely known in the past; older people tell that entire Upper Pek and half of the Zvzd have visited this manifestation (Durlić 1998).

## CONCLUSION

In order to overcome the natural givens of death, people created certain patterns of behavior within their magic-religious images, as a direct response to its appearance (Jovanović 2011). In this way, the loss of connection with the deceased after completing the act of burial is avoided.

Animatistic religion such as Vlachs, cherishes the memory of the dead, believing that death is not a human immanence. Magic-religious tradition, which is the important feature of the Vlach culture, is presented through the community's aspiration to persuade and propitiate the spirits of ancestors. There is no nation which is so preoccupied with the commemoration of deceased as Vlachs. By carrying out the ritual practices on the carnival Priveg day, members of the Vlach ethnic group strive to provide to the deceased the best conditions for staying at „the other“ world. Exploring of this and other Vlach customs acquired ideas about their view of death and belief in an afterlife, as well as strange, sometimes paradoxical mixture of Christian and Pagan rituals.

In addition to being interpreted as a form of „communication“ with the deceased, carnival Priveg can be viewed as an agrarian-magic, a collective ritual, which is used to propitiate the nature of period from transition the winter to summer solar cycle. The period of the winter carnival is rich with ritual practices often tasked to provide fruitful year.

Although it is very complex ritual that has many elements of different meanings and functions, Priveg is insufficiently represented in the literature. Ethnologist Paun Es Durlić was dealing with study of the Priveg the most. In his articles published in the years of 1996. and 1998. there is the first detailed description of this custom. Until then, the literature on this topic was reduced mainly to brief mentions in the texts about ritual fires, Vlach customs and cult of the dead. Given the presence of a very colorful rituals related to Priveg, which can greatly contribute to learning about religion and roots of Vlach, every attempt of its introduction and scientific analysis is very important.

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1: Priveg bonfire (Source: [www.discoversoutheastserbia.com](http://www.discoversoutheastserbia.com))



Photo 2: Atmosphere at Priveg manifestation in Debeli Lug (Source: [www.debelilug.blogspot.com](http://www.debelilug.blogspot.com))







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Lela Milošević Radulović  
Dragana Stjepanović Zaharijevski

**OLALIJA –  
A CUSTOMARY CELEBRATION OF BELI POTOK\***

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**INTRODUCTION**

According to sociological interpretation, customs are the records of culture of past times, symbolic structures and actions for the regulation and control of social reality, as well as an ethnic label, since as established patterns of conduct they govern the life of the traditional community to strengthen its solidarity and confirm its peculiarities. Hence we can accept the following Tacitus' thought: "good customs are of more avail than good laws!" The efforts that reveal the power of customs, as "a symbolic backbone of identity" of traditional Serbian society, to regulate and control social life are justified (Zaharijevski Stjepanović 2004, 14-16).

Serbs have shown great resistance to maintaining old customs, preserving traces of earliest stages of folk beliefs, often originating from the old Slavic polytheistic religion, with the addition of Christian elements. In a traditional society religious and social customs undoubtedly reconcile man's attitude toward himself and toward the "other" in certain relationships and circumstances in life, but also toward forces and beings he believes in. Traditional customs still reside in the modern civilisation, in the new "social time"; however, they are mostly performed by inertia, since their original meaning has been forgotten.

The principal aim of the sociological analysis is to point out the survival of customs through the prism of the determination by functions. Actually, as long as local residents live, the old customs will live as well, regardless of their change due to modern ways of life. What is preserved is mainly those customs that have a practical application and a wider social significance.

"Therefore, it is assumed that a belief, an institution or, for example, a custom is preserved only as long as it has certain functions and a certain purpose in people's lives, or satisfies certain needs of a group or an individual (Bandić 1997, 241)."

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The main issue here is the social context for preserving customs and tradition; specifically, the ignition of fire on the White Carnival. *Olalija*, the custom of annual cycle, is connected to the Bright week, when the period of fast-free days ends. This feast is movable, and as Sreten Petrović (1992, 246) points out in his study of customs and beliefs in people's lives of the Svrlijig region, "everything depends on the day Easter falls on". An important feature of this custom is a periodic renewal, which, according to Emil Durkheim, contributes to the restoration of the impact on that which is beyond, so as to ensure continued happiness, health and prosperity in order to create and strengthen the tie with holy creatures and apparitions that man depends on at regular intervals (Dirkem 1982, 58). Each reunion and the state of "dense-ness" are followed by the dissipation, which is manifested as an alternation of sacred and profane times, whereby the rhythm at which the religious life happens just expresses the rhythm of social life and also results from it (319).

Based on ethnological sources, *fire* is seen as a phenomenon of respect, fear and curiosity, as a symbol of creation, energy, vitality, protection, and unequivocally, as a powerful driver of material and spiritual culture that Lewis H. Morgan wrote about in detail in his work *Ancient Society*.

The worship of fire is deeply rooted in Serbian folklore, mythology, religion, as well as in ancient customs and magical beliefs and rituals. The very etymology of the word already requires respect – it stems from the Sanscrit word *agni* (the god of fire, Agni).

It is particularly necessary to consider celebrations involving fire, which belong to the annual cycle of customs, followed by the ritual ignition, gathering and ceremonies that are differently interpreted in ethnological literature. In foreword to the book *Vatra u običajima i životu srpskog naroda* ("Fire in Customs and Lives of Serbian People") by Sima Trojanović, Žarko Trebješanić provides a comparative overview of ethnological discoveries on ritual and traditional practices that accompanied the ceremony of the ignition of the holy fire. The ignition of fire is most often, and almost universally, followed by ritual laying on the fire, ritual leaping over the live coals, appropriate girls' songs, family gatherings first at home and then around the fire with other villagers and by smearing faces with cinders. The prevailing view is that this is a pagan ceremony of lighting the fire of joy in spring; fire is leaped over to provide health or to protect the village from conflagration, but also to provide young people with happy marriage throughout the year (Trojanović 2008, 14).

This is undoubtedly a custom of the annual cycle, which indicates a new period in natural and social lives. The purpose of the fire is to bring people together and encourage them to live in a community, but also to drive out evil spirits and purify people as well as their homes and yards. Blazing fire is an ideal meeting place and it is very important that it „does not die out“, because it provides heat and light, destroys otherworldly forces and protects, purifies, heals... It is believed that periodical renewal of this ceremony strengthens the tie with all the forces that can influence a human life. Fire contributes to the overall strength of the social community because it provides health, happiness, prosperity and renewal. It is alive and powerful because it

provides heat and light, and only the living environment is a token of life, health, prosperity and full protection. It is very important to keep the fire burning: by keeping the flame down man controls it and, therefore, has the impression of being powerful, which strengthens his self-confidence and brings back the faith that he can more-less organise his own life and the life of the community as well.

This custom has survived in the village of Beli Potok. Year after year the remaining villagers light the fire “because it has always been done”. The question is whether it is the knowledge of the ancient meaning of these ritual practices that has been preserved, or is it the customs that are preserved although their essential meanings, motives and goals have long been forgotten. This is an attempt to answer the question, but also to reveal the predominant purpose of preserving customs in a new “social time”.

### ABOUT BELI POTOK

The village of Beli Potok<sup>1</sup> belongs to the municipality of Knjaževac, situated in eastern Serbia along the border with the Republic of Bulgaria, in an area that is geographically and historically known as the Timok region. It is located on the left bank of the river Svrljig Timok, 18 km away from Knjaževac, at an altitude of 670 to 678 meters. The village is of a scattered type and the houses are grouped into quarters. A trend of continuous population decline has been recorded. The village has a population of only 168 inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> The most numerous inhabitants among the residents are elderly people, farmers and pensioners. Due to negative demographic trends, (massive migration of the young and middle-aged population into cities) there has been a transformation of the structure of rural households in the direction of the decline of the average number of family members and the rise of elderly and single-person households. The village is 18 km away from the municipal centre, and there have been no bus services for years. Not all residents have fixed telephone lines; even though there is a telephone in a local post office, it can be used only two days a week, during the post office opening hours. The village has a complete electrification and water supply system thanks to its own funding resources. The main road through the village is made of asphalt (2.3 km), and the rest is covered with macadam. There are no schools and the church (*The Holy Birth of the Virgin Mary*) had been empty and deserted for years after World War II, until the late nineties when its renovation was started. However, the priest comes only once a year (on September 21<sup>st</sup>, when the whole village celebrates the *Virgin Mary*). The village hall (built in 1948) is also closed.

It used to be different: the seat of the agricultural cooperative “Cerje” was in the village hall and it had a purchase station where villagers could sell cattle and all kinds of agricultural products; there were herbs, dog roses,

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<sup>1</sup> See the extended version of the text about Beli potok in: Milošević Radulović and Stjepanović Zaharijevski 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Data taken from the official site of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia.

mushrooms and snails for purchase; two shops had various goods to offer; yellow and white cheese was traditionally produced and cherry orchard (60 hectares) was very fruitful as well. However, as the demographic processes of depopulation and aging of population manifested in continuous reduction of the labour force potential, there was less milk and other agricultural products, so that the cooperative ceased to exist in 2006. Since then the village has been in decay. There is one privately owned shop in the village at the moment and a health care facility which is open only one day a week. There are neither cultural institutions, nor any other associations. The villagers are mainly engaged in cattle breeding, fruit growing and bee-keeping and left to themselves. Few young people, who stayed in the village, or returned from the city, have no certain future ahead of them.

Although these are the indicators of the numbness of life, the villagers keep from forgetting everything that was good by fostering traditional customs. Year after year they celebrate *Christmas*, *Easter* and patron saints: *St. Nicholas*, *St. Cosmas and Damian* (magicians), *St. John*, *St. Michael the Archangel* and *St. Mrata*. The whole village celebrates the *Ascension Day* (the date varies, depending on the date of *Easter*) and the *Virgin Mary* (September 21<sup>st</sup>), and on the White Carnival the villagers light holy fire.

### THE IGNITION OF FIRE ON THE WHITE CARNIVAL

The last week before the Lent is called the *White week*, and the last day of this week, the *White Carnival*. According to a folk belief, various evil forces represented a considerable threat in this period, and the most effective method of protection was fire. The custom of lighting fires on the White Carnival is known as *olalija* in south-eastern Serbia.

In Beli Potok *olalija* is ignited every year on this feast. The villagers say that fire is lit to drive away evil forces and provide health, happiness and prosperity, ensure a fruitful year to come and save the village from natural disasters (hail, drought). Most of them cannot explain why, but just state that "it should be done because it has always been done".

The fire is lit in the evening, at the crossroads in the village. Neighbours get together, prepare a place for lighting fire (ph. 1 and 2) and bring straw and dry branches. They get out with their families; all members of the household are present.

The first person to bring straw used to be the one closest to the crossroads, whereas nowadays it is the person who first remembers that "it should be done" and who invites the neighbours. Then everybody brings straw and dry branches. "Poles for poking fire" are prepared as well to make the sparks fly. After "poking" the villagers used to say: "How many sparks, so many cows, sheep, goats and other livestock in the cote! God help us! How many sparks here, so many children in the house! God help us! How many sparks here, so many loads of wheat, barley and maize in the barn! God help us! How many sparks here, so many friends! God help us!" The blessing has changed recently. The villagers mainly pray for their children's health and that God saves their households, mostly because they do not live together.

The person who came to the fire used to say to the assembled villagers: “Good evening; may God give you welfare; happy Carnival. May this olalija be in health and happiness.” The others used to respond: “God help us.” Nowadays, the villagers gather with a sigh “lets ignite olalija, but it’s not like it used to be any more; there’s nobody left, there’s only us!”

Olalija was a great joy for children, so that they chattered excitedly around the fire. Nowadays mostly elderly people gather around the fire in Beli Potok (ph. 3). The following could be heard in the village from all sides: “Olalija buntalija, olalija buntalija!” People competed with each other to build the biggest fire and make it visible from as many places as possible. During the day younger people made preparations to make the biggest possible olalija, and the following day everybody rumoured about it: where it had been the biggest, how long it had been burning, how many sparks there had been, who had leaped over it and so on. Everybody danced and sang around the fire, and when it almost burnt out, boys and girls leapt over live coals, because it was good for health. Even the elderly leaped over (both men and women) for health, but also to prevent a dry year: women were usually sprayed with water from buckets while jumping over. It was believed that the year would not be dry, “that it wouldn’t be burning and scorching like fire, but rainy just like water from the bucket”. People sang different folk songs, whichever ones they knew, and played whatever instruments they had – an accordion, a one-stringed fiddle (*gusle*), a flute”. They did not wear any special clothes, however, it was important to “be neat and seemly”. They told stories and laughed.

Nowadays a flame can be seen just at some places and at some crossroads in the dark, whereas few, mostly elderly villagers, gather around the blazing fire and talk with nostalgia about how it used to be.

The villagers neither drink nor give toasts as they used to (ph. 4). They used to stay long by the fire, drink heated brandy or wine and talk for hours. It is not so today. People do not stay long. They see each other, recall everything and go away. They used to go home saying: “Health be with you until next year, and if God wills, to meet again like this!” whereas today they simply say “if anybody remembers and comes to light a fire, if we’re still alive!”

When the fire burnt out, many people used to soot each other’s faces by trickery, because it was believed that this would scare evil forces away from the fire and villagers. Girls used to take coals from fire and carry them with themselves so that boys “gather” around them just like people “gather” around this fire. This does not happen anymore as well.

After lighting the fire it was customary for all family members to dine together. Eggs and cheese were obligatory (something white, because it was the day of the White Carnival); there were also pies, stuffed paprikas, sarmas (cabbage or grape leaves rolled around filling) or cabbage, but not meat. Almost everything could be found on the table, except meat. After dinner an egg cake (*jajčeni*) was served, which was made of 10 to 15 eggs, white flour, animal fat and sugar. The cake was shared with all the family members. Housewives baked cakes after returning home, which was why they first left the fire. Men stayed longer. Heated rakia and wine were also served in

the house. At dinnertime it was customary to “bite eggs”. “Egg biting” (*kloca-nje*) is a custom in which a boiled egg is taken and pierced by a nail (regarding it is not rusty) or a needle; then a red thread is pulled through it, so that it can be crossed and the egg made movable. Two persons compete against one another. Each one of them pulls the crossed thread and the egg moves back and forth. The goal is to bite the egg: it is believed that the one who wins will be the happiest person of all.

This custom is in villages of Svrljig region known as “lamkanje”. According to Sreten Petrović (1992, 246) beside the custom of “lamkanje”, it is customary to wash forks and spoons from food of animal origin and hide them with spikes facing upward (as a magical act of tying beaks of pests). It is interesting that the villagers of Beli Potok followed this custom on Christmas Eve, and not on the White Carnival. Informants over 80 years old remember: “on Christmas Eve forks and spoons are tied with a red thread and taken out of the house overnight; they are not washed, just tied; they are brought in the following day, and the reason is to tie beaks of crows so that they don’t eat maize” (“it is true indeed; our maize had never been eaten; and when we stopped tying, everything was eaten up; even now there is nothing left, crows eat it all; but tying is not done anymore, and it should be!”, an 80-year-old woman, Jelisavka Milošević said).

Egg biting has not been practised in the village for years; many people have forgotten that it used to be done, but the fire is still ignited: “People do light it. It’s alright, it should be lit. Maybe there should be some order!”, said Jelisavka Milošević.

The tradition continues, but obviously this custom used to be not only more massive, but also much livelier. Based on the knowledge gained from the conversations with the villagers<sup>3</sup> and the observation with personal participation, a co-author of this paper (ph. 5) recorded the custom with a camera and saved it from oblivion.

## CONCLUSION

The *olalija* custom, inherited from the religion of ancient ancestors, survived in the village of Beli Potok, because year after year the remaining villagers ignite the holy fire. By the periodic renewal of this ceremony, even though it is performed “because it has always been done”, they feel more than they know, and believe that they drive something toward as much as possible, and contribute to the stimulation of fertility in the year to come and the protection of the village from adverse impacts.

Fire announces the beginning of an annual cycle of the new sun rising, a new period of life and a rebirth of nature and hope. The villagers of Beli Potok try to control this fact of nature on a socio-cultural level of ritual action, even by igniting the fire only and assembling around it.

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<sup>3</sup> Informants and participants: Jelisavka Milošević (85), Hristifor Vasilijić (85), Mica Milošević (82), Ljubiša Krstić (72), Ruža Krstić (68), Ratomir Milošević (66), Zoran Krstić (63), Mika Krstić (47).

The presented sociological analysis confirmed the reduction and transformation of the *olalija* tradition, but also established its latent function. Preserving this tradition looks like a substitute to the institutional numbness of the village and its social and cultural underdevelopment with the belief that fostering customs preserves rural communities, as the most faithful guardians of tradition and national culture, and moreover, that all of them together might have to wait for better times. In a gloomy everyday life, villagers preserve this custom persistently because they see fire as “a powerful ally” (Čajkanović 1973, 211). Even though ritual contents are getting poorer whereas the oblivion of ancient meanings is becoming greater, fire is undoubtedly still regarded “as sanctity” (Trojanović 2006, 39), which has mystical powers: life-giving, protective, purifying and transforming ones. Therefore, fire are still ignited and it is believed that the new annual cycle will bring prosperity to the whole village.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Ph. 1: *Preparations for Olalija* –  
Zoran Krstić



Ph. 2: *Olalija*



Ph. 3: *Neighbours*  
(Zoran Krstić, Ljubiša Krstić,  
Mica Milošević, Ruža Krstić)



Figure 4. *Neighbours* (Zoran  
Krstić, Ljubiša Krstić, Mika  
Krstić)



Figure 5. *Ratomir Milošević and  
Lela Milošević Radulović (re-  
corded the custom)*





Jovan Živković  
Sonja Veličković

## WITCH-SCOLDING – PRESENT ANIMISM\*

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### INTRODUCTION

1. Concerning the nature of the worship, the Old Serbian religion and mythology or folk religion of the Serbian people is as specific as its other-worldly aspect can be represented through its symbolic presentation in this worldliness. However, the level of transcendence from the polytheistic times seems not to have been lagging at all behind whatever was needed by the pleb, folk or Serbian peasantry, against the later monotheism – Christianity that was first to be adopted by the medieval gentility at the courts. Today we can say that it turned out that, at an early or a later date, the mediation in the religious rituals (ensuring the passage from the other-worldly into this worldly) was identified among the things profane, that is, those belonging to this worldliness, as a common trait both in the former old polytheistic Serbian religion and in the Christianity which would, in its Eastern variant, absorb all the symbolism of the highest deities through the most relevant saints such as John, Nicholas, George, and the like (Đurić 1973, X-XII). Remaining at the level of the original general representations corresponding to the Serbs' folk experience of the world dominated by the principle of imagining particular figures, states or feelings, it has turned out that their existence is directed towards the overall human activities for the sake of preserving the existing reality and avoiding certain mishaps. One of the evils which was widely spread and thus should have been suppressed in every possible way referred to the influence, power and activities of *witches*. In that sense, when it comes to the rites called Witch-scolding (*karaveštice*),<sup>1</sup> the focus is on the control of the environment and on taking hold of the nature of those relationships that are liable to the impact of *magic*.<sup>2</sup> What lies at the core of this human intention is that the witches should be *scolded*, *scolded through and through* or *expe-*

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<sup>1</sup> This holiday comprises a series of rituals; in addition to the main name “Witch-scolding” there are other ones as well, such as Shrovetide or *olalia* which depends on the locality where it is performed or on the foresight of the Christian conception to incorporate pagan customs in its ideological matrix.

<sup>2</sup> To paraphrase Mircea Eliade, magic is an art of mastering a certain type of energy possessed by every human being... the only question concerns the way in which it is used. Black magic changes the fate of man unlike the white one; this is the basic difference between these two forms (Eliade 1996, 159).

lled from the immediate surroundings; in addition, they should be suppressed as much as possible in their evil impact upon the social environment and the people close or far from them and, if possible, should be destroyed altogether.<sup>3</sup>

2. The folk lore tells us that the witches belong to a set of demonic or mythical beings whose nature is so much evil that it induces great anxiety in the social community since they can even bring about death to people.<sup>4</sup> Their intention is to use spells, curses or other kinds of magic for the purpose of disturbing the social conditions at large as well as to effect their will upon individuals, especially young people. This wide-spreading practice to ascribe certain demonic features to particular women with special character traits, hence the soul of such persons is transformed, for more authentic magic activities, into the form of a butterfly, feathered or some other animals (dogs, for instance). Their supernatural skills and craft caused fear in people; because of this, early recognition was of utmost importance. The identification of witches is the first good step concerning the fact that their enunciation reduces the extent of their negative power – still, the proper solution was still claimed to be the insistence on their utter extinction. Since it was generally believed that they could not sink in the water, the solution was to torture, kill and burn them. Not rarely is it stated, in the respective writings, that the woman who openly admits her being a witch as well as who openly renounces her magic dealings could return to the community and take up her former way of life (more about it in Bandić 1991, 122-126).

3. The fight against the witches assumes many options and levels. Firstly, it was recommendable to avoid such women altogether as well as to excommunicate them from their immediate social community if they were found out to have taken up the witchcraft way of life. Other forms of protection included spreading magic oils all over one's body, keeping garlic in people's immediate surroundings, turning brooms and pothooks upside down, making awful din and noise or pronouncing magic words or sentences that represent an additional magic action against the one that can be put into effect by the witch. All in all, the witch's mischief is opposed by extra magic power of some objects, behaviors and feelings from this world, namely those with the potential for exerting influence upon the evil powers coming from the other-

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<sup>3</sup> Former belief in the existence of witches was not characteristic only for the territories settled by the Serbian ethnos in the pagan times. Christianity also incorporated this demonic form of action in its understanding of the world and human existence. Accordingly, in the condemnation of witches in Europe, up to 1782, 60.000 people were killed as suspected of having made a pact with the devil. This number includes 75% of women and 25% of men and children. The persecution was also in Scandinavia and Switzerland while the greatest number of victim was recorded in Germany – as many as 25.000 (Source: Deutsche Welle, via web site B92, March 7, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Phenomenon of existence, persecution and killings of witches is even today, unfortunately, a burning problem. It exists in Africa or Far East. As it is stressed in some contemporary writings, this phenomenon is active in "Congo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Benin and Tanzania. Only in Tanzania, from 1994 to 1998, 5000 women were killed as suspected of being "witches". The killings of "witches" were also recorded in late nineties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Indonesia and in early 21<sup>st</sup> century in India." (Source: Deutsche Welle, via web site B92, March 7, 2012).

worldly sphere. It is, thus, evident that, on both the sides of the practice – on the witch and on the human ones – there are magic deeds and actions with different meanings and opposed intentions. The human world of the then society is thus marked by the form of certain action – as well as the magic of the worldly against the powers that could destabilize and ruin it – with the purpose of preserving, in the name of the survival of the whole entity, its collectiveness. This makes complete the strictness of the cohesive and closed social structure regarding the way of providing for security in the practice of the then world, since any individual pretension was suppressed by the collective norms. In view of all that has been said so far, it is still valid to quote Veselin Ilić (1988, 33) and his view stating that:

„Within the social determinants of the mythological and religious consciousness, as a collective one, there is an individual who seems almost not to belong to himself; he is a sort of object that the society has at its disposal; he is alienated from himself.“

### DEFINING THE RITES AND ITS IMPORTANCE ON THE WITCH-SCOLDING DAY

Though this particular analysis is focused on the Witch-scolding Day in Bujanovac, when, on February 26, 2012, it was monitored in afternoon and evening hours as a full-fledged ritual,<sup>5</sup> it must be said that these rites are, in a very similar way, present in many parts of Serbia, especially in its southern part.<sup>6</sup> Despite the participants' awareness that it is a traditional folk mythological ritual, it is still understood, in its importance, as having an authentic religious Christian meaning. This is evident in the fact that the particular day is referred to as being Shrovetide<sup>7</sup> which, again, means it is related to the Shrove days, before the Lent (as a great Easter fasting) or on the eve of the great period of fasting and penitence. The Serbian term, *Bela nedelja*, meaning the White Sunday, involves the concept of „whiteness“ which has its origin in the reference to the “cheese week” when the ritual makes it obligatory to eat white food (in other words, it is a „siropust“ or cheese week).

In our interviews with the local people, that is, participants of this ceremony, we have found many explanations of its aspects. This year's organizer, from Belgrade Street in Bujanovac, Mr. Ljubiša Janjić says that

„today, in Bujanovac, in the streets, citizens are lighting fires and jumping over them; but, in our street, we celebrate it in our own way: we organize music, singing, dancing, joking, eating snacks and 'egg-swaying'“

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<sup>5</sup> The dwellers of Belgrade Street in Bujanovac celebrate the Witch-scolding Day or Shrovetide or Absolution in an extraordinary way every year. On that day in Belgrade Street they practice customs such as forgiving, lighting ritual fires, setting up tables abundant with food and drinks, playing music, reveling and drinking hot brandy. In a word, one street organizes a genuine folk festival.

<sup>6</sup> Witch-scolding is celebrated, in addition to Bujanovac, in Preševo, in the environment of Vranje, Leskovac, Kruševac, in some villages around Niš, Svrlijig as well as in the county of Pirot.

<sup>7</sup> Shrovetide can be celebrated as *final*, *big* or *absolution*.

(as a competition in which children, with their hands tied-up, are trying to get them with their teeth). This ceremony makes us closer as neighbors, both us, adults, and our children. This is the tradition we cherish from the days of our ancestors while our children follow our model and continue it; even our grandchildren do the same. They find it amusing while we, adults, cherish former customs, not to let them fall into oblivion.“

The ritual elements on the Witch-scolding Day include: *a special way of dressing, absolutions and reconciliation, feast and socializing, lighting fires, jumping over fires and face-blackening.*

### **A special way of dressing**

A special way of dressing mostly practiced by children or co-called “shrovetiders” (*pokladari*) which is a way of preparation for the evening hours of the ceremony. The young are putting on unusual costumes as a way of disguise in order to avoid being recognized by the witches; this is a symbolic act to create an atmosphere in which the witches cannot find the way to the given people; neither can they direct the forces of evil to the young and the other present ones. The strangeness of the costumes also springs from the fact that they are created according to the individual wishes; a great diversity of them includes those representing the witches. The costumed participants, with the masks on their faces – as befitting the prevailing accepted ritual – form a procession and pass through the village and its surroundings playing and singing, creating as much noise as possible in order to drive away the witches. In addition to gifts and candies obtained by the village people, the children under masks and costumes ensure not only the secrecy of their own visages but also the apparent presence of other divine creatures in order to appear, before the demonic beings, in as a powerful form as possible.

### **Absolution and reconciliations**

Absolution and reconciliations as a form of mediation of the Christian faith in the social surroundings are related to the times of the so-called Shrovetide of Absolution, that is, the Witch-scolding Day. On that day, for the sake of human purification, lessening of tensions or vanity, people initiate the ritual of forgiveness of debts and offenses as well as reconciliation. Starting from the fact that on that day the sky and the earth forgive each other, this „absolving evening rite“ is done firstly in the temples and then, on the return from the temple, in the family homes. According to the habitual behavior and folk legacy it is customary to make a toast on that day and say, „Forgive us, we are entering a fasting period as if we were getting into the sea“ while the other present participants reply, „Let it be God-forgiven; now you forgive me“. In view of the general approach to this day of celebration, within the same context, one of the participants in Belgrade Street rites says,

„We, neighbors, gather together every year, on this very day, in order to make peace in the case someone has done wrong to someone else since every offense is a big sin while today is the day for the absolution of people since it is human to forgive...“

From all that is previously said, it can be concluded that the Shrove-tide festivity is for the believers a day for forgiveness and joy. The implied belief is that the period of the great forty-days Lent (Easter fasting) should be entered by someone who is clean and sinless since only people with their souls peaceful can accept anointment from the priest.

### **Feast and socializing**

Feast and socializing represent the main event without any intention to lessen the importance of the previous and other aspects of this special day. The feast is an occasion for socialization while socialization is in itself the basis for the feast which is, in 2012, organized in the household of the host, Mr. Ljubiša Janjić. The last part of his statement on this day's festivities says, "... in a word, this is the common folk celebration that must not be missed". What is there to enjoy includes abundance of delicacies on the table, tasting diverse drinks, joking, singing, and above all, neighborly talks (ph. 1). On that evening in the host's yard there is place for everyone – not only for men but women and children as well. Concerning these gatherings, our third companion stresses that "even today we cherish the custom; each of us takes something to the host's; we gather together, we mix... Not only this. We also discuss the issues that are relevant for the problems and happenings in our street."

### **Lighting fires**

Lighting fires is done according to the traditional customs when the night is falling and when the celebrating people are through with the ritual of feasting and amusement. Today in Bujanovac they are about to build fires in the middle of the street, at seven different locations, before the yards where the feasts are taking place (ph. 2). In that sense, the aim of lighting fires and "burning witches" is to protect the population from unknown and possible evil behavior of some otherworldly creatures. Therefore, fire is used to dispel the witches and other monsters but also, fire itself signifies the burning of those beings that function on the black magic principle used for harming people in the social and individual sense.

### **Jumping over the fires**

Jumping over the fires becomes a part of the overall ceremony from the moment that its strength is the greatest. It is not reserved just for children or youth; it is also desirable for the adults to do it as well. The meaning implied in the jumps is that the fires are experienced as an act by which a positive or white magic act is fighting back or eliminating or transcending the negative or black or evil one. The fire is jumped over until it is extinguished (ph. 3 and ph. 4). Our fourth companion has, referring to this, added that "lighting fires and jumping over them have remained regular customs not only in our street but also in our whole region. I think that this custom does not exist only in the south of Serbia. By some belief, all evil and its wicked deeds, if man somehow has them in himself, are expelled from him and then, from the next day on, he can start his big Easter fasting with his soul pure, with no trace of evil whatsoever."

### **Face blackening**

Face blackening is the final act when from the burnt out fires, that is, ash, the participants, jokingly playing tricks on one another, blacken each other's faces (ph. 5). This should be the last act when the witches get a shock seeing the unfamiliar faces on that very day. The multitude of the blackened faces, unknown persons, on the other hand, launches an additional attack on the demons running away from the fires and, now, from the "shrovetiders" from the same vicinity. By expelling the witches through the ritual of the blackening the faces of the fire-jumpers, the same custom as practiced in Bujanovac is coupled with the protection from diseases, not only from wicked spirits, as stressed by our interlocutor: "By some belief, in this period a special danger was threatening people from the witches; that is why people lit fires for their own protection. As if they were trying to do something to drive the witches away by scolding them. That is why we light fires and jump over them. This is today a special act of socializing and having fun. Once the fires are dead we use the soot for painting our faces as a symbol... of protection from diseases and evil spirits."

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

1. In view of the fact that the participants will, after celebrating the Witch-scolding Day start a new season with much more optimism and belief in happiness, we consider the ritual founded on those values that are recognizable in the Christian understanding of the world and man, namely those based on penitence, self-restraint and purity. To what extent this is achieved in the ceremony of the Witch-scolding remains an open question but it is true that in the interpersonal (neighborly) relationships new links are established as well as new interrelations (through the rituals of forgiveness for offenses and debts). It is also true that through the strict adherence to the rules of behavior – up to the jumping over the ritual fires and face blackening – some sort of purification and protection is achieved. Therefore, in the symbiosis of pagan and religious notions and determination of their values, the aspirations of the human actions are crowned by establishing a harmony or by achieving a higher level of "the spirit of harmony" which is exactly the background of this festivity.

2. Knowing that this ritual is present in most parts of Serbia, especially in its south, it is true that people, not only in the southern regions, live with the belief that they are, by nature, reliant on each other so that it is natural that by using certain magic actions they tend to drive away the other ones – namely, evil or, simply, black magic actions reserved for the witches. In the prevailing mood of this world, interdependence on the community principle can be understood as the key term among people, that is, neighbors – as elements of immediate surroundings, of human direct networking – together with the diversity of their concrete undertakings and ways of behavior including their liability to the whimsical natural environment which is in itself the context in which they live and realize their strivings. The protection of such a world, even from the witches that can attack their socio-existential

conditions – in addition to the difficulties in which they find themselves victimized by the circumstances – reveals the concern for the entire human surroundings in order to keep it in balance and thus far from anything potentially harmful to it. Hence another demand follows: that all people should care about the existing order, that all people are responsible for whatever is life-giving and life-providing; so that there is no derailing or dangerous imbalance and neither is there any lack of care that could provoke endangerment to the well-rooted traditional life of man in the Serbian environment.

3. Finally, in addition to what has been said, another big issue arises from the previous remarks, namely, how much can the former sociality of man be approached as comprehensible and, even more important, unchangeable? What does it mean that even today people can have “fun” enjoying the values that are nothing else but the relics of the world of the primordial existence which cherishes provincialism as a newly acquired wisdom of the old-value customs whose respective delusions are stemming from the days of general illiteracy, universal ignorance and almost total closure and suspicion toward everything that is “other”, different and foreign? It might be said that the entire ritual practice centered around the Witch-scolding day and other similar ceremonies is only symbolic reminiscence and imitation of the former beliefs. Yet, if we take into consideration the fact that this particular day is not only related to the animistic period, that is, that the pagan rites are absorbed by the Orthodox Christianity (as something which is all the time emphasized in all the statements) then – when the things are no longer so simple as before – the question must be asked whether this is the matrix from which, in Serbia, stems the domination of the patriarchal, the conservative and the rejecter of the new. On top of it all, another question can be added concerning the place of human freedom in such a social structure but – then – this would open up a new debate about the character of the Serbian traditional culture in its attitudes towards everything which refers to the Other, modernity and progress – in other words, it would mean an analysis of the issue of the position of subjectivity.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Ph. 1: Neighborly talks



Ph. 2: Fires in the middle of the street



Ph. 3: The fire is jumped over until it is extinguished



Ph. 4: The fire is jumped over until it is extinguished



Ph. 5: The participants blacken each other's faces





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## KALAVEŠNICE IN RADOVNICA \*

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### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The significance of the conducted field research is seen in the application of micro-sociological approach, an increasingly used level of sociological analysis today, which proves that a social life is mostly realized through “ordinariness and mediocrity”. Hence, everyday life is to be taken as an area where “the most important things” happen: it is a place where people live, where traces of history and memories are seen, where future is created, and where people will die regardless of socio-economic circumstances (Spasić 2004, 14). The goal was, using in-depth interview, to make an attempt to bring the moment of *everyday life* into a scientific observation about identity sustainability of Serbs and national minorities in border municipalities of Eastern and South-eastern Serbia, and to do this not by contemplating on *everyday life*, but by retelling which comes from the *everyday life*. In this paper, the social reality is seen “from above”, from the perspective of a conversation between a respondent and a researcher, with a goal to reach deeper understanding of customary practices from the perspective of everyday life of a family in the village of Radovnica – the family of Žarko Jovanović, his thoughts, feelings, and behavior related to important questions about his everyday life and the life of his family. Due to heavy snow, the village was without electricity and telephone connections, the road was impassable, so it was impossible to carry out the interview as firstly planed on December 13, 2011 (when it was planned to observe Sirovar in Radovnica). It was conducted on a rescheduled date in the family house of Žarko Jovanović, which is located in the center of the village of Radovnica, not far from an elementary school and a village church; it happened on February 26, 2012, an important date in the Serbian customary calendar – Poklade (carnival). The interview was conducted by Dragan Todorović and Danijela Zdravković in an ambient of worm family atmosphere, filled with unhidden hospitality and optimism. The visit and conversation took almost five hours (from 5:15 p.m. until 9:45 p.m.); the intent of the researchers was to carry out the interview in two parts: filming the ritual of kalaveštica in the open, in the garden of the family house, and then to continue the interview about impressions and

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memories of cultivating the observed customs both in the past and present days. His spouse, Ljubinka Jovanović had a role of a hostess, and she participated in preparations and conduction of the ritual, as well as in the interview from the beginning till the end.

The choice of people for this interview, family members of Žarko Jovanović, was imposed on us as a logical one, since it resulted from the previously made contacts with people in Radovnica and in Niš during the field research (village teacher Tijana Stojnev, several locals and two students of the Faculty of sports and sports education in Niš, who come from Radovnica, but study in Niš). Namely, last year (2011), one of the authors of this paper (Danijela Zdravković) went on the field with a task to examine the socio-demographic characteristics and life style of the locals in the border village of Radovnica (Tasić & Zdravković 2012). Then she found herself in the mountain village of Radovnica in Trgovište municipality for the first time, and met locals who were open for cooperation and ready to participate in the research, offering wholehearted help, suggesting a visit to some important sights in the village, and at the same time pointing to possible data sources and people who can testify about important events in this area. All mentioned sources agreed in one thing: that Žarko Jovanović falls into a group of locals – respected hosts, with doubtlessly clear visions for the future, but also with deep concern for preserving the tradition, as well as for significance and importance of customary practices for nourishing family relationships, cohesion, and solidarity within neighborhood and the village of Radovnica. Especially because it is possible to observe this example through the prism of a modern sociological principle: *that in modern conditions of national aculturalization, border regions become preservers of national treasure and a bulwark of national culture, because they are archaic in comparison to highly urban centers where a strong influence of Anglophone culture is manifested.*

#### **About Radovnica**

The village of Radovnica is a rural settlement of a dispersed type; it belongs to the municipality of Trgovište, which is located on the far South-East of the Republic of Serbia, covering the area of 370km,<sup>2</sup> along the Serbia-Macedonia border, bordering also municipalities of Bosilegrad, Vranje, and Bujanovac. This village belongs to the Pčinja District. It is situated at 950-1400m above sea level, on the valley banks of the Tripušnica River, which is a right tributary to the Pčinja River, 17km Southeast from Trgovište, and 63 km from the town of Vranje. The terrain configuration is typically rural and mountainous; the mountainous area is surrounded by mountains and plateaus, such as: Bele Vode, Dukat, Čupino brdo, Kozjak, etc.

According to tradition, the name of the village comes from a male personal name – Radovan, who was the first inhabitant of the village. It is an old settlement, which is confirmed by found remains of previous settlements (Roman coins, church remains...). In the past, it was mentioned as a village on the well-known Kyustendil caravan route. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was settled by older families from Kriva Palanka, and from around Preševo and Kumanovo. Only Serbs live in the village. The largest hamlet is Trn with 30

houses, and the largest mahalas (T.N. – “mahala” is a residential quarter of a rural or urban settlement) are Magura (12 houses), Kostinci (10 houses), and Bazovica (8 houses). The village has always been in the same place, and it covers 10km<sup>2</sup> – 10km wide and 10km long. The average annual temperature in the village is 10°C.

### **Carnival in Tradition**

Every nation has its customs, and these are quite different, but the best seen difference lies in getting acquainted with circumstances in which they have been created, revived, and observed by wider community. No matter how different they may be, folk customs are always connoted by esthetic, scenic, verbal, and nonverbal characteristics, because people have been creating and nurturing it for centuries, filled with emotions and cultural charge. Serbian customs are probably interesting and amusing to other people, both because of differences and similarities that correspond to their own customs.

Serbian customs are insufficiently familiar to modern Serbs. Bearing in mind that since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century culture is seen as a model of material and spiritual adaptation, which a society accepts as a traditional way of solving problems, and that knowing other peoples' customs or exchange of riches of folk traditions is seen as an advantage and is desired in the path of bringing people closer in the time of globalization, an example from the Serbian calendar of customs, known as *Poklade*, which is celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> day of February every year.

Since the dawn of time American and European nations have used pagan rituals and customs to celebrate the end of winter and the beginning of spring, glorifying the cult of the Sun. In carnival<sup>1</sup> atmosphere people turn to unrestrained indulgence in food, drinking, and celebrations wearing masks, contrary to everyday living under strict moral norms equally in Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions.<sup>2</sup>

In France and countries under French influence, Shrove Tuesday is known as Fat Tuesday (Mardi Gras). In Anglo-Saxon countries this day is also called Pancake Day, probably because on that day the remaining eggs were used to make pancakes before fast. In Croatia, the carnival is also called “mesopust” (T.N. – from *meso*, meaning “meat”, and *pustiti* meaning “abs-tain”). The carnival in Russia is celebrated as Maslenica (Marković 2011). Most carnival traditions include ceremonial *straw dolls burning*, which can have different symbolic meanings.

Today, the carnival is usually related to the beginning of Lent fasting before Easter. The last week before Lent is called “bela nedelja” (White Week), and the last day of this week is called “bele” (white) or “sirene” (of cheese) pok-

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<sup>1</sup> The word “carnival” comes from the Latin expression *carne vale* – “farewell to meat”, which means that these are last days before the fast, when one can still eat meat. Today some of the most famous carnivals are those in Rio (Brazil) and in Venice (Italia).

<sup>2</sup> The precise date of Bele poklade (White carnial) depends on Easter, which is a move-able feast and it follows the Church calendar, falling on different dates in the Orthodox and Catholic Church. Bele poklade are always on Sunday among Orthodox Christians.

lade (Velike poklade, Završne poklade, Proštene poklade, Pročke, Pročka, Mesopust, Siropust). Usually, these are days full of songs, jokes, and happiness, but they also have a pronounced chthonic character. The day begins with taking food and burning candles in a graveyard, food that is white in color is placed on graves of people who died since the previous carnival, incense is burned and the words are spoken: “everything white today, on this day, let it be seen by all my beloved...” Afterwards, a feast is prepared at homes, with many fatty foods, especially delicatessen made of dairy products. On Clean Monday housewives orderly clean all dishes from any fat and throw away any fatty food; in this way the seven weeks long fast begins.

Here is a description of carnival (poklade) in the encyclopedic dictionary “Slavic Mythology”:

„POKLADÉ – among South Slavs, the last day or the whole week before a —» fasting season of several days or several weeks; it is celebrated in a cheerful and loud way, with abundance of fat food (Serbian poklade, Croatian: and Slovenian: fašnik, Slovenian: pust, Bulgarian: заговезни, Macedonian: сирийца). In folk tradition the most celebrated day is the one before Great or Easter Fast.

Bele poklade, Velike poklade, Sirne poklade, Macedonian Велики поклади, Проштени поклади, Прачка, see also Serbian: Mete poklade, Bulgarian: Мети заговезни 'the last day when fatty foods can be eaten (the week before Lent)'. Among Balkan Slavs, characteristic customs for the last day before Lent are those related to visiting relatives (forgiving sins and offences), to burying -> fires (torches, arrows), masquerade and other games, -> divination (about life and death, yields), to exorcism against —»diseases, —> unclean forces, etc., also to Serbian lamkara, Macedonian амкање, Bulgarian ламкане, хамкане – a custom with —» an egg (piece of cake, halva, coal) that hangs on a thread, which participants have to catch with their teeth (Tolstoj and Radenković 2001).”

In the afternoon, so called *oproštajno večernje* (“forgiving evening service”) is served in Orthodox churches, when believers, first in churches, then in their houses, ask for and give forgiveness for previously made insults, negligence, defamation, and feuds, so that they could start Great Lent with a “pure soul”.

„Sons and daughters with their families visit their parents, bringing them a bottle of liquor and other gifts. A son-in-law necessarily visits his parents-in-law, best man, and a bridesman, and asks for pročka (T.N. – he asks if he has a pass) so that he could decently start fasting. When he enters a house, he kisses a hand of his father-in-law and says: ‘Forgive me, grandpa’, and his father-in-law replies: ‘You are forgiven, son’.“  
(<http://www.pravoslavljje.net/index.php>)

During this period, a special attention is given to protection from negative influences of witches, so there was a practice of smearing oneself with

garlic and lighting protective fires (“olalije”, “oratnice”, “priveg”) (Đorđević 1985).

Lighting and jumping over fire is kept in local traditions under several similar names: karaveštica, karavesnica, kalavešnica, krljaveštica, krlaštica.<sup>3</sup> Momčilo Zlatanović (1998) in his Dictionary of South Serbia Speech defines these as follows:

“**καρσέιμνιζα** *f* jumping over fire on Bele poklade; a carnival game (Vranje).“

Bonfires were made of straw, hay or old rags, often straw dolls in a shape of a witch were also made.<sup>4</sup> Almost every house had its own bonfire or it was made at the end of a village, on a crossroad, on a hill, but it was necessarily followed by dancing and jumping over the fire.<sup>5</sup>

The celebrations were made more festive by noisy groups of children dressed in unusual costumes and masks; playing music and dancing, shouting and yelling along with music of the tamburas, accordions, frulas, and bagpipes, they entered gardens of locals and expected gifts (fruits, confectioneries, dried prunes, roasted squash, bacon, dried meat, coins, eggs, etc.). The masked procession used to be accompanied by “mečkari” (“bear tamers”), men painted with soot and dressed in torn clothing or covered with hide (Marjanović 2003-2004, 2005).

Ceremonial procession used to be a part of widely accepted religious behavior of Serbs. Facing unpredictable natural forces and mythological creatures, peasants used different magical practices, dresses, songs, and dances in attempt to tame them and bring them on their side or, on the other hand, to drive them away from their arable land, orchards, and meadows in order to secure harvesting crops in the summer (Vlahović 1999).

## KALAVEŠNICE IN RADOVNICA

### How were the customs observed?

Building fire on “Bele poklade” (or Kalavešnice, as it is called here) is a long tradition. While jumping over burning piles of straw and hay in a field, a garden or anywhere else on a property, household members would shout as loud as possible: “The bigger the voice, the bigger the crop”!<sup>6</sup> An unwritten rule was to form three consecutive burning piles, which were jumped over in both directions (upwards and downwards) without stopping.

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<sup>3</sup> Actions which are used to drive away (“otkarati”) witches.

<sup>4</sup> Today, in the region around Niš, children come with their parents to jump over fire, they are masked and they have hand-made dressed dolls that resemble witches. When the fire burns out, they may smear soot on their faces, believing that everything evil was expelled by this burning ([http://www.juznevesti.com/Drushtvo/Karavestice-u-Gornjem-Medjurovu-video\\_.sr.html](http://www.juznevesti.com/Drushtvo/Karavestice-u-Gornjem-Medjurovu-video_.sr.html)).

<sup>5</sup> There used to be a belief that places from which these fires can be seen won't be struck by hail during the summer.

<sup>6</sup> Magical words were used to ensure a good harvest in the coming season.

The whole week before Lent – “Pročke” – people would visit their relatives and close family members (godparents, parents-in-law) and ask for forgiveness for any possible negligence during the previous year. A younger person would humbly address an older one, because the young could, intentionally or accidentally, due to their inexperience, make mistake in their behavior toward the elderly.

The beginning of Lent marked the beginning of planting season in fields, plowing and sowing agricultural crops; winter was sent off, and the arrival of spring was celebrated. It was in consciousness of peasants that proper magical rituals were to protect crop yield from lightning, hail, drought or flood; and this was done by offering sacrifice to higher forces, which was represented by making ritual bonfires. Omitting any of the prescribed actions was out of the question, because that could challenge the success of harvesting plenty of fruits, vegetables and other products.

Straw is not burnt as it used to be (there is not much of it in households, because there is less livestock for which it is used as a floor covering), hay is used instead. Straw used to burn well and the flame was bigger, while the fire of burning hay produces thick smoke. Nevertheless, peasants do not give up the old tradition and they keep them alive in somewhat changed settings.<sup>7</sup> It may happen that children and youngsters scorch their hair and eyebrows, and they would additionally change their appearance by smearing soot on their faces. Still strong elderly people used to leave unbridled joy to youngsters, and when the fire died away they used to cross it at least three times in both directions while saying appropriate words and sentences.<sup>8</sup> In a case of death of a family member during the previous year, mourners did not observe these customs, nor did they organize it in front of their houses.<sup>9</sup>

Masquerade and carnival in Radovnica have never been organized on Bele poklade, but on another day – *Sirovare*, a holiday that is also traditionally organized in this region, but at different time, at the end of January. From an early twilight until late evening hours, a group of ten younger people visits households in the village and collects gifts, such as wool, meat, bacon, apples, brandy or money. They used to wear traditional clothes (worn clothing, “šajkača”, and “brič”-trousers) and whirl “treskataljke” (T.N. – a type of ratchet), a handmade wooden instrument that produces unbearable noise, which purpose was, among other things, to drive away evil forces and to reduce their actions. No masks were worn on this occasion.

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<sup>7</sup> Those who do not have hay take *dried fern* and burn it in their yards.

<sup>8</sup> Modern generations do not attach importance to traditional beliefs when observing the customs, but they do it mostly in order to preserve tradition. However, Ljubinka, Žarko’s wife, recalls words of her parents: “If a child had an allergy on his or her face, ash from the ritual bonfire would be smeared on it, which was kept in a special jar, as a medicine.”

<sup>9</sup> They also would not decorate eggs for Easter.

### **What is done today?**

In the late afternoon on February 26, hosts from Radovnica have been patiently standing in front of piles of hay in their gardens, formed over unmelted snow. Through fog, filled with light rain, the first fires have begun to spark from different locations, followed by din of excited people.

There was Žarko Jovanović, a respected host from Radovnica, waiting for us in front of the house, together with his wife Ljubinka (1959) and the youngest child from a neighbor's house.

Žarko Jovanović, an Orthodox Serb, was born on May 1, 1960 to father Uroš (1933-2009) and mother Rajna (1931) in Radovnica, in the mahala of Kočinci. He finished elementary school also in Radovnica, as a pupil who had to walk a long way to go to school, and then a secondary school of mechanical engineering "V.V. Vujo" in Vranje. He married Ljubinka (1959) from Trgovište on August 3, 1982, and he has three sons, Saša (1984), Dragan (1985), and Marko (1992). Žarko has a harmonious relationship with his family, which, beside his wife and children, is consisted of his mother Rajna and daughter-in-law Suzana (1987), wife of his eldest son Saša. In 1986, the Jovanoviés moved from their old house in the mahala of Kočinci (6km from the center of Radovnica) into their new family house, made of solid materials, with backyard and additional buildings for keeping poultry and livestock, drying and storing forest fruits and fuel, and agricultural land. They keep only pigs, poultry, a dog, and a cat. They cultivate the land as they did before, and beside orchard (apples and plums), they grow vegetable crops (potato, pea, onion, beans...). In 2000, Žarko bought a house in Vranje, where two of his sons and his daughter-in-law live now. The youngest son studies in Niš.

After he had finished high school (1980) and married (1982), Žarko found a job in a textile factory – JUMKO from Vranje – in a branch in Radovnica, where he still works as a precision machinist who maintains machines. His wife Ljubinka also used to work there until 2009 as a textile worker, but she receives welfare money now and is waiting for a process for obtaining a pensioner status to begin.

The Jovanoviés family is very mobile during the whole year, splitting their time between Radovnica, Vranje, and Niš. This mobility of the Jovanoviés indicates family solidarity, help, support, understanding, and cooperation when it comes to the questions of education, employment, working at factory and around the house, working the land, maintaining livestock, collecting forest fruits (mushrooms, blueberries, rose hips, wild thyme...), collecting wood for heating, and selling mushrooms, blueberries, and wood. This has provided solid financial income to the Jovanoviés as well as the possibility to intensify and spread their work and family activities, in accordance with visions of this respected and persistent host from the mountain village of Radovnica, who used benefits of symbiosis between locals of this border region and the nature.

We are acquainted with their family life by his wife Ljubinka, whose story has a recognizable character of idealization of the past in traditional life practice which is still cultivated today; she points out that her children have

been included both in work and in everyday activities since they were very young, and that they have actively participated in traditional practices of this region. All members of the family are involved in work that is neither easy nor simple, but they still have time to rest, have fun, and socialize with neighbors and relatives; this is more common during winters, when there are no activities related to nature, except for selling fruits, vegetables, and wood. General conclusion of both Ljubinka and Žarko is that existence in Radovnica depends largely on one's own work and family solidarity in the house, in the field, in the factory, and in the village.

After cordial greetings, pointing his hand to the houses of his closer and farther neighbors (ph. 1, 2, 3, and 4), he advised us not to prolong the realization of activities for which we had come to this region, almost at the tripoint of Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia. The seven year old boy was the most impatient: he was spinning a sack made from a military tent sheet filled with hay. He went hastily into the orchard behind the house and spread dried grass in three equal piles on the snow that had been dug away. Knowingly, Žarko poured some gasoline in order to light fire more easily. Three bonfires kindled suddenly, and the Jovanovićs together with Nenad (ph. 5) started to jump skillfully over them; one of the authors of the paper joined them (ph. 6), as well as neighbors from the next door (ph. 7). There was shouting all the time: "The bigger the voice, the bigger the crop!"

As soon as the last ember from the three hay piles died out Žarko painted Nenad's face with soot and took him to a facility next to the main house. There was a peeled boiled egg hanging on a long thread (in the past, there used to be a chain hanging from the ceiling above a hearth). The boy's task was to "bark" at the egg ("woof, woof, woof"), which swung to left and right, and to try to bite it without using hands (ph. 8). Žarko remembered his childhood when seven or eight children had been clumsily pushing around the chain wanting to catch the swinging egg in their teeth, and to eat it as a reward. Proving that this was not his first time, Nenad ably fulfilled his task in a short time, which was followed by loud approval and laughter of everyone present.

We moved to the living room of the Jovanovićs, where we were joined by Žarko's cousin, Slave Dodić (1958) and his wife Stojka Dodić (1956) (ph. 9). We continued the conversation about the meaning that these rituals had had for the previous generations in Radovnica. A dish that was necessarily prepared used to be "banica", a special egg pie;<sup>10</sup> cheese, bacon and sliced dried meat were also served (poultry and livestock were not slaughtered for this occasion).

A gest whose presence was required was a son-in-law, who expected "forgiveness" from his parents-in-law for any possible feuds since the previous holiday. He used to bring a box of sugar cubes as a gift, and if he behaved well

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<sup>10</sup> Laughing a bit, Stojka told us that, when she was a child, her parents had used to wake her up during the night, giving her the last chance to "oblažiti" (eat fatty food, remaining from the daily feast). Already in the morning, they threw the remaining food to animals, and dishes were washed in warm water. They fasted until Easter.



during the year, his mother-in-law would give him “ribica”<sup>11</sup>, the best part of pork shoulder. Generally, during the whole week, younger people visited older ones, but never vice versa: even if there were no reasons for asking for “forgiveness”, these meetings would strengthen family and marital moral and would remind them to act properly.<sup>12</sup>

On that day they would not miss to visit graves in the village cemetery, just after the noon (“lunch is brought to the deceased”, older people used to say). Everything that had been on the dinner table the previous evening was offered to ascendants along with a lit candle. Attendance of a priest is not obligatory. Generally, people do not bind these customs to the official Church, they do not go to church on *Poklade*, but neither is the Church interested in what its parishioners do before Lent.<sup>13</sup> The day after, and only on that day – Clean Monday, the first day of seven-day refraining from eating fatty foods, no matter how far they went in overeating the day before, the largest number of locals would observe a strict “water only” fast: they would not take any calories in their organism, except for water. This custom is still preserved today, although there are far fewer people who would undertake a precept of a seven days refraining than there used to be.<sup>14</sup> Our interlocutors confirm that there is no music, and that incantation and divination are also not practiced by young girls or elderly women.

Žarko and Ljubinka asked us to move to another room, where a set table awaited us with homemade foods which people from Radovnica usually offer to their guests on this day (ph. 10). Beside unavoidable “banica” and boiled eggs, we were offered peppers stuffed with cow’s-milk cheese, peppers boiled in oil, potato salad, pressed sheep’s-milk cheese, and soured cow’s milk. There is a separate plate with sliced dried bacon, dried meat and čvarci (T.N. – a type of pork rinds), and there was a roasted lamb in a metal sheet pan. Žarko, as an experienced hunter, was proud of a marinated rabbit caught in the local mountains, and he insisted that we tried it. We were offered homemade brandy at the beginning and homemade wine at the end of the dinner.

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<sup>11</sup> When a son-in-law used to return home from the visit to his parents-in-law, he would certainly be asked: “Son, did grandma give you ‘ribica’?”

<sup>12</sup> Ljubinka tells us: “There, my sister called me a few days ago and asked me why I hadn’t gone, with Žarko, to our parents; Father had expected us to come for ‘forgiveness’. I told her that I hadn’t sinned, and that their son-in-law could go if he had: as far as I knew, he hadn’t sinned also. ‘And how would you know?’ – she asked in return”.

<sup>13</sup> There is an Orthodox church with a priest in Radovnica. However, the local do not visit it when they go to the cemetery, when they take foods and drinks as gifts to the dead. Many of them are more rely more on experience of their elder relatives and neighbors, who bestow their knowledge on them, which they had inherited from their old ones.

<sup>14</sup> Žarko explains his point of view: “Look, people used to prepare some lens, beans, soups in the past, they didn’t have so much food as we have today. Meat from a pig that was slaughter during the year used to be kept in storage for important days of the year: Christmas, Easter, Slava. So they used to eat nonfat meals on any other day. It is not like that today: every household slaughters a pig or two, weighing up to ten kilos, and they eat meat every day. So it is normal that they cannot keep fasting for forty days!”

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Ph. 1: Burning fires in Radovnica households



Ph. 2: Burning fires in Radovnica households



Ph. 3: Burning fires in Radovnica households



Ph. 4: Burning fires in Radovnica households



Ph. 5: Members of the Jovanović family jump over the fire



Ph. 6: The author joins in the jumping over the fire



Ph. 7: People jump over the fire in the neighboring backyard



Ph. 8: Nenad Tončić "barks" at an egg



Ph. 9: Interviewees: Slave and Stojka Dodić, Ljubinka and Žarko Jovanović



Ph. 10: Holiday meal



Milan Tasić

**THE RITUAL OF CALLING FOR THE RAIN  
IN THE VILLAGES AROUND KLENIKA –  
SOME FURTHER PARALLELS\***

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Klenike is a place (village) with only 15 households, however its geographic position intended it to become the municipal center (until 1965), with thirty villages gravitating around it for long time. Further geographic details: it is located on two different rivers: the South-Moravian and the Pčinja, in the vicinity of St. Prohor Pčinski Monastery, established in Byzantine times and renewed in the time of King Milutin.

We are going to convey the story of Trajković Ljubice, from the village of Petke, about the magic ritual of calling for the rain, which was practically preserved until the 60's of the last century, when the villages above all changed drastically their demographic structure caused by the departure of the young people to the town.

Part of the tradition in this region is the magic ritual of calling for the rain, particularly in the drought periods when the crops were endangered. The term "dodols" refers to this event, it is a noun from female gender, plural, used for calling girls at the age of 7 to 14 years old, the main actors of the ritual activity. Dressed in torn shirts, with wreaths made from willow leaves and switches in their hairs, they would go to each home to meet the members of household. They would stand in front of them outside, while the girls would sing the well-know song, with the following chorus after each verse: "Hey, dodo, hey doodle!" We found the following words:

"Give us God drops of rain,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
Let rain fall all over the fields,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
All over the fields, over the meadows,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
Let white wheat grow,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
And the barns will fill,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
And black grapes will ripen,

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\* Prepared as a part of the project *Sustainability of the Identity of Serbs and National Minorities in the Border Municipalities of Eastern and Southeastern Serbia* (179013), conducted at the University of Niš – Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, and supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia.

Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
And the wine barrels will fill,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
Wine barrels filled with red wine,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!"

In other cases, they would begin with the verse and chorus:

"Give us drops of rain,  
Hey dodo, dodole!" etc.

and later people would abundantly pour water over them, accompanied by laughter...

We convey the testimony on this ritual in Serbian language from the work of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1987, 135-136), who in his *Dictionary*, says:

"Few girls, in the summer, when there is a drought, go through the village from house to house singing for rain. One of the girls would undress, remaining only on her shirt, and thus naked she would put grass and flowers all over her, so her skin wouldn't be visible, and she is called *dodola* (...) and afterwards would go from house to house. When they would arrive in front of a house, she would dance alone, while the other girls stand in line and sing different songs: then the hostess, or the children would take a caldron or a kettle filled with water, and pour it down the *dodola*, while she dances in circles. At the end of every verse in the *dodol* songs the following lines follow: hey dodo, hey dodo le! ...

"Our *dodola* prays to God,  
hey dodo, hey dodole!  
For drops of rain,  
hey dodo, hey dodole!"

Vuk further continues:

"There are *dodol* dances even in present times nearly every where in Serbia, particularly from Valjevo down to Timok. In Srem, Bačka and Banat they danced until recently, however the priests forbade it and eradicated the ritual (ibid, 136)."

The fact that this chthonic ritual related to the earth, the fruits, was widely spread, but also disappeared and was "forbidden" tells us that it is "ancient", and has prevailed since ancient times, when the mythical and magic beliefs weren't replaced by religion or merged with it. This is further supported by the unclear word "doda", or "dodola", while Vuk himself only touched the subject of its meaning: "She dressed herself to look like *dodola*, a girl or a woman that has placed ornaments in her hair" (ibid, 136).

It is intriguing that when referring to this cultural fact Vuk (superficially) uses the words: "ritual", "dance", ... not evoking any pagan, magical reference in the ritual activity, nor reference to, let's say, St. Ilija the bearer of thunder, or the personification of the ancient Slavic god Perun, the god of thunder and lightning.

The following dodol song, from the villages around Gnjilane, refers to this:

“Let rain fall,  
Hey, dodola dear God!  
Hey Ilija, oh God, give us rain!  
Hey Ilija, my Perun!  
Give us rain God, give us rain Ilija!”  
(*www.starisloveni.com*)

Or the following record:

“Go outside, go outside housewife  
Give us rain, give us rain!  
Housewife,  
Give us rain, give us rain!  
Beloved guests have come  
Guests from afar!  
From the rainy cloud  
From the strong rain  
And his dear brother  
Perun, the thunder bearer” ...  
(*ibid*).

Precisely the same ritual, schematically, for the same reason was performed on the holiday of St. Ilija in Dalmatia, only the role of the girls was taken over by (unmarried) men, boys. Vuk says the following about this:

“Just like there are dodols in Serbia, in Dalmatia (in Kotar) there are *prporushes*, only they are not girls, but bachelors with green branches and flowers they go from house to house and dance and sing (Stefanović Karadžić 1867, 62-64).”

From etymological aspect, the root of the word “per” in Perun means: “to strike”, “to beat”, just like according to the legend, when this god drove in his carriages in the sky and the wheels roared. Many other languages kept this meaning (Russian: *perun* = lightning, Polish: *piorun* = thunder), as well as in our word “grm” = thunder, while the roots of the words “hrast” = oak, “gora” = woods etc., as is the second name for the word “perunika”=goddess. Still, the word *gundėmi*, in Lithuanian, which means “to thunder”, is the closest to the word “dodol”, since Dodola was the wife of the god Perun, or the goddess of rain, etc. It is interesting that the Righteous god – Perun was part of this ancient belief. This god punished the wrongdoers and evil, and there are traces of him in the Middle Ages, mentioning that the Slavs swore in him to speak the truth. (*Nestor’s Chronicle, Pasie’s Anthology* etc.)

If the oak was the tree of our ancient god Perun, the thunder bearer, in the rituals of picking oak, or willow leaves and branches, and placing them on our body, we can recognize the ancient (pre-Christian) act of homeopathy – human beings relate their feelings and state of consciousness for the deity through herbs, since they “express” the deity himself. In this case, it is the need for water in nature, rain. The ritual itself is imitative, because pouring the water and abundant gift giving, refers that nature itself “reciprocates” to people with the same: rain and gifts.

In our literature, there are songs that “accompany” this ritual activity, collected by Vuk himself. One of them is:

“We go across the village,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
Clouds run across the sky,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
We are fast, the cloud is faster,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
The clouds overtook us,  
Hey dodo, hey dodole!  
They poured over wheat and wine,  
Hey dodo, hey doodle”!  
(Nedić 1977, 53-54).

The song was sung in octameter, while the chorus in septameter, which by following each line, emphasizes the tone of praying. The imitative act itself is simplified, because the movement of the girls-dodols follows the “movement” of the clouds in the sky, whereupon the clouds overtake them, bring rain and so the desire prevails.

In Macedonian language, the dodol songs convey the same essence, but the language expression is much different, so the chorus “hey doodle”, is changed in “hey ljule hey”. The brothers Miladinovci left a record of this song from 1861, from the surrounding of Struga:

“The butterfly flew away  
Hey ljule, hey,  
From plowman to plowman,  
Hey ljule hey,  
From digger to digger  
Hey ljule hey,  
From cutter to cutter  
Hey ljule hey,  
And rain shall fall  
Hey ljule hey,  
Rain for good harvest  
Hey ljule hey,  
In the fields and sea,  
For good harvest  
Hey ljule hey,  
Good harvest for wine and wheat;  
Hey ljule hey. ...  
(Miladinovci 1962, 462).

The title of the song is “Hey ljule”, and it seems that in fact, these are the words: “Hey dodole”, altered due to the particular pronunciation change. What is particular in the song is the word “peperuga” = butterfly from the first line, because this old word form derives as a personification of the female deity Peperuna (or Perperuna) in the South Slavs, Romanians, ... which is in fact the goddess of rain. She might also be the wife of the god Perun etc., si-



nce the word itself is used to call for rain, just like in other regions the word “dodola”, “dodolica” is used.

Thus, this magic form, along with many more, has remained on our ground, towards the border with Macedonia, like a fetish, from the spiritual history of our ancestors, before they converted to polytheism to monotheism. It was “validly” present in each village, demographically, not to the degree to endanger life in the community designated by this word, since near the villages in this region there are uninhabited hamlets, or at least ones with only few people. Of course, it does not give us the right to suspect about the disappearance of the ritual in this region, in a certain period, rather we could say it presents “constant” culture in the life and work, “forever”, transmitted through heritage and tradition. It is sufficient to find any religious ritual: for instance the “Lazar’s girls” on the day of Lazar’s Saturday, or Vrbice, and make no exception without any obvious reasons even in the case of dodols, performed at different occasions, not on certain dates in the year.

We can further establish about the beliefs (earliest) regarding the beginning of this ritual activity in the past that they are representation of the magic power (primarily) contained in each separate thing to always produce itself from anew. It further developed itself to the term “homeopathy”, or “sympathetic magic”, the incarnation of the principle “similar produces similar”, recognized in this case of pouring and splashing water on the bodies of the participants in the ritual act, as well as in the words sang. Hence, we find: “We go through the village, the clouds through the sky”, or “we go fast, the clouds faster” etc. As it is known, during history, the primary forms of beliefs in the magic power possessed by words and things, would merge with religion, which appeared later, preserving in the general framework, even when strongly opposed. The sociologist Gurvitch claims that according to magic certain “higher powers” can be managed, while this is not the case with religion.

Different events during human history, when man did not know about deities, anthropomorphic or zoomorphic – were primarily explained in the form of fetishes, taboos, totems. Thus, as we already said, the ritual we speak of was related to the god of thunder, Perun, while the same role was dedicated to St. Ilija in Christianity, a monotheistic religion.

Finally, let us inspect some traces (or better yet: roots), which we have come across in some Indo-European people, of similar rituals regarding the same subject, with certain particular characteristics. It can be concluded that all these people, although thousands of years (geographically) distanced and separated, hence prevented to directly influence each other, have a distant common Indo-European history.

On the north of India, in the Mirzapur region, in times of droughts, half-dressed women would go out to the fields and pull the yokes, while the one holding the plough would say: “O, Mother Earth! Give us rain, wheat and crops. We labour, tortured by famine and thirst” (Zarubin 1969, 33-39).

There is also the testimony of the Czech anthologist, Kosma from Prague, from the Middle Ages, about how the Czechs at the beginning of spring would go to the streams and throw in the air black hens and cocks, ca-

ling for the rain. The black colour here is connected with thunder and rain, and we recognize this in the old Indian hymns *Tajtiria-Samhiti* where during droughts, people offered sacrifice of black colour, since it was believed that this colour brings rain. The Slavs, just like the Indo-Aryans, long ago offered sacrifices to streams, wells, rivers, lakes, believing that the earth and underground waters are immediately connected to the sky.

The appearances in the sky, thunders and lightning, in one way or another were imitated in order to (also) homeopathically produce the wanted effect down here on earth. More humorously, in front of the children, but maybe with some “pre-meaning” hidden inside, during thunder people would say: “Grandpa and Grandma are fighting”, while in the Czech Republic they would say: “The celestial soldiers are arming” (*ibid*).

Today, there is a ritual in the region Ahmednagar in India, at the beginning of the rain season when the young men from different villages throw (symbolically) stones and branches at each other. There is a similar ritual in Bulgaria – during the so-called “un-baptized days” (“*rusalija*”), between Christmas and Epiphany, when the armed crowd would fight among each other, marking the victims, and then “revenge”, “baptize” and convert them to Christianity.

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## SIROVARI OF CAKANOVAC\*

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### INTRODUCTION

“From Saint Nicholas’ to Saint Sava’s the year opens toward the heavenly and otherworldly. The cold fixes the geometric purity of shape and the prenatal barrenness of soil. The sky, a rib cage skeleton lighted up from the inside, trembles among the constellations. In every house, holidays and saint’s days make tame what is distant and unfathomable. Our wisdom, burdened by the questions of the beginning and the end, rests for a while from futile efforts. Holiday food and drinks cheer up the consciousness. An unhealthy curiosity has misled us to a wasteland; customs bring us back to better possibilities for understanding and experiencing, to painless solutions bequeathed by our ancestors.”

Milovan Danojlić

The tiny village of Cakanovac lies 7 km from Preševo, a municipal town, and 3 km from the Railway Station of Preševo, the part of the town closest to the highway, Corridor 10, and is inhabited by Serbs and Đorgovci (Orthodox Roma), who think of it as their own village that seems to separate them insurmountably from the rest of the population of Preševo, which comprises an absolute Albanian majority. It seems that the impoverished settlement is barely alive and surviving thanks to the ancient will of the villagers who know where they come from, who they are, and what they should do in these dire times for Serbs and Serbia. The villagers still have high hopes for the future, mainly because they stick firmly to the centuries-old, traditional Serbian customs, whose practice separates them from their immediate surroundings. This is the case with the custom of “Sirovari”, an unusual name for a pre-New Year’s, January 13 holiday.

Cakanovac deserves the continuation of a more profound research due to its history, the strategic position which it occupies in the Albanian surroundings, its current development, and, particularly, because of its folk and religious customs to which the inhabitants hold on.

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**THE FIRST FIELDWORK:  
INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL PREPARATION**

For a sociologist of religion, which one of the co-authors is, the most important finding in the research of Cakanovac is the one concerning the practice of *sirovárstvo*, an old southern Serbian custom. Its significance is reflected in the fact that it carries five different words with it, collected by M. Zlatanović (1998, 366) and included in the dictionary of the dialect of that region:

“**sirovár** *m* a participant in the ritual group that visits village homes and sings sirovári songs at Vasuljica (Koćura).

**sirovárka** *f* the kolo danced by sirovári on the eve of the Orthodox New Year (Novo Selo on Vardenik).

**sirovárski**, -a, -o which relates to the sirovári (Koćura).

**sirovárstvo** *n* the custom of the sirovári which is performed at Vasuljica. ‘My brother and I went every year to sirovárstvo’ (Koćura).

**sirovárština** *f* the custom of the sirovári in Pčinja.”

Our reporters from Cakanovac told us (on June 15 and September 9, 2011) that only them, and nobody else, called this pre-New Year’s custom *sirovári*, and that in the “Valley of Preševo”, Pčinja and farther, in Macedonia and Bulgaria, it was called *koledari*. However, they were wrong on two accounts: a) the Serbs from the Leskovac Morava, as well as closer neighbours from Pčinja, use the same name for this unique tradition; and b) even though the background and the essence are more or less the same, *sirovárština* and *koledarstvo* are not identical.

Dragutin M. Đorđević (1958, 354–55), protoiereus-stavrophor, under the guidance of Milenko S. Filipović, writing down the customs in the nearby Leskovac Morava, “discovered” and precisely described sirovári in a number of villages:

“*Sirovari*. – To drive away the demons, at night, on the eve of the New Year, Sirovari go through Dušanovo. Sirovari in Dušanovo originate from Pčinja, but there are also some in Jablanica.

It is not a rule, but Sirovari appear only where there are compact villages, inhabited by the immigrants from Pčinja, where the influence of the native people is not that strongly felt. The following villages may serve as good examples: Barje, Dušanovo, Klajić, Grgurovce, Lipovica (District of Jablanica).

Sirovari go at night in groups of 7-9-11 and even more people, usually younger, single men, but married men can go as well. As far as the number is concerned, great care is taken for them not to be counted by anyone and not to let anyone know how many of them are in the group, since someone would then die from that group during the following year.

Contrary to *Koledari*, Sirovari go unmasked. Some of them carry bells, some of them string old plating, horse and ox plates, on a thread and rattle them at house doors and along the streets. Some of them carry *traskalicas* (‘traskataljkas’, ‘trašetaljkas’, ‘rašavkas’)<sup>1</sup>, Fig. 55. It is an

<sup>1</sup> All of these terms can most accurately be translated as *ratchets*. (translator’s note)

ancient device, a bifurcated piece of wood, where the gap is bridged by a thread with a series of small sheet metal parts strung on it. When it is shaken, the traskataljka rattles. Apart from that, they also carry long sticks with a thick lower end. These sticks are sometimes covered with an ox or horse plate. One of them, however, always carries saddlebags where goods obtained as treats are collected.

Where sirovary begin their game, that is also where they end it and spend the night. Nobody goes home after the game to sleep, but they all wait in that house to make kachamak with other sirovary, which they eat on the spread sedge in the middle of the house.

Sirovari go around the village and yell terrifyingly: 'Sirovo – burovo!' When they come up to a gate, everyone beats hard on it, ring the bells, and rattle with traskataljkas. They also beat hard with their sticks on the gate. When the gate is opened, a few of them come in (since the rest hide so as not to be counted), and the one of them immediately starts to poke around the hearth. While one of them is doing that, the others jump, dance and yell: 'Sirovo – burovo'. They drive their sticks on the ground and say to the host: 'Gov'ner, let's shoe the mules!' While saying this, sirovary point to the sticks they are driving as if they want to say that they are going on a long trip so they need the money to shoe the mules. Or they say: 'Gov'ner, let's shoe the mule, so as not to falter on the long trip.' And then they raise the sticks a metre high. The host then gives the tip. Aside from that, sirovary receive some corn flour, beans, bacon, peppers, wad, and other things from the housewife. Sirovari receive their treats from a sieve. Previously, a 'sirovary bread' used to be made for the sirovary, but that is not done anymore. All that sirovary receive, they share among themselves into equal parts.

Sirovari are welcomed by everyone in the village, and very warmly at that, but there are occasions when a household will not let them in. In such a case sirovary stack stones, boards, cans, planks, etc. in front of the doors of that house, then move away and start yelling: 'Sirovac – burovac, do godine ni kolac! (Sirovac – burovac, not a single stick next year!)

In Dušanovo when sirovary come out of a house, the housewife throws from the house a piece of the burning Yule log after them."

The authoritative *Serbian Mythological Dictionary* (1998, 409) gives a similar account:

"SIROVARI – a group of young men who in some part of southern Serbia, on the eve of the New Year ('Vasuljica'), visit houses congratulating the holiday. They are not masked, they carry 'sirove', sticks with the head shaped like a mace, and a ratchet ('treskalo'). When they enter a house, the one that collects the wool pokes around the hearth and blesses. They receive wool, flour, bacon, and money as gifts. According to their meaning, they basically correspond to koledari and represent the spirits of the ancestors (see *koleda*)."<sup>2</sup>

Today's sirovary, Saša Zlatković and Dragoljub Draža Ristić, speak of the following. Sirovarština, held on January 13, is most respected in this vil-

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<sup>2</sup> As in Nedeljković (1990, 204). Both sources rely directly on: Filipović and Tomić (1955), Đorđević (1958) and Nikolić-Stojančević (1974).

lage in relation to other neighbouring villages – all the way to Vranje; the villagers say that perhaps it cannot be found in that region, except in their village.<sup>3</sup> Anyhow, it is called *sirovvari* only in Cakanovac. Five or six “teams” are formed in the village, composed only of men of all ages, meaning the boys also, and every group is odd in number, consisting of five up to nine members. It should be noted that children make their own groups separate from the adult villagers.

Previously, a procedure of masking was developed for *sirovvari*, and some would dress as brides or grooms, some as bears, with the obligatory decoration with bells. Today, they are only masked using fake moustache and beards, marker pen or cinder make-up, as well as masks made of cardboard, and they dress themselves in special cloth and wear warm hats and *šajkačas*.<sup>4</sup> The visited host gives a small amount of money to *sirovvari*, and some wine, brandy, sugar, fat, eggs, and poultry. After that, *sirovvari* gather in the house of one of the members of the group, and there prepare dinner, eat and drink. The lunch is in most part prepared from what has been received; the housewife is not too burdened, but she is in obligation to make and serve the *banitsa*, and serve *tursu*...

What is the group participation of inhabitants based upon? Well, *sirovvarstvo* is characterised by the group participation of the segment of population in the preparation and performance of ritual activities, and the part which is visited joins the practicing of the custom by presenting gifts.

Our informant Slavoljub Uzunović has his own view of the *sirovvari* tradition, since he practiced it himself in Cakanovac, and his own laconic interpretation of the D. M. Đorđević’s famous record. We are conveying it in its entirety, without any interventions to the spoken word:

“I just want to comment on the grandfather’s<sup>5</sup> writings in relation to how ‘*Sirovvari*’ were organised, that is, how those customs were performed in Preševo and Cakanovac, and that surrounding area, which I was a part of myself. So, it is true that the basic idea was the exorcism of ‘*Karakondžula*’<sup>6</sup> on the eve of the New Year, i.e. on the eve of that Old, Orthodox New Year, on January 13, when it all took place. It didn’t matter how many people would comprise a group, but it was only im-

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<sup>3</sup> That the people of Cakanovac are again in the wrong is confirmed by Danijela Zdravković, a sociologist from Vranje, in an e-mail (August 29, 2011): “Yes, there are *sirovvari* in Poljanica and in the villages on the banks of Morava, it is a small group of people who go together during the important religious holidays and visit hosts to congratulate them, and the hosts give them food, fruit or money!” She is not precise as well, since she does not connect *sirovvari* with the Serbian New Year.

<sup>4</sup> The traditional Serbian national cap. (translator’s note)

<sup>5</sup> What a surprising coincidence: priest Đorđević was the grandfather of the informant’s wife Nataša, thus his grandfather as well. That is where the close calling by the name of Grandfather Gute comes from. That diligent protoiereus-stavrophor, born in Leskovac, who spent most of his service in Turekovac, where he rebuilt a church inn and installed electricity, built a church in Lokošnica, and with father Toša, his own brother, renovated the church Odžaklija in Leskovac, did a lot for the Serbian ethnology with the cited book.

<sup>6</sup> A demon in the Balkans mythology, from Turkish *karakoncolos* meaning *black demon* (translator’s note).

portant whether the people inside the group knew each other, and whether they were good friends. Where we gathered was also not important, but it was important that we would meet after the action, if I may call it that – I'll talk about that later. So, 'Sirovari' consisted of a 'groom', a 'bride' and the rest. Now, an explanation: the 'bride' – that was, in fact, one of us dressed as a woman and with full make-up. He carried a doll which represented a 'baby' and he, that is, she was the person that would receive the money from the host that we would visit. Such a team would go from home to home in the manner that grandfather Gute (Dragutin Đorđević) already described, with the difference that he wrote about 'Sirovari' going without masks, which was not the case in Preševo and the surrounding area, since we had masks, because the main idea was not to be recognised by the neighbours. We carried bells, the so-called 'trakataljkas', and not 'traskataljkas' as grandfather Gute wrote, made in the same way, and we carried those sticks with which we banged on the gates when we were entering courtyards, in order to be as loud as possible, since we were exorcising the 'Karakondžula' that way.

Today, more recently, this custom has grown into some sort of entertainment. It is a fact that hosts were very welcoming, and we always asked them about their health when we were entering the courtyards, and wished a Happy New Year, Christmas, and then we would start to sing everything that came to mind, I say everything that came to mind as of lately, and we received some kind of a reward for that. The 'bride' would get some money, and the rest of us would get food such as: flour, sugar, meat, jerky, brandy. After we had finished visiting all the houses in the village, the custom was for the team to gather at someone's place, that is, every year at someone's else house. For example, to round it up, the last time I went to 'Sirovari', that group of my friends gathered at my place. Father made dinner then, and mother made some pita, and the meat that we had collected was served then, and the whole meal was mostly made of the food that we had collected that evening. Also, the custom was to share the food, but I can't remember that we shared that food that evening since it wasn't really interesting for us to do that. As far as the collected money was concerned, we didn't want to share it, but we decided to spend it by going to the tavern later that evening, especially since it was January 13, and the celebration of the Orthodox New Year. We welcomed the Orthodox New Year there and we didn't stay at anybody's place, as grandfather Gute described it, since it was customary earlier, and I'm talking about the more urban version of 'Sirovari'.

There was a lot of superstition in the custom of 'Sirovari', and one should not to this, and not do that, I can't remember anymore, nor do I want to, because I believe it was just nonsense that each one of us came up with, as if it were some very important stuff, which had no connection to the tradition, in fact.

We sang: 'Sirovo, burovo (borovo), igramo, pevamo, dran češire šire nemamo!' ('Sirovo, burovo (borovo), we dance, we sing, 'dran' (?) we have no better trousers!')

I don't know the meaning of that sentence which was sung repeatedly, particularly the meaning of the word 'dran' or 'dram', while 'češire' represented trousers. As far as I see it, it probably meant that the members of the team had torn trousers, that is, 'čakšire', or 'češire' in the song. The constant repeating, singing of this sentence was, in fa-

ct, meant to draw the host out of the house once we were in his courtyard. In the case that there was no one to open the door, I heard about it, but I never witnessed it in all my ten years of participating in 'Sirovari', then curses would follow, that I don't even want to utter right now. Even later, my friends told me that nobody ever cursed anyone in the event of not being welcomed or presented with gifts for 'Sirovari'.

Nobody ever mentioned any *mules* nor was anything ever connected to them in my neighbourhood, because grandfather Gute wrote about it before the media practically existed.

There, that's all from me."

There are evident discrepancies between the renowned ethnological reports on sirovarština and what we have recorded from our interviewees and informants from Cakanovac. The reason for this probably lies in the fact that a certain reshaping of the custom has occurred over time. To what extent it spread over the form, and to what extent over the essence, it should be determined by researching the custom while it is being performed.

### **THE SECOND FIELDWORK: THE RESEARCH OF THE CUSTOM**

#### **Preparation for the Research of Sirovarstvo**

The research couple – Dragoljub B. Đorđević and Vladan Petrović – assisted by S. Uzunović, arrived in Cakanovac on January 13, 2012, at 2:45 a.m., and settled in the house of Dragoljub Draža Ristić. Several villagers came over immediately, with whom the researchers talked about the upcoming ritual in a relaxed atmosphere, and it would later turn out that they were direct participants in sirovarština.<sup>7</sup> It was predicted that five sirovari parties would certainly be formed in their village out of younger and older ethnics. The villagers pay much more attention to the Serbian New Year than the so-called civil one for three reasons: because of tradition, partially due to the custom of sirovari, and not less important, as they said, because there is no money or will to celebrate it before January 1. They claimed that they had not abandoned sirovarstvo since the beginning of the village, i.e. since Cakanovac was founded at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The preparation begins with the first twilight. Previously, a single group of sirovari would be formed, today there are several. Every team prepares separately in the home of one of the actors, and they all start their "campaign" from there (ph. 1). Today, the teams of sirovari bump into each other and they all finish from 6 to 9 p.m., with the custom being hastened to have time to prepare for the night out.

We were told that at the beginning of the 1960s sirovari danced at their host's place, danced the oro in front of the host's house, sang and fired guns, and

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<sup>7</sup> Saša Ristić was also there, a German gastarbeiter from Munich, who came from the capital of Bavaria with the aim of returning to the old custom, and once again being, as when he was young, an active sirovar – and he asked us to note that he would be coming back to Cakanovac every year.



even before that they would enter the rooms and dance there. The received wine was first drunk from jugs, right there in the courtyard in front of the house, and the rest of it was consumed at the joint dinner. Even boys on the edge of manhood drank as much as the adults. Draža remembers that the collected flour and fat was given to a poor family, which is not the case today. Then a sirovarka, the wife of the sirovar at whose place they would all gather that year, would inevitably bake a banitsa which was wanted even more than the meat. The preparations for all this would begin approximately a month prior to the event. People would go down to their cellars, find some old clanky stuff, and make trakataljkas. Small change would be collected for anything that a sirovar needed. And he needed a mask – whether it was made from cardboard or something else – wool beard, moustache, shoeshine, marker pens, welding glasses, special cloth clothes, leather or rubber opanci<sup>8</sup>... So much make-up would be put on, that sirovvari could not take it off for days after the event. It was crucial for them not to be recognised whatever house they would enter, whether it was a cousin's house or their own.

Back in the good old days, if a landlord would not welcome you and let you into his home, some damage would always be made to his house: his gate would be broken, his plough would be damaged, his courtyard would be ploughed, and even his fields tilled and furrowed. Or, a bucket of boiling water would be hung above the doors, pulled by a rope and spilled on the exiting host in an attempt to scald him.

Anyhow, and as Vojislav Ristić said, whose opinion was shared by everyone present, he had been a sirovar since he was seven years old (today he is 51) – and did not participate only once – and he still gladly went to sirovarština. Then he went away to mask himself and change his clothes.

A lot of different people persuaded us that in the background of sirovvari lay a wedding custom: one sirovar in the party would always be dressed as the bride, the daughter-in-law, and followed by the groom and wedding guests (ph. 2). However, S. Uzunović remained firm in his opinion that the aim was to exercise the karakondžula.

At the place of the host Momir Moma Todorović we recorded the majority of the sirovvari groups. He gave 50 dinars to each one of them, the total of 350 dinars, which was not small for the people from this poor region, and Moma was unemployed (ph. 3).

### **The Essence of the Custom**

What is the essence of sirovarština? Let us say from the start, the people from Cakanovac almost have it at arm's reach, they hazily remember why they perform the ritual, they feel it more than they have grasped it. It is the case of the procedure of rationalisation and approximate evaluation. The first anonymous sirovar was concise: "Well, the point of this custom, I guess, is

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<sup>8</sup> "Opanci from Pirot", thus called because of the Tigar Corporation from Pirot, were brought to the people of Cakanovac by their neighbours from the region of Pčinja. By the by, opanak, *pl.* opanci, is the traditional peasant shoe worn in southeastern Europe (translator's note).

that celebration, the wedding. And it is inherited through tradition here.”; while the second one tried to be more concrete: “The celebration of the Serbian New Year, the Orthodox New Year. And that is this gathering, this company, that bride, groom, they represent the wedding couple, and the rest go as wedding guests. It is a form of celebration. So, the celebration of the Orthodox New Year. And these drums, that ratchet, I guess, it is supposed to exorcise some demon. As an Indian tribe, yes, yes. That’s it. The exorcism.” The conversation further continued in that direction:

V. Petrović: So, they usually exorcise the karakondžula?

Anonymous sirovar: The youth do. You know what has changed? I’ll tell you. The change is from before, meaning some 40 years, 30 years. So, the change is only in the apparel, nothing else, here. We went for 30 years, everything has been the same principle. Meaning, there’s always a bride and such, the music and everything...

V. Petrović: But those songs are not sung anymore, “Sirovo – borovo”!

Anonymous sirovar: Well, we used to sing, but these kids they avoid doing it, and they don’t know the songs. They don’t know them, you know? And, before, we used to sing “sirovo...”, and when they didn’t want to open the door for you, afterwards, everything would burn in that house, everything would go awry there... The wheat, corn, peppers would not grow, you know? And we mostly cursed his brandy to... Eh. And we used to go, wearing old clothes, masked beyond recognition, full make-up. I say, for the last 30 years, everything has been the same. But before, only the clothes were different. The kids, for example, wore vests, and all, šajkačas, all. Now, you can see that there’s not a single šajkača anywhere.

V. Petrović: They say that people would enter quickly making a lot of noise before, to scare the owner of the house, but Uzunović has noticed that today everything is so quiet and that a lot of it has changed.

Someone present: Well, it is also because of the financial situation, there’s not much...

Anonymous sirovar: Up to a year, where it’s been a year since someone passed away, there we don’t rattle or sing, nor do we dance, but enter quietly. Only “Good evening, Happy New Year”.

Someone present: To exorcise that ghost.

Anonymous sirovar: Yes. Happy New Year... But we go quietly, without making any noise. Without rattling, without... And you know, we don’t even have bells anymore (ph. 4), no, we don’t have the tropatalos, we don’t have the tračkalicas. We do have one tračkalica, but we forgot to take it with us.

S. Uzunović: A trakataljka.

Anonymous sirovar: Trakataljka. It’s in the garage. Boban, go get it for them to take a picture of it, to see it – trakataljka. So it was made out of beer, of bottle caps...

### **The Prospects of Sirovari**

Cakanovac is a tiny village on the edge of survival, so it is logical to wonder about the future of the sirovari custom. There is also a critical number of young people, who formed three groups of sirovari in 2012. The entire performance of the ritual was followed with undivided attention by children from four to ten years of age, absorbing its elements. We have noticed that both the active and the passive participants of the procession pay special attention to the children.<sup>9</sup> They even play an actual role: not only do they ap-

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<sup>9</sup> “Winter holidays turn us, temporarily, to children. There is a bliss of ignorance” (Данојлић 2012, 54).

pear first with the host on the threshold and welcome the teams – female children come out later – but they also fill the bags, sacks, purses, jugs, and bottles with all the food and drinks. Some of them sit at the table equally with the adults and enjoy in the specialties of the sirovvari celebration (ph. 5).

Somewhat in disharmony with the current position of children in sirovarstvo, the tale is told of how once the children use to experience it:

S. Uzunović: I would like to ask you something. When you were little, I mean at the age of three, four, five, now you may remember, and you may not. I know from my experience and the experience of some of my friends that I was personally very afraid of sirovvari.

S. Zlatanović: Yes, but those are very little children that...

S. Uzunović: Yes, yes, yes, but see, this was the case for myself and my friends... when I went to sirovvari for the first time, it was an idea of trying to fight the fear of them, and now I'm the part of those sirovvari also. I remember, my Vlada, who passed away, used to say: "Well, I'm going to send him to sirovvari, and I'm going to see what he'll do then." You know, literally to overcome that...

S. Zlatanović: Yes, to overcome the fear...

S. Uzunović: The fear that a child has.

D. B. Đorđević: Your daughter was here, we recorded it. Do you know how she reacted? Dear God, look at all this sirovvari...

S. Uzunović: Ah, and just look how big they are!

D. B. Đorđević: That's not fear, but...

S. Uzunović: Well, okay, we weren't really that terrifying, we were... the goal was to get masked...

Anonymous sirovar: The masks were much scarier before...

Yes, nobody says the opposite, "the masks were much scarier before", but there were much more sirovvari teams also, the entire village and its area rang in the dead of night with their rattling, everyone lived for that event and awaited it for months – and the children were frightened beforehand.<sup>10</sup>

Will sirovarština disappear or will it be performed with new contents? S. Zlatanović, the leader of the middle-aged team, replied: "It will continue for as long as we exist here. I mean, I don't believe that the tradition will die out, there will be less and less groups, since we are getting smaller with each day – but for as long as we live, I'm sure that the tradition will continue." Alright, but what is more important for keeping the ritual, for it to simply happen regardless of the changes in masking and, we have seen, in songs? Saša continued: "The changes as far as clothes are concerned are inevitable, since every time comes with its own clothes, but the ritual, I think, will remain as it was before... Yes, yes, the clothes are not important, it is important to keep the tradition." Even on our insisting that the form should also be preserved, the external parts of sirovarstvo, our sirovar remained firm: "Naturally, but, I have noticed, everything changes over the years, having in mind that the old clothes have now disappeared, they got torn, and we don't have the same clothes, new ones, and then we are forced to wear something else."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> There was no television and video, cartoons and horror movies – alongside so much more – that accustomed children to fear with every hour.

<sup>11</sup> It is difficult, almost impossible, to find the special cloth clothes in Serbia. The public service television broadcast a programme The Wool Road on the last Serbian tailor

The same is with opanci: when there were any, the genuine Serbian were worn – which are the only ones that perfectly match the special cloth clothes (suits), and now everything that one can find is worn, most often the rubber opanci from Pirot, bootees, and boots. People were masked with wool beards, moustache was glued on, warm hats and caps were worn, ritual visors were also made: “There were, there were some masks made from cardboard, or some leather, they were made...” (ph. 6 and 7) The goal was for a sirovar not to be recognised, for as a small number of villagers as possible to spot him by the end of the ritual. The central instrument, beside the scrappy drums, handmade guitars and flutes, was the so-called trakataljka. It is interesting that bagpipes were not used:

S. Zlatanović: Trakataljkas. That was a bifurcated piece of wood, some wire, and sheet metal. The sheet metal was cut into several pieces, maybe fifteen, twenty pieces...

S. Uzunović: Or bottle caps in modern times, from beer.

S. Zlatanović: Yes, from beer, when beer arrived, or sheet metal, cut into square shapes. That was it. Then an old pot which has no bottom, and then some nylon or some leather was stretched, and then one would beat it, as a drum, some handmade guitars, flutes...

Anonymous sirovar: You forget the bagpipes.

S. Zlatanović: There were already no bagpipes in my time, maybe before, with the older generations...

The sirovari of Cakanovac feel intuitively, and experience in practice, the clash of the old and new – something has been kept from the olden times, but there is much more of the new stuff. And they are powerless there. The sirovar comments upon it: “That’s okay, I agree with that... It is important for the custom to remain. How it will develop, we can leave that to each coming generation. One could not have imagined a child wearing camouflage pants. For example, it is unimaginable for some older people to mask up, glue a beard on. Even if we would have wanted to change it now, we couldn’t. It means that the times are as they are... I don’t know. But we will not abandon the tradition, doesn’t matter. Everything changes with time, and so do we. Now these masks, these plastic ones, we cut up cardboard. It was always the case here in our village.” They used to perform the “tinning”, i.e. mask themselves with shoeshine – “Yes, yes, we used to smear our faces with shoeshine (ph. 8).”

### **Sirovari Groups**

We were convinced of a piece of information from the literature: a team of sirovari has to be odd in number, and there is no question about it, nor can anyone be allowed to count them. The punishment is twofold: physical – the one who tries to count them will get beaten, and, we would say the more terrifying one, magical – the counted sirovar could die. There is no way that two teams come upon each other somewhere. Anonymous sirovar: “That’s the custom here. Two groups of sirovari, when they encounter each other, then a fight breaks out.” D. B. Đorđević: “Alright, alright, but that didn’t use to be the

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working with this cloth, an eighty-year-old man from, if we remember it right, the surroundings of Ljig, who complained about it being so hard to find the material, while still receiving orders.

case.” Anonymous sirovar: “Yes, yes. When two groups met, there was always a fight. And the ones that were stronger took the meat, took the brandy...” The member of the oldest sirovvari brethren confirmed the story: “Earlier, when we were kids, during the 1970s, two groups couldn’t come upon each other. It was strictly forbidden to count the people. Whether there were eight of us, in fact, it was always an odd number. Seven, nine, eleven, even twenty-one. But no one was allowed to count. The one that counted would always get beaten. If someone counts all of ‘Sirovari’, it was said that he would die by ‘Sirovari’. And there was always someone hiding behind the house.” That dangerous rule was elegantly “dodged” by being silent, says the likeable “third-called”: “And even if we went in pairs, one would remain outside. He would hide. Or stay somewhere in the street, or hide somewhere in a shadow where the host could not see him...”

### **Sirovati Guests**

We noted a novelty in sirovvari: the sirovvari of Cakanovac regularly have guests who attend, apart from the preparation phase – dressing up and masking – all other phases of the holiday. There is no mention of such things in the literature on sirovarstvo. The guests are from Macedonia, mostly from Kumanovo and Skopje, and they are there because Cakanovac is a border village and people enter into mixed marriages. Aco Mladenovski from Skopje came to see his sister-in-law’s husband, and his fellow citizen Mirče Stojanovski, a Cakanovac son-in-law, even had a house here, not received as dowry, but newly-built. Mladenovski spoke picturesquely of the sirovvari of Kumanovo. Another visitor from Kumanovo was a boy – an active sirovar that evening – who had relatives all the way across in another Preševo village.

### **Song and Kolo**

There was also some convincing to do when it came to the sirovvari song. S. Uzunović, a village native – spent his youth in the neighbouring Preševo quarter The Railway Station – a compulsory sirovar until he left for Niš to study, sang the verses “Sirovo, burovo (borovo), igramo, pevamo, dran če-šire nemamo” and commented to the people of Cakanovac: “It was all rhythmic, you know, what we carried, the bells, trakataljkas... And then we would all together, sirovooo, borovo... in the same beat... It was heard, all in rhythm, thundering, thundering... The point of the story of sirovvari was, in fact, to exorcise the karakondžula from the house and that we go as wedding guests, customarily, and have a groom, for well-being, for... for the progress, for fertility, you know? That’s the idea. On the one hand, to scare away the evil spirits, and on the other, to ensure well-being... That’s why we needed to be loud, to bang, beat, rattle, and so on, that’s how I understood it.” Today’s sirovar, with fifteen years of experience, entered the conversation by saying that he did not remember a particular song, until the abovementioned Zlatanović corrected him: “Well I... if not more, then at least for 30 and several years that I have been part of it, there has been a sirovvari song... Yes, but, for example, the entire song wasn’t sang here – only sirovo-borovo... It’s a shame then that the entire song didn’t spread here also and that it’s not used today.”

The issue of the song of sirovvari is not that simple. By following all of sirovvari parties to courtyards and houses, we noticed that almost all hosts demanded a song to be sung. And the most sung songs were these somewhat

acceptable three songs: “Ko to kaže Srbija je mala (Who says Serbia is small)”, “Zajko Kokorajko”, and “Đurđevdan”. There were no signs of genuine Serbian songs, and only one or two cases of “Sirovo – borovo”. A great change has occurred, the old ways have been lost.

The sirovari kolo in the host’s house is also gone, the one that the host danced with the guests for the “bride”. Sirovari made a doll out of a squash and money was put into it. Today, the oro is danced only in front of the home of the host (ph. 9).

### **Sirovari in the Surrounding Area**

The inhabitants of Cakanovac “get carried away” a bit, and they are ready to claim that they are the only ones that practice sirovarština. However, that is not the case, since it can be found in some places in Pčinja. They have come from the region of Trgovište, where the custom has survived in some villages, and inherited it. In their neighbourhood, just across the highway, sirovarstvo is even more attended and intense in Slavujevac, and also in Trezevac. They interpret this fact incorrectly relating it to the church – “There’s some in Slavujevac, where there is a church, there it is. Trezavac has it, again where there’s a church...” – since the Serbian Orthodox Church has not Christianised this custom, the priest does not show during that evening, in certain villages, such as Cakanovac, there is no temple but there is sirovarstvo. A more acceptable explanation lies in the simple fact that the size of the village, the number of inhabitants, and the economic situation, above all, influence the performing of sirovarstvo.<sup>12</sup> Draža Ristić says that in Bugarinje – an old name for Slavujevac – sirovarstvo is more spread since the village is bigger and there are more young and single middle-aged people.

### **Sirovari dinner**

The conversation was held during the sirovari dinners, in the S. Zlatanović group at its very beginning. The dinner is organised in the home of one of the participants. Apart from the sirovari, the host’s family, neighbours, and other villagers attend the feast. It is cheerful, a truly joyful mood, which is reflected on every face present. As the leader said: “No, it’s not a problem. Generally speaking, this is the true atmosphere. As I have said, every group gathers separately, has its own atmosphere, its own ambiance, and as far as food is concerned, it’s...” S. Uzunović, an experienced practitioner, explained to the team how he shared everything that was collected with the team, even the flour – “flour on the table, and then we share it in equal parts.” Saša also remembered that it was the same back in his childhood, that the collected money was shared as well, but that today everything belonged to the dinner host and served that purpose.

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<sup>12</sup> The guest of the sirovari of Cakanovac told us an interesting story, but did not see through it. In the two nearby villages of Vranje, close to the petrol station, the situation is different: there are sirovari in Donje Trešinje, but there are none in Gornje Trešinje. One can state laconically: “Thus, they have separated.”

This is not in coordination with the claim made by sirovvari from the oldest team with whom we remained together all the way after midnight. They were some really hospitable people, the dinner was so rich, the newly-composed music too loud, and brandy flowed in “runlets” down the jubilant throats (ph. 10):

Anonymous sirovvar: So, since I was six years old, since six years old until today, I have never missed out on it. It is a part of us, the tradition, always...

D. B. Đorđević: What happens to the stuff that you collect, with what you give to the host? Do you give it to someone poor sometimes?

Anonymous sirovvar: Yes. When we collect flour, meat, wine, two or three kilos of brandy, flour, we used to carry sacks...

D. B. Đorđević: It's given away in larger quantities...

Anonymous sirovvar: If he doesn't work, we give him flour, meat to prepare it, we give it to him.

D. B. Đorđević: That's nice.

Anonymous sirovvar: It used to be humiliating to give something to somebody.

It seemed that, according to the veterans, some sort of sharing did take place.<sup>13</sup>

We left the sirovvari dinner of the first group with a short toast:

S. Uzunović: Cheers, Sirovari, thank you for your cooperation, may you be alive and well for a hundred years.

S. Zlatanović: Cheers, all the best...

S. Uzunović: Let us preserve ourselves as a people!

S. Zlatanović: Cheers, for many years to come, for us to follow the tradition.

Host: First may we be alive and well.

S. Uzunović: Thank you for your hospitality, gov'nor. May you be alive and well.

Host: Happy New Year, a lot of happiness and health to all of you. First health, and then the rest.

### **Appendix: Roma sirovvari**

Ibrahim Osmani, a Romani intellectual, a long-time researcher of the Rromanipe in the Romological School of Niš, who lived in Preševo for decades, and now spends his retirement days in Vranje, wrote to us on sirovvarstvo in Preševo Roma, in an e-mail from January 6, 2012: “As far as sirovvari are concerned, they have always been there, usually on the Serbian side. Roma never went to sirovvari, yet more recently, a group of boys have been gathering and visiting out of curiosity, even though their parents won't let them.” In another e-mail sent on the same day, the romologist Osmani tried to come up with an answer to the posed question: “Why do the children want to be sirovvari, and why are the parents forbidding it?”, thus he said: “Recently, there have been less and less sirovvari among the Serbian population. Lest the old custom be lost, boys gather out of curiosity: how they will be welcomed and what they will receive. Sometimes the groups argue with each other and fights break out, so the parents ban their children from going to sirovvari fearing such things. Today, the Romani groups of sirovvari are so-

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<sup>13</sup> Dragoljub Draža Ristić, the key interviewee from Cakanovac, made his point: “We would give it to the housewife who prepared the meal, there was some money there. If we didn't buy anything, we would give. You know?”

metimes followed by an adult. And all that because of the fear that something unpredictable might happen to them from other groups, dogs, or other passers-by...”

It is reasonable to ask: why do Roma take on *sirovarstvo*? The answer is complicated and here are groups of possible reasons. It might be a number of stimulations – it is advisable to note them – but the sociological task is to single out the most crucial ones, generalise and clarify them. It does not seem that the basis of the Romani *sirovarstvo* is the “curiosity of the children” or the immediate “benefit” – how many and what kind of presents are received – although they should not be neglected. We must also take into consideration the dying out of their own holidays, for example *Vasuljica*, under the influence of Islamisation; as Osmani claimed: “Romani nights were organised traditionally from the 14<sup>th</sup> onwards, but now that is very rare, since Islam has taken its toll on Roma. Islam is very extreme in that sense and it condemns the Roma who celebrate *Vasuljica*; it can be seen in Preševo today, but mostly in Bujanovac, since the opening of its own mosque.” (Electronic mail from January 6, 2012.) The Romani folk instinct reacts unmistakably: you can ban *Vasuljica*, it is alright, but since it takes place at the same time as the Serbian *sirovarština*, we will take it, and you cannot ban it also!

The people of Cakanovac corroborated Osmani’s claims. To the question posed by D. B. Đorđević on whether Roma go to *sirovari* or not, they first answered negatively. But on his insisting that Đorgovci, the Orthodox Roma, do it, they then answered: “Yes, yes, Đorgovci go, Đorgovci go... They have been going recently, we know, we’ve been there.”<sup>14</sup> We have thus determined that the Roma *sirovari* are both Orthodox and Muslim.

*Sirovarština* is dying out in the citizens of Preševo, the “urban” Serbs, even though Preševo is only a step away from a village, slowly acquiring characteristics of a town. Roma are again adopting a disappearing Serbian custom for the who knows what time, they are skilful keepers of customs and have kept for themselves, for example, *Lazarice* (Ђорђевић, 1984) and *Zasevka* (Златановић, 2002:194-202). Roma are practical interculturalists, prepared for a creative exchange of gifts, and that is why – they survive (Ђорђевић, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

*Sirovari* – a fine folk custom – is not only maintained in the Serbian villages of the Preševo region. It can be found in Leskovac Morava and Pčinja. But it is also performed across the border – in Macedonia and Bulgaria.<sup>15</sup> Ma-

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<sup>14</sup> Dušan Ristić, the principal of the elementary school “Vuk Karadžić”, a true connoisseur of that region, implied it to Đorđević, during a personal meeting, on December 15, 2011, in Preševo.

<sup>15</sup> They are called *survakari* there. In a nutshell, all winter ritual processions of younger men – *koledari*, *survakari*, *kukeri*, *rinači*... – which take place in the Bulgarian tradition during the months of January and February and are often connected to



ny of its elements have been reshaped: from the ritual clothes, over masks, to songs and the kolo; many have been preserved since the old days. It seems as if the essence has been lost, and today's practitioners, even in the case of Cakanovac, are not exactly capable of providing a reasonable presentation and explanation of the custom; they do not remember it clearly and cannot recall it from the collective memory without difficulty. Some of them think that the purpose of sirovari is to exorcise the karakondžula, others to announce and celebrate the New Year, while others still assume that it has to do with the initiation of boys and their acquiring the right to marry. And all of them are right, indeed, since according to the ethnological literature, sirovari are somewhere performed so as to exorcise the karakondžula, elsewhere to celebrate the New Year and wish happiness, and still elsewhere to initiate the young people into the world of adults. The villagers of Cakanovac are also right in one more thing: it is important that the custom has survived, that it is practiced and will be practiced, and every generation will attribute its own meaning to it.

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masking, belong to the rites of passage, because they provide the young men with the right to enter into marriage... (Габровски 1989).

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

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Ph. 2: A sirovari bride: pretty as a picture



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Ph. 7: A modernized sirovar:  
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Ph. 10: Sirovari meal





**RELIGIOUS AND FOLK CUSTOMS  
ON THE BORDER  
III**



Dejan Krstić

**A CUSTOM OF “SLAVA” (“SVETAC”)  
IN THE MIDDLE TIMOK\***

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A custom called “slava” (glorification), which also has got other local names, is a traditional Balkan celebration whose features are: 1. celebrating at the family social level, i.e. at the level of a household; 2. a relation to a Christian saint, the patron saint of the household, 3. The ritual cutting (breaking) of the ritual bread called “kolač” (“a round bread”) is performed, 4) a cult meal with guests is performed.

During the romantic XIX century, in which nations laid their foundations, the slava began to be perceived as an ethnic identifier (Ковачевић 1985, 531) – it was in social sciences declared as a national symbol of Serbian people (Скарић 1985, 287, 313), and it was widely thought that “the Serbs are those who celebrate slava”. This is why Serbian ethnology in the XIX and in the first half of the XX century dealt with this custom in particular, with registering ethnographic facts about it so as to primarily discern its origins. However, even though it is undeniable that slava is dominant among Serbs, it is also evident in other Balkan people – in northern Albanians, in western and northwestern Bulgarians, in the Macedonians, in the Vlachs of eastern Serbia and northwestern Bulgaria, in some Croat areas (Филиповић 1985, 15). It could be, therefore, argued that this custom is typical of the central and western Balkans.

The anthropologizing of Serbian ethnology, which assumes focusing on the subjective perceiving of culture rather than on cultural facts itself – as well as the present invalidness of the scientific and Church myth of close relation between the slava and the Serbs, developed to serve the national idea – have led to a radical decline in the number of studies and discussions concerning this custom. The slava has been removed from the scientific focuses, but, unjustly, in my opinion. This custom has retained its cultural value and its significance in social life. It has, unlike most of other Balkan customs (all of which belong to traditional rural agricultural environment), managed to resist modernization, industrialization, urbanization, growing atheism and anti-religious impact of socialism, and prevailed as one of the basic customary and religious manifestations of the central and western Balkans. The current significance of the slava is seen in one example. When UNESCO announced a project for the protection of the individual facts of national intangible cultural heritage, the

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slava was the first intangible cultural fact chosen by the Museum of ethnography in Belgrade, that is currently working on the proposal. The slava could also be a rather attractive part of Serbia's touristic offer, since the tourism is one of the strategic lines of development, both at local and state level.

This paper aims to present the basic features of the slava in the area of the middle Timok which here means the valley of the Beli Timok with adjacent slopes of the Stara Planina and the Tupižnica, which are populated by people widely known as the Torlaks or the Timočani (Крстић 2002). Based on a research carried out in the villages of Ošljane and Marinovac in 2001, the basic facts about the slava have already been presented in a paper "The ritual of cutting of bread in the upper and middle Timok" (Крстић 2001, 88-103), along with other customs that include bread cutting as well as inseparable facts concerning the celebrating of the slava in neighbouring areas. However, in order to complete this paper, additional research was carried out at the end of 2011., in the villages of Novo Korito, Jelašnica and Ošljane. On the basis of previous and new acquired facts, this paper summarizes the slava customs of the middle Timok, so as to present what they were like in times when the customs were performed with many more details. Some other paper will present, from anthropological point of view, today's circumstances and the social impact of this custom.

### GENERAL FACTS

In the middle Timok, the slava used to be called only "svet'c" (a saint) (in Ošljane it is spelt "svetac"), but widely accepted term "slava" prevailed over them. Almost every household celebrates both summer and winter "slava", i.e. every family has got a celebration on its patron saint's day both in the first half and in the second half of the year. For example, St. Georges Day (6. V) and Saint George (16. XI), summer St. Nicholas (22. V) and winter St. Nicholas (19. XII), summer St. John the Baptist (7. VII) and winter St. John the Baptist (20. I), summer St. Cosmas & Damian (14. VII) and winter St. Cosmas & Damian (14. XI), summer Holy Archangel Gabriel (26. VII) and winter Holy Archangel Michael (21. XI), summer St. Stephen (15. VIII) and winter St. Stephen (9. I) etc. It is interesting that the summer Saint George is the equivalent of St. Alypius the Stylite (9. XII) (in Marinovac, for example).

The winter and summer slavas are equally significant: the name is the same (svet-c), the ritual of the cutting of bread is the same, the number of guests is the same, they last the same number of days... Only in Novo Korito the winter slava is principal and fewer guests are invited for the summer slava. In this village, those who celebrate St. George in autumn don't celebrate St. George's Day in spring, because, traditionaly, each house celebrates Saint George's Day predominantly as an animal husbandry feast. Some slavas, for example St. Dimitrios (8.XI), are celebrated in autumn only because they don't have their summer equivalent. Beside these widely spread slavas, among which St. Nicholas is the most dominant, there are others, rarely celebrated: St Joachim and Anna (21. IX), St. Thomas (19. X), St. Paraskeva (27. X), St. Luke (31. X), St. Menas (24. XI), St John the Chrysostome (26. IX), St. Ig-



natus, (2. I), St. Basil (14. I)<sup>1</sup>, St. Sava (27. I), St. Antony (30. I), St. Todor (the first Saturday of the Great Lent) (Rajković 1990).

The right and duty to celebrate the slava are handed down to a new householder, but since the slava is land-related, after two or more estates merge one household obtains a larger number of slavas. For example, if a household's property is enlarged with the land of a son-in-law (he inherits the land regardless of leaving his home) when he moves in with his wife's family or when a land is inherited in return for nursing the old who don't have children. In case of a new estate, on the patron saint's day the same customs are performed, both in summer and winter. It, therefore, occurs frequently that one household celebrates two or even three slavas. However, for practicality, the sizes of the ritual meals of the slavas are different, because an optimal number of guests used to be invited for principal celebration only (both in summer and winter), whereas other slavas used to be celebrated only by the family and closest relatives. Whether the new slava will prevail over the old one in terms of the size depends on the recognition of the son-in-law, the size of the added estate and its importance to the household and the frequency of slavas in the village, because less frequent slavas are chosen so that people can go to other households' celebrations.

For example, in one household in Ošljane, at old slava, on St. Nicholas day, the bread was cut without any guests, whereas a new slava, The Holy Archangels, handed down from an old woman they nursed until her death, was celebrated with guests. Only recently, the descendants that live in Belgrade and are not dependant on the income from the household in Ošljane have changed the rule: they celebrate St. Nicholas' day with guests, and only cut bread on the Holy Archangel without guests. In Marinovac, there is a case where in summer a family celebrates the old slava with guests, and in winter they celebrate the slava of their son-in-law. Usually, over the years, a slava that is of minor importance becomes completely neglected. For example, there was a case in Ošljane that one family prepared an ordinary kolač for their slava, the kolač they also prepare for other feasts, but for St. Nicholas day, although it is not their patron saint, they prepare the kolač. The presumption that St. Nicholas day was a long-forgotten slava of that household proved right, because an analysis of the family history showed that current slava had been brought in the family by a son-in-law who was the great-grand father of the informant in my research. In Ošljane, the households with two estates, although of different origin but having the same slava, prepare two "kolač" and cut them one after another during the same ritual, first the kolač dedicated to the more important estate and later the other kolač dedicated to the less important estate. In some households they prepare even three kolačes.

In the middle Timok the slava is celebrated for four days – in the eve of the saint's day, on the very Day, the next day and on the day after that, in the morning. The day before the saint's day is spent in preparing the celebration.

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<sup>1</sup> The slava St. Basil is also celebrated by the Gypsies of the middle Timok.

### THE PREPARATION OF SLAVA

The day before the saint's day, a housewife prepares the ritual slava and ordinary breads and prepares the food for the ritual meals that will take place that evening and on the following three days. In the morning, she kneads the dough which must be made of wheat flour and then starts to boil wheat (boiled wheat, as will be seen, plays its role in the ritual part of the slava). Then, she prepares the rest of the food. If the slava is within a fast, then animal-free food is prepared. Otherwise, the dishes are regular. If it is not a fast, the housewife prepares chicken soup or sheep offal soup, cheese pie, cabbage stuffed with minced meat and rice, dried paprika with meat or boiled sauerkraut with smoked pork. A householder butchers a sheep for winter slava or a lamb for spring slava or a piglet for summer slava – and roasts it on a spit in open fire, in front of the house in the summer and in the hearth inside the house in the winter. Some people, before roasting, stuff the animals with their specially prepared offal. If it is a fast, they then prepare mushroom or lentil soup, walnut pie, bean and fava bean, cabbage stuffed with rice, dried paprika stuffed with rice or ground walnuts or beans or potatoes, sometimes small fish with potatoes and fried fish caught by bare-handed men.

When the dough is ready, the ritual breads are baked. Each house in Jelašnica, Ošljane and Marinovac has got a wooden or metal stamp called "paskurnik" that is used in making breads, with which the sign of the Cross with letters ИСХС НИКА is imprinted in the breads. In Novo Korito, such stamps don't exist.

First, the ritual bread called "kolač"<sup>2</sup> is made. The dough is shaped in the form of a round bread, and then five inscriptions are imprinted with the stamp, forming the sign of the Cross on the bread – one in the middle, and four at four sides. In Ošljane and Jelašnica they emphasize that it is important to imprint central inscription first, and then the other four. In Jelašnica, the housewife crosses herself before imprinting and then imprints the inscription saying folk prayers<sup>3</sup>. After that, symbols are made of dough and put on the bread (in Novo Korito, it is done right after shaping the dough). A universal symbol of every kolač is a "flower" – a spiral made of a strip of dough, nicked with a knife. In Ošljane, in most cases, there are five "flowers" on the kolač, placed over the inscriptions made with the stamp. Only in one case, the kolač with five "flowers" has got a circle of dough on its edge, nicked with knife on the outer side and with the corner of the stamp on the top. This circle is not closed because it is, as they explained, dedicated to living people. In Marinovac, the kolač (and the same kolač is also prepared for some other

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<sup>2</sup> In this area, in each household, apart from the slava, the "kolač" is made also for the following feasts: "zavetina" (a votive day of the local community – the kin, part of the village, village), "obrok" (a votive day for the good health of a family member or of the livestock), Christmas, Easter, St. Archangel Gabriel (Крсгић 2001).

<sup>3</sup> The term "prayer" in this paper does not mean a prayer according to Church canons. Here, it means a free, verbal form, often slightly poetical, that expresses wishes for overall well-being of a household.

customs) has also got five "flowers", but it is somewhat different: it always has got the Sign of the Cross made of rolled dough which divides upper surface of the kolač into four parts with one "flower" in each part. In Jelašnica, too, the kolač has got five "flowers", only the central "flower" is bigger than other four. In this case, the kolač is encircled with a rolled strip of dough. In Ošljane, the kolač can be with one "flower" only, as it is prepared for other feasts, but the recorded cases were the slavas brought into the families by son-in-laws. In these households, too, they make the kolač with five "flowers", in one case (mentioned above) for long-forgotten slava, and in the other cases for principal slava. In Novo Korito, motifs on the kolač are different. They prepare two kolač-es – one for the Eve, and one for the very day of the slava. The kolač have got a "flower" in the center, around which there is a strip of rolled dough, not closed, but bent outwards at the ends, nicked zig-zag. After placing the symbols, in Ošljane and Marinovac they make different inscriptions or nicks with the corner of the stamp and with a knife.

The other bread that is made for the slava in Ošljane, Marinovac and Jelašnica (it's not prepared in Novo Korito) is "večernjača" (Ošljane, Jelašnica) or "večernica" (Marinovac) (the evening bread). In Marinovac, it is the same size as the "kolač", there is also a cross of rolled dough, but the "flower" is only on the central point, and instead of other "flowers" there are small, round breads. Sometimes the inscriptions are under these breads, sometimes on them. In Ošljane and Jelašnica, "evening bread" is smaller than the "kolač". In Jelašnica, one inscription with the stamp is made, onto which a "flower" is placed. In Ošljane, both on this bread and the "kolač" five inscriptions forming the sign of the Cross are made with the stamp, and then one "flower" is placed on the central inscription. In Ošljane, according to other practice, a wider circle of thinned dough is placed over the middle of the bread, which is later nicked on the edge with a knife. According to the third practice, "evening bread" in Ošljane is the same as in Marinovac, only somewhat smaller.

In Ošljane, for the slava, they also prepare bread called "Leturđia" or "Laturđia" ("Lithurgy"), onto which five inscriptions are imprinted with the stamp. It should be less than "evening bread" which is also less than the "kolač". In Ošljane, they prepare three breads totally identical to "Liturgy" (they have got only five stamp inscriptions), that are simply called "kravaj" (medium-sized round bread).

In Marinovac, beside above mentioned breads, according to one source, they make three and according to other source they make five small breads with one stamp inscription in the middle on each one. They are also called "kravajci" (small round breads). In Jelašnica they make even ten of these breads that are called "paskurice" (small round cemetery breads) which are intended for cemetery customs. In the villages of this area they are small breads with the same name and are made for cemetery customs.

In Novo Korito, they make one type of the "kolač" that cannot be found in other researched villages and it is called "Sveta Petka" ("St. Paraskeva"). It is round in shape, somewhat smaller than the "kolač", with a swastika

made of rolled dough on the top, i.e. a cross with the ends bent to the left. This swastika is nicked with a knife in a zig-zag manner.

Beside above mentioned breads, for the slava they also make a bread onto which they pour some salt and ground paprika. In Marinovac, this type of bread hasn't got its name, but is generally called "kravaj". In Ošljane, they call it "ljubenko", "ljubenče" or "ljubiša" (a bread to be kissed), because it is, as will be seen, kissed during the ritual. In Jelašnica it is called "ljubinko" and in Novo Korito "za svetomu" (to the Saint). According to some sources from Ošljane, in times when they baked the bread in the hearth inside the house, this type of bread was not baked in earthen casseroles, but always in ashes and embers. In Novo Korito, this type of bread is egg-like, with no ornaments, simply with salt and ground paprika on the top. This type, according to some sayings, can also be found in Ošljane. One source in Ošljane says that the housewife inserts a coin laterally, halfway into the bread. In Jelašnica, this bread is round, the same as "paskurica", only somewhat bigger with a deeper stamp inscription so as to hold salt and ground paprika. In Ošljane, there is also a type of a small, egg-like bread, with two separate rings of rolled dough, in which they pour salt and ground paprika. In Marinovac, it's got the same shape, but the motif's got a shape of an eight made of rolled dough, into which they pour salt and ground paprika. In Jelašnica, they don't make this type for less significant slavas during which there won't be any non-local guests, because this type is prepared for guests in particular and meant to be kissed by guests (see ph. 1).

#### THE EVE OF THE SLAVA

In the Eve of the slava, one of the youngest members of the family – it is usually a child, except in cases when there aren't any children and the ritual is done by someone else – starts inviting guests, upon the instructions from elders. In Novo Korito it must be a girl, and if there isn't a girl in the family, than a neighbour's female child is asked to perform the ritual. The child that invites the guests carries brandy. In Novo Korito, a small jug should be decorated with yellow flowers called "golemo cveće" ("big flowers"), which are put in the spout. When the child enters the home of those to be invited, she says she comes to invite them to the slava – to dinner that day or to lunch and dinner the next day and day after that. She offers some brandy to a householder first and then to others who would drink, pouring it from a small jug or a bottle into their glasses or into a glass that she carries along with her. Before drinking they, and especially the householder, pray in return. If no one drinks brandy (for example, men are absent) the child pours the brandy into a glass that she leaves at their's. In Jelašnica, they used to invite guests separately for each day of the slava, so on this occasion they invite to the Eve's dinner. In Ošljane, in times when there were no telephones, guests from other villages and remote and separate parts of the village were not invited, but close friends and relatives used to come uninvited. On the other hand, In Novo Korito, nobody came uninvited – the guests were invited through a messenger. Many more guests used to be invited to the slava than today – all close relatives and friends. Since going to the slava used to be a kind of a pledge, it

was guests who decided when and how many of them would go to some slava, because they knew they would be paid a proper return visit. The same guests could come several times, and if a family was large, they could go in groups, at different time each.

The evening before the saint's day is called "povečerje". In Novo Korito, according to one source, in the evening, before the guests come, they put a small bread with salt and ground paprika on it on the table, placing a coin on it. In Ošljane and Marinovac each guest enters the same way, whether he comes the same evening, on the saint's day, the next day or several times: he calls good night (if it's the evening) or praises the Lord (if it's the afternoon), than takes off his cap if he's a man, approaches the table, crosses himself, takes the bread with salt and ground paprika, kisses it and puts it back on the table. According to one source from Ošljane, the guest also puts a coin on the bread. Only then he greets the householder shaking hands with him and then with the rest of the family, congratulating them on the slava and after that greets other guests. Then he sits at the table. In Novo Korito, the guest greets the householder and the family, congratulating them on the slava, then takes the bread called "povečerje" from the table and kisses it and after that he sits at the table. In Jelašnica, when coming to the "povečerje", none of the breads was kissed (it would be done later, during the ritual performed that night). Otherwise, when coming to the slava, the guests used to bring a bottle of wine and a dish of pie, and in Jelašnica, for winter slavas they used to bring a dish of aspic.

When the guests gather and the table is ready, the ritual begins. In Ošljane, it is performed as following: Everybody stands up. The householder crosses himself and lights a candle. There are three above mentioned round breads ("kravaj", with only five stamp inscriptions), placed one on the other in front of him, and, according to one source, on the top of them is a bread with salt and ground paprika. After the housewife brings a censer with embers and they put incense in it and it starts to smell, the householder censes the breads, encircling them three times, anticlockwise, holding the censer with his right hand. After every circle he takes the censer with his left hand so as to cross himself with his right one. During the censing, he prays for his household and his family, and other guests join with their prayers or complement his, crossing themselves simultaneously with the householder. After that, he takes all three the breads and kisses the one on the top (according to one practice, there is a bread with salt and ground paprika on them), and then he carries them from guest to guest who do the same after crossing themselves or they approach to him to do that. According to one informant, beside kissing the bread, everybody kisses the householder's right hand. Then, according to one source, since the householder holds all three breads, he breaks them in halves or removes the bread with salt and ground paprika from them and breaks the one on the top and then breaks off a piece of the bread for each guest. According to another informant, after lighting the candle and censing, only one piece is broken off the "evening bread". Than everybody sits down and the dinner begins, if it is a fast – with animal-free food, and if not – with regular one.

In Marinovac, the “povečerje” ritual goes as follows: When all guests arrive, everybody stands up. In front of the householder there is a bread “večernica”. According to one informant, the householder puts a candle on the “večernica”, raises it together with the candle and calls good evening to all, asking them to bless the bread and pray to the saint the day is dedicated to. Everyone prays vocally, and he makes a circle in the air in front of him, anticlockwise, holding the bread with the candle on it. After the housewife brings a censer in which they put incense, first he censens the “večernica” three times, crossing it with the censer saying: “In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen”. Then he censens the whole table, encircling it with the censer, three times, anticlockwise. After every circle, he takes the censer with his left hand so that he could cross himself, which is a signal for others to do the same. Then he takes the candle from the “večernica” and puts it on a candlestick, in a glass or most often he inserts it into the bread on the top of which there are salt and ground paprika. Then he turns the “večernice” upside down and cuts the bottom of it, down the centre line, halfway into the bread and then he breaks it. According to one source, he puts one half on the other and kisses the upper one. According to another source, every guest gets a piece of “večernica”. Then they put the candle on a place east of the table, they all turn to the east and cross themselves. After that the dinner begins.

In Jelašnica, they put the “kolač” on the table first, than the “evening bread” on the “kolač”, and the bread called “ljubinko” on the top of them, but still without salt and ground paprika on it. When the guests arrive, the householder crosses himself and, praying, he lights a candle and then puts it on a candlestick. Then they bring embers where he puts incense and, turning to the east he censens the breads three times. After every censening, he takes the censer with his left hand so that he could cross himself, which is what all other guests do. Then he takes all the breads together, going from guest to guest rightwards, stopping at every guest so that each of them could first cross himself and then kiss the householder's right hand and the bread on which salt and ground paprika will be put. After that, the householder cuts off a piece of “evening bread” and then it is broken into pieces which are given to all guests. Then the dinner begins.

In Novo Korito, when guests gather for “povečerje”, one of two “kolač” is cut. The “kolač” is put on a bread called “St. Paraskeva”. Beside the bread there is boiled wheat (still without sugar and walnuts). A householder crosses himself, lights a candle, while praying together with other guests. He crosses himself again and censens the “kolač”, encircling them with the censer, three times, anticlockwise, constantly praying. Then he takes the “kolač”, turns its bottom (the side opposite to ornaments) upwards, touches four points on it with the tip of a knife making, thus, the Sign of the Cross saying: “In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen”, and then cuts it halfway deep, making thus a Cross-like cut. Then, on the four ends of the Cross he pours some wine. After that, with another male from the family he breaks the cake in two, and in case there is no male it is done with a male from the neighbourhood. While they hold one half each after the breaking,

they kiss them, raise them in the air and say: "May the wheat grow this high!" Then, first the householder and after him the other male breaks the halves in quarters, with the help of another two men. The plate with the boiled wheat is handed over from guest to guest rightwards so that everyone can eat a little, which stands for their wish to have good yield in wheat. The "kolač" is further broken into more pieces that are given to all guests.

After the ritual, the cult meal is performed. As for beverages, they drink brandy first, and then wine. During winter slavas, boiled brandy is prepared. They used to sing during the dinners, sometimes music was played if someone could play the shepherd's flute or the bagpipes.

### THE MAIN DAY OF THE SLAVA

The day of the slava hasn't got any particular name, it is usually referred to as "svet'c". In Jelašnica, on this day, early in the morning, before the dawn, a householder goes to the cemetery. He takes ritual breads "paskurice", boiled wheat and small portions of all prepared dishes for the slava including the roast. He places the food on the grave of the latest deceased from the family. On the cemetery, the food isn't censed. It is censed only within the period of one year from the death of a family member (in this period the food is also censed on other important feast, even on the day of slava. The charcoal for the censer is brought from home). After that he puts one "paskurica" and a little food on each of the graves of other deceased members of the family, saying "May God have mercy on their souls" (it is a usual expression in cemetery customs). The rest of the food is exchanged with other people on the cemetery, mentioning the deceased.

In Ošljane, on St. George's Day, in every household a male lamb is butchered. Those who don't celebrate that slava also do the same. The lamb is stuffed and roasted with offal that is previously mixed with thyme and green onions. When the lamb is done, women go to the cemetery, always bringing a little of the meat as well as the first St. George's Day cheese.<sup>4</sup> In Jelašnica, since the guests are invited separately for each day of the slava a child invites the guests. He invites the guests to lunch or dinner.

In Jelašnica, in the morning, in case there is a cult place (mostly votive tree or a stone or a wooden cross) within the village area dedicated to the same saint as their slava, people go to the place and perform what is usually performed at a cult place: they light candles and leave offers – flowers, coins and food.

The ritual of the cutting of bread was always performed before noon, while the Sun is ascending to the zenith. This is why the lunch used to begin sometimes before noon and guest used to attend the ritual. Nowadays, guests come to lunch in the afternoon, and the ritual is performed in the morning with only family members present. The guests, after entering the room where the slava is celebrated, kiss the bread with salt and ground paprika, which

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<sup>4</sup> St. George's Day cheese is made of milk from the first milking in the season. In this area, the sheep are neither butchered nor milked before the St. George's Day.

lies on the table. According to one source from Ošljane, the bread is placed on two other breads that left unbroken in "povečerje". In Jelašnica, they used to pour salt and ground paprika on this small bread only on this day (the evening before, they kissed this bread while the "evening bread" was cut). Therefore, only from this moment guests kiss the bread upon arrival, then they put a coin on it, after that they shake hands with the hosts congratulating them on the slava and then sit at the table.

When all guests arrive, the ritual begins. It used to be performed only by a man. Even today, many observe this rule, even though in many elderly households there is none but one woman. But, in cases where a woman isn't strict in obeying formalities, she performs the ritual herself.

In Ošljane, the ritual of bread cutting was as follows: The ritual is performed by a householder, but if there is anyone among the guests who is better in praying than the householder or if the householder happens not to do it well enough, than someone else performs the ritual. That person is called a "priest". Everybody stands up. In front of the householder (i.e. in front of the "priest") there is a plate with boiled wheat, on the plate there is a "kolač", on the "kolač" there is a "evening bread" and on the "evening bread" there is a "Lithurgy". Beside them there are a glass of wine and a candle. He crosses himself (usually saying: Lord, please help..), lights the candle and inserts it into "Lithurgy". During the research, one household told that they make a special three-branched candle. The housewife brings a censer with embers, in which they put incense and the householder censes the breads, the wheat and the wine encircling them with the censer three times anticlockwise, praying constantly. Before each circle, he takes the censer with his left hand so that he could cross himself, and if praying is longer he holds the censer in his right hand saying prayers. According to one source only, he takes the "lithurgy" and cuts off a piece of it. They simultaneously emphasize that this bread goes to the person that performs the ritual – to the "priest". After he puts the "lithurgy" aside, he takes the "večenjača", cuts off a piece of it, and according to some people, he even emphasizes that the piece goes to the person who performs the ritual. After that he crosses himself, takes the "kolač", puts it on his left forearm and, with a knife, makes the sign of the Cross, three times, over the side with symbols. He does that by touching four points on the cake with the tip of the knife (according to some sources, he also touches the central point of the cake) saying: "In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen" simultaneously and cuts a cross in it. Then he crosses himself, takes a pinchful of the boiled wheat and puts it on four or five points (the fifth point is the central one), thus making the Sign of the Cross. He crosses himself again, saying the same words and pours some wine on the four points making the Sign as well. Then he puts the glass under the cake so as to collect the wine dripping from the cake and says: "May the wine in the barrels overflow and may the wheat in the barn overflow!"

After they cross themselves, he and another man break the "kolač" in two halves, each of them kisses his half and raises it above his head saying: "May the wheat grow this high!". First the householder and then the other man with the help of another two men break the halves crosswise into quar-



ters. The householder (or "priest") together with a man with whom he broke the bread kiss their quarters and stretching their arms, press the quarters against each other saying: "Christ!", while the other two do the same saying the same words. The second time they do it, they say: "Among us!", and the third time: "He is and will be!", while the other two men repeat all these actions. One quarter of the cake is put on a shelf on the wall, which all older houses used to have and, nowadays, to any higher part of the furniture, saying: "May the wheat grow this high!". The householder (or „priest“) pours a little wine on the boiled wheat making the sign of the Cross, puts the glass with wine on the plate with wheat and puts the lighted candle in the glass. All men standing at the table who can reach the plate take it, and those who can't – they all lay one hand on the next person (usually their shoulders) who can take the plate and so forth..., so they are all connected to the plate through each other. Saying prayers they all raise the plate with wheat, wine and the candle slowly, finishing the ritual with words "May the wheat grow this high!". The householder (or "priest") crosses himself and takes a spoonful of wheat mixed with wine from the plate, eats it and, according to one source, sips a little wine from the glass, and then all the others do the same rightwards. According to one source, all the guests then turn to the east and, after they stick the candle to the wall or put it on a shelf, the householder prays and the others start to cross and bow. Then, they all sit at the table and the lunch begins, the first dish being boiled wheat. If it's a fast – it is with ground walnuts, otherwise – with milk (see ph. 2).

In Marinovac, they cut the "kolač" as follows: When the guests arrive, they all stand up. In front of the householder, there are a plate with boiled wheat, a "kolač" on the wheat, and on the "kolač" there are above mentioned small breads, with one stamp inscription in the middle on each of them. According to one practice, there are three of them and they are pressed one against another around the central point of the "kolač", forming a triangle, while on the other hand, according to another evidence, there can be five small breads, each of them placed on a "flower" on the "kolač". According to the first practice, the householder puts a candle on the three small breads, takes the "kolač" with the breads and the candle and says: Good morning! Bless this bread dedicated to St. Nicholas. He makes a circle in the air with the "kolač" (with small breads and the candle) anticlockwise and puts it back on the plate with the boiled wheat. After he crosses himself and lights the candle, he inserts it in the middle flower on the "kolač", between the three small breads or in a "kravaj" that is on the middle flower. The housewife brings a censer with embers and, after they put incense in it, he censes the three small breads first, thus making the Sign of the Cross, each time saying: "In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen!", and then censes the whole table encircling it anticlockwise. Then he removes the small breads from the "kolač" (and according to the practice with three of them) puts them on the plate with boiled wheat, on the central point, the same way they previously were on the "kolač" and inserts the candle between them. Then he takes the "kolač", puts it on his left forearm so the "flowers" lie on

the forearm, with his right hand he takes a pinchful of boiled wheat and puts it on the four points of the bottom of the "kolač" thus making the Sign of the Cross, and then cuts the Cross in it. According to the one other practice, first he cuts the bread and then he puts the boiled wheat. Then he takes a bottle of wine, that must be full, which symbolizes a wish for prosperity of the household and then he pours some wine on the cake, also on the four points making the Sign of the Cross. After that he puts the bottle under the cake so that wine drips into it and says: "May the wine in the barrels overflow, may the wheat and corn in the barns overflow and may the family is healthy!".

Then, he breaks the "kolač" in two halves with the help of another man, and after that the halves are broken into quarters with another two men. Each of them, after the breaking, kisses the piece of the cake in his hands and raises it in the air saying: "May the wheat grow this high!" According to a belief, the man whose piece of the "kolač" holds a central "flower" will have the honour of being the one to plow the land next year, which is considered as a symbol of his luck. That's why the householder tries to make the "flower" stay on his quarter. According to one source, one quarter of the "kolač", the one with the middle "flower", is put on a shelf on the wall or, nowadays, on any part of the furniture where it stays until the end of the slava (all three days). After that, the householder pours some wine on the boiled wheat, on four points, thus making the Sign of the Cross, saying: "In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen!". whereas in the practice according to which the small breads are on the wheat he pours the wine on the small breads. All the men that can reach the plate take it, and the others who are distant lay their hands on the closest ones (usually on the shoulder) that reach the plate and then they raise the plate slowly, turning it anticlockwise. During this part, the householder says: "May the wheat grow this high!". Then, the candle and the small breads are removed from the plate, the householder crosses himself and takes a spoonful of wheat and eats it, and after that the housewife carries the plate from guest to guest so that they could do the same. After eating the wheat, each guest turns to the east, crosses himself and sits at the table. When all are sitted, the householder starts to pray: "Lord, grant us good health and may we gather for many years joyfully!" According to another evidence, the householder puts the candle that is removed from the wheat on a shelf on the eastern wall, starts to cross himself and pray and then the others turn to the east and cross themselves, complementing his prayers. After that, everybody sits at the table.

In Jelašnica, when all guests arrive, they put boiled wheat and wine beside the "kolač" and the bread with salt and ground paprika. A householder lights a candle, then they bring him a censer with incense and he censures the "kolač" encircling it with the censer three times anticlockwise, taking the censer with left hand after each circle so that he could cross himself, while the others do the same. Then he takes the "kolač", makes the Sign of the Cross above its bottom (opposite from the top with symbols) three times with a knife, saying: "In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen!" and cuts the Sign in it. Then he pours the wine in the Cross he previously cut, saying the same words. After that he and another male member of

the household, (and if there aren't other male members – than with a guest), after crossing themselves, break the "kolač" in two halves. Then, they press the bottoms of the halves against each other and, holding them together. After that, first the householder kisses his half saying: Christ among us! and then the other kisses his half saying: He is and will be! They repeat this act twice. Finally, each of them raises his half and says: "May the wheat grow this high!" Then all the guests cross themselves, eat a little wheat, cross themselves again, sip a little wine and then sit at the table. After that, the "kolač" is cut in pieces and given to all guests.

In Jelašnica, when it is some household's turn to prepare the votive "kolač" in the name of the local community for a custom of "zavetina" (a feast of the community at a cult place) and the place is dedicated to the same saint as that of the household, than the household prepares two "kolač" – one votive and one for the slava. Thus, the slava "kolač" is cut at the cult place, right after they cut the votive "kolač".

In Novo Korito, the cutting of the "kolač" on the day of the slava is the same as on the "povečerje". The only difference is that after the "kolač" is cut, a piece of the bread called "St. Paraskeva" is cut off.

If an elder householder hands down the slava to a new householder, it is emphasized at the end of the ritual of bread cutting. In Ošljane and Novo Korito, after the bread is cut, the elder gives a quarter of the "kolač" and a candle to his successor and stresses that the right of celebrating has been handed down to him and that he can be considered as a new householder. After the ritual of bread cutting is completed, the lunch begins. The first dish is always the boiled wheat. It used to be served salted, with milk, but later they began to serve it with sugar and ground walnuts. The atmosphere during the lunch is joyful and pleasing.

In Novo Korito, when guests are ready to leave the celebration, the householders of visiting households put coins on the bread with salt and ground paprika, explaining that the host of the slava should use that money for forging his plowshares.

In Novo Korito, only if it hasn't been a year since the death of a member of the family, women go to the cemetery, taking a little of every slava dish for cemetery customs as well as small breads, "paskurice".

Beside each family's cutting the "kolač" at its own house, in Ošljane there are rituals of collective cutting of the "kolač". In a part of the village, called Staro Selo, all people celebrating St George (mostly the kin of Topolovci) on their summer slava St. George's Day (6. V), and all those celebrating St. Nicholas (many kins) on their summer slava (22. V) used to commemorate these saints' days not at their homes, but at cult trees with cult crosses dedicated to the saints. They don't consider these trees as votive, as it is usual in this area, but as the slava trees. They lay the "kolač" – es from all households in front of the cult place (each "kolač" with other breads that go with it and other auxiliaries used for the home ritual), and then one of the householders, usually an older man who is good at prayers, starts cutting them. He is also called the „priest". The ritual of cutting is the same as at home, only the man

that cuts the “kolač” breaks each “kolač” with the owner of the “kolač”. The other difference is that at the beginning of the ritual he pours some boiled wheat from all households into one dish and pours some wine from all households into one glass, using these mixtures during the cutting of all breads.

In comparison to the celebration at home, the difference in this way of celebrating is in usual customs related to the sacred tree. In the morning, a woman goes to a cult place, clean the stone cross with water and basil and bind it with a new red thread on which others will hang their flowers. Later, when people arrive to the cult place, before the ritual of the cutting of the “kolač”, each of them cross himself at the votive cross, lays flowers and money and lights candles. After collective censing, women leave a little of every slava dish at the cross. Those who celebrate St. George always bring some St. George's Day lamb roast. After the “kolač” are cut, they perform improvised cult meal, and then go home with their guests. After the WWII, communist governments forbade the collective cutting of the “kolač” and they even cut the slava trees. After that, people continued to perform the ritual at their homes, the way the other households in the village do, as the ones that celebrate other saints. Only in 1993 those who celebrate St. Georges Day started to cut their “kolač” collectively at the cult place, and in 1994 they made a shelter above the stone cross and the stump. Even then, some of them continued to perform this ritual at home and, nowadays, only one household cuts its “kolač” at the cult place (see ph. 3, 4, 5 and 6).

Beside this, in a different way, in Ošljane, the collective cutting of bread was performed also on St. Nicholas Day. Namely, in a part of the village called Staro Selo too, some householders of neighbouring households that celebrate St. Nicholas used to gather on this saint's day (19. XII) at one household, then went together from household to household and cut the “kolač” collectively. This practice of cutting the “kolač” also ceased to exist after the WWII, while all people have done this at their homes.

### **THE SECOND AND THE THIRD DAY OF THE SLAVA**

In Marinovac, the second day of the slava is referred to as “okrilje”, in Ošljane “paterica” and “patarica”, in Jelašnica patarice, whereas in Novo Koprivo it doesn't have any particular name, they only stress that it is the second day of the slava.

On the second day, the guests also come to lunch and dinner. In Jelašnica, they specially invite guests to the slava, in the morning, as on previous days.

In Marinovac, in the evening of the second day, at the end of the dinner, the householder cuts off a piece of bread with salt and ground paprika, and in Jelašnica, he breaks it in two, which means that the official part of the slava is over (after that this piece is eaten as any other piece of bread).

In all four villages, the third day is referred to as “paniččin dan” or “paniččin d'n”, and in Ošljane they also call it “rasturnica” (the last gathering before parting).

In Marinovac, on that day they invite to the table only close relatives, in Ošljane as well, so as to eat the remaining food from the slava (it is what the name derives from – a shallow bowl, "panica", a dish). In Jelašnica, some householders used to invite male guests only, thus allowing themselves to get drunk at the end of the feast.

In Ošljane, on this day, the householder breaks the bread with salt and ground paprika.

### THE CONCLUSION

The ethnographic material presented in this paper enables extracting some features of the slava. With other material related to the slava, the features can be elaborated further, and they will be only listed here with brief comments.

The diversity of the slava practices in this micro-area is obvious. As many other customs in this area, and in the Balkans in general, the celebration of the slava is not consistent even on the level of a village – some details vary from household to household. There aren't any strict rules, but a framework in which the customs are performed. However, regardless of the huge diversity, on the basis of all material published so far and concerning individual ethnic groups and geographic areas, it is clear that there are particular types of the slavas. In spite of previous large interest in this custom and a vast number of descriptions of the slava, systematic researches have never been carried out nor has any typology been offered. In the river basin of Timok, particular features of the slava, on the basis of which we can assume some special types, can be found in Svrljig area (Петровић 1992, 295-298), in the area of Zaglavak (Крстић 2001, 88-103), in the middle Timok (Крстић 2001, 88-103), in Sokobanja region (Радовановић 1998), in the Serbs in the region of Boljevac (Грбић 1909, 195-212), in so called Kosovljani (Ђокић 2005, 215-216) in the Vlach population (Дурлић 1998; E-2), and one special type is also found in the neighbouring areas of the Stara Planina in the north-western Bulgaria in so called Torlak population (Пешева 1958, 14-17; E-1). Given the enormous ethnic diversity of this area and regional ethnic groups in which researches in the slava haven't been carried out yet, it is expected that more types of slava will be offered.

This depiction of the slava celebration in the middle Timok allows us to extract the features of a particular type of the slava related only to the middle Timok. We can also point out the differences between this type and the type of slava in the bordering village of Novo Korito, which represents the slava in the Torlaks in the north-western Bulgaria. The population of Novo Korito is in terms of ethnic culture somewhat different from other population in the middle Timok because they mostly originate from the areas of today north-western Bulgaria (Станојевић 1940, 492-494; Рајковић 1990, 297-300). One of the most prominent features of the slava customs in one household in the middle Timok is celebrating in both autumn-winter and spring-summer periods. The details related to ritual breads are the best indicators of two types of practices, one typical of the middle Timok, and the other

typical of Novo Korito and areas in north-western Bulgaria. The differences are in the motifs on the "kolač" (the "kolač" with five "flowers" against the "kolač" with one "flower" surrounded by an unclosed circle with bent ends; patterns with parallel nicks against patterns with zig-zag nicks), then in the number and types of breads used in the ritual ("evening bread", "lithurgy" and "kravajci" against the "kolač" for "povečerje" and "St. Paraskeva" bread) and in the name of the bread with salt and ground paprika (the breads, the stem of whose name is "kiss" against the breads, the stem of whose name is "sacred").

There are many details related to slava from this area that could be very useful when trying to discern the essence of the slava customs. It is about a custom that is an example of so called traditional Orthodoxy – the syncretism of Orthodox Church and the plenty of traditional customary practices that are not in line with Church canons (e.g. the ritual is performed by a household, not a priest), among which there are many archaic, pre-Christian elements. The Christian elements are seen in relating the slava to a Christian saint, ubiquitous Sign of the Cross and crossing, inscriptions in the ritual breads with clear Christian message that Jesus Christ wins, mentioning The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, identifying the slava "kolač" with Christ in the ritual cutting (Christ among us!...). However, during the ritual, the prayers are not addressed to Christ, not so much to the particular saint either, but to an universal deity, simply called God that can provide well-being in all aspects of life – from economy to health and life itself. What is the character of that deity like?

In the essence of slava there is a solar cult. It is obvious in the slava's relation to the annual cycle of customs, which is related to the revolution of the Sun, the round shape of the "kolač" and other slava's breads, solar symbols on them (a circle, a spiral, a swastika), the time of cutting of the cakes (in the morning, when the Sun is ascending), the importance of the eastern side in the ritual (the lighted candle is set east of the table, the prayers are said eastwards). There are even more details that clearly indicate that it is about an agricultural cult. In praying, the prominent are the prayers concerning better yields in wheat and cereals in general and in grapes. The "kolač" must be made of wheat flour exclusively, the boiled wheat is required, as the parts of the "kolač" and the boiled wheat are raised in the air for wheat to grow that high next year, the person that gets the central flower upon bread cutting will be a plowman next year, the bread is offered money that should be used for forging plowshares, the wine is poured from a full bottle so that a plenty of crops fills up the household, and exceptional agricultural feature of the slava is seen in the fact that the slava is related to the farm estate. In the slava, there are obvious, even ritual-based, elements of the cult of hospitality. The guests are very important, as a kind of witnesses, in ritual prayers and tables intended for overall prosperity of a household. The inviting and preparing the table for guests, and the ritual practices related to the bread with salt and ground paprika unquestionably confirm this cult.

Apart from cited features, it is obvious that the slava has got a patriarchal character – the ritual actions are almost exclusively performed by men, the slava is handed down from father to son, all prayers are addressed to a male deity. Going to the graves of family members on the day of the slava and the using of the cemetery breads show that the slava is also related to

the cult of the world beyond, i.e. with supernatural powers that rule the world of the dead. The material from the middle Timok raises a question of exclusive home-related character of the slava. Beside the collective cutting of the "kolač" from household to household and going to the kin cult places on the day of the slava, outstanding examples of the kin slava cult trees at which the "kolač" cutting is performed are a significant support to this claim. These examples show how thin the line between the slava and "zavetina" is, with "zavetina" being a custom with more comprehensive collective character. It means that behind the slava there isn't a divine power that protects only one family, but one that involves all social levels.

All cited features clearly indicate that behind the slava custom lies an ancient universal solar deity that rules not only this world, but also "the world beyond", a deity that is an incarnation of overall existence and cosmic order.

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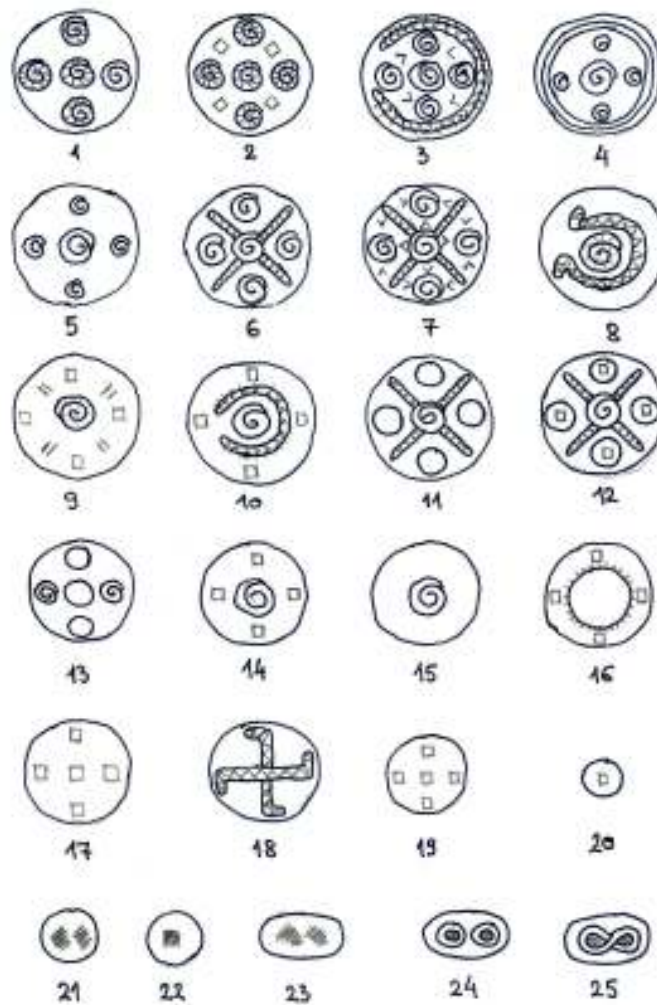
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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Ph. 1. The slava breads: 1, 2, 3 – “kolač” in Ošljane; 4, 5 – “kolač” in Jelašnica; 6, 7 – “kolač” in Marinovac; 8 – “kolač” in Novo Korito; 9, 10 – “kolač” for less important “slava” in Ošljane; 11, 12 – “večernica” in Marinovac; 13, 14, 16 – “večernjača” in Ošljane; 15 – “večernjača” in Jelašnica; 17 – “kravaj” in Ošljane; 18 – “Sveta Petka” in Novo Korito; 19 – “leturdjia” or “laturdjia” in Ošljane; 20 – “paskurica” in Jelašnica and Novo Korito; 20 – “kravajče” in Marinovac; 21 – “za svetomu” in Novo Korito; 22 – “ljubinko” in Jelašnica; 23, 24, 25 – “ljubenko”, “ljubenče” or “ljubiša” in Ošljane; 25 – “kravaj” in Marinovac.





A Custom of "Slava" ("Svetac") in the Middle Timok

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Ph. 2: The breaking of the "kolač" (Zaječar, inhabitants from Ošljane)



Ph. 3: The cutting of the "kolač" at a cult place called St. George



Ph. 4: The cutting of the "kolač" at a cult place called St. George



Ph. 5: The cutting of the "kolač" at a cult place called St. George (Petko Hristov)



Ph. 6: A cross dedicated to St. George and the stump of a cut tree (Petko Hristov)





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**RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL ELEMENTS  
OF CELEBRATION OF MUNICIPAL AND RURAL  
SAINTS' DAYS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BABUŠNICA\***

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**REVITALIZATION OF RELIGION AND THE BORDER REGION**

After the period in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which secularization processes in society took place, the current state of religion in the world can be described using the phrase – revitalization of religion. Such a general assessment cannot be applied to all modern societies, since the effects of secularization are very different in different parts of the world. Secularization is a process which is usually connected to the developed societies of the West, however, there are significant differences between these societies as well. When talking about secularization in this region one has to bear in mind the impact of the secularization processes which took place during the era of socialism, as well as revitalization impulses that were present under the influence of national renewal during the 1990s.

As far as Serbia is concerned, one can say that after the fall of socialism came the retraditionalization of social relations in general, with religion becoming an important social actor and identification marker. All elements of revitalization processes were present – the increase in the number of believers, the intensification of religious practice, and the dedifferentiation of religion and social institutions. One can also say that this is a phenomenon that can be recognized on the entire territory of Serbia, yet the life on the border carries certain specificities when it comes to religion and religiosity. An important characteristic of the life on the border is the distance from the center, the peripherality of position. The ghettoization of border regions in southeastern Serbia, even though not the choice of their inhabitants, leads to the way of life which carries a lot of difficulties – poverty, detachment from the “big world”, disinterestedness of that same world in their problems, insufficient resources, a sterner treatment by the state (out of sight, out of mind), but it also produces qualities which cannot be found elsewhere – finding hidden strength in difficult conditions, mixture of peoples and cul-

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tural models, orientation toward each other. De Certay states that marginalization is today a universal phenomenon, that marginal groups have become a silent majority. The marginality can be imposed, or chosen, it can become an identity of sorts, and even a matter of choice.

“Thus, marginality becomes a way to manifest one’s identity. A way to not be either on the outside or the inside, always a screen which can help one come into or come out of something if an opportunity or a need arises (Zanini 2002, 58).”

Apart from being located on the border between Serbia and Bulgaria, the situation in the municipality of Babušnica is also determined by its high level of poverty, which causes problems to be felt much more prominently in such a situation. In the conditions of the transitional crisis of values and identities, but also because of hard living under the pressure of everyday problems caused by the difficult life, religion takes over its important role of theodicy.

“Social crisis endangers general agreement, thus inviting every individual to think about themselves and the community in which he or she has thus far lived without greater shakes (Šušnjić 1998, 167).”

The life on the border can represent the encounter of different religions which can act integratively on minority communities when used in the function of cultural defense, but also disintegratively when groups which confess different religions are concerned.

### RELIGIOSITY IN BABUŠNICA

This paper is the result of the analysis of data from the qualitative research (based on in-depth interviews), whose subject was the celebration of municipal and rural saints’ days in the context of the level and type of religiosity present on the territory of the municipality of Babušnica (ph. 1).

“The municipality of Babušnica is surrounded by the municipalities of Pirot and Bela Palanka in the north, Bulgarian border in the east, the municipalities of Vlasotince and Crna Trava in the south, and the municipality of Gadžin Han in the west ([http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opština\\_Babušnica](http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opština_Babušnica)).”

There are around 15,000 people living in 53 settlements. The average age of the population is 45 years, while that average is 65 years in the villages. Demographic projections show that many of the scattered mountain villages will become desolate. Due to the scattering of villages, roads and infrastructure are not being restored, which contributes to the process of demographic dying out of this region. Agricultural production is very rudimentary since the mountainous landscape does not allow the use of machinery. The majority of population are Serbs, while there are 6.7% of Bulgarians (Гиговић 2010, 34). Demographers categorize this region within the zone of extremely low population density based on the number of inhabitants per square kilometer (Радовановић и Гиговић 2010, 113). On the web site of the Municipality of Babušnica, the holidays celebrated as fairs, as well as those

celebrated in the villages of the municipality as rural saints' days, are mentioned as important events. It is interesting that the list contains religious holidays and important dates from the socialist period. Certain ideological holidays have replaced the religious ones. This is the first finding with which the analysis of religiosity in Babušnica and surrounding villages will commence, along with its manifestations and elements.<sup>1</sup>

From the conversation with the population in Babušnica, we find out that the conversion to Islam was very rudimentary, that there are a few Catholic immigrants, and that Orthodoxy is the dominant religious orientation which connects Serbs and Bulgarians as the members of the same confession. The interviewees testify that there is no social distance between these ethnic groups, neither when it comes to marriage, nor when visiting each other during the saints' days (sometimes even Bulgarians take on celebrating their saint's day), nor in the case of common celebration of the municipal and rural saints' days. They emphasize that being Orthodox draws them closer together, and the Roma living in this region also declare themselves as Orthodox.

"I am a member of the Bulgarian national minority. My father is, so to speak, Bulgarian, but he is not Bulgarian. Up there, all villages were with surnames ending in 'ić' until 1946. But it was very difficult for me, when I was here, and when someone called me Bulgarian."

Interviewee: professor of Serbian language and literature, employed in the Municipal Administration of Babušnica, originally from the border village Našuškovica. The mixture of ethnic groups tears down the strict boundaries when it comes to ethnic identification.

"I would say that Shopi are an ethnic group. Because, during the time of the Turks, there was no border here, and there was a lot of mixing between the peoples, running there from here and the other way round. For example, you have an entire part of Bulgaria which is called Znepolje, and there lived, in fact, Serbs. But when the great forces annexed it to Bulgaria, then a large part of the population escaped from there to here. Even in my village and in Kambelevac, there are families that we call Znepoljci. And then, after the migration of the population from the villages to the towns, the majority of the population, my best man, for example, who has a confectionery here (Bulgarian, authors' note), they came here from the villages on the border."

Interviewee: pensioner, Radoševac

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<sup>1</sup> Under the title – rural saints' days, one can find the following information: Aleksandrovac – St. Elijah's Day, August 3; Berin Izvor – Pentecost; Bogdanovac – Gorešnjak, July 26; Berduj – St. Peter's Day; Vava – Feast of the Ascension; Veliko Bonjince – St. Panteleon's Day, Nativity of the Theotokos; Vuči Del – St. German's Day, May 25; Gorčince – St. George's Day; G. Krnjino – St. Peter's Day; G. Striževac – St. John's Day; Dučevac – St. Peter's Day; Draginac – Epiphany (Vodice); Izvor – May Day; Jasenov Del – St. Bartholomew (end of June); Kambelevac – Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (Mladen-ci); Linovo – St. German's Day, May 25; Ljuberada – St. Elijah's Day; Malo Bonjince – St. Peter's Day; Našuškovica – St. Demetrius' Day, Pentecost, St. George's Day; Ostato-vica – St. Jeremiah's Day, May 15; Provaljenik – Fourth of July, Rakita – Holy Saturday; Radoševac – St. Panteleon's Day; Radinjince – Annunciation; Stol – St. John's Day; Studena – St. Peter's Day; Suračevo – May Day; Modra Stena – St. John's Day; Zavidince – St. John's Day, St. Elijah's Day; Štrbovac – May Day.

### RELIGION AND IDEOLOGY

During the period of socialism it was forbidden to express religiosity, celebrate a saint's day, and practice religion in any other way. As it is often the case, the methods of abolishing religion as the "opium for people" were more drastic in the border regions, in order to show ideological orthodoxy. Depending on whether interviewees were members of the communist party or not, their assessments of the socialist relationship toward religion differ. Everyone agrees that religiosity was forbidden, but former communists say that it was "mild", that churches were not demolished, only abandoned. Anyhow, every village does not have a church, and not all of those that do exist work over the entire year. Some of them were renovated after the fall of socialism. One of the interviewees emphasizes that a church was demolished in the village of Grnčar, but that it is the only known case.

"I think that a church was torn down in Grnčar. They didn't forbid it, but they harassed the youth when they gathered there. The police would come if someone did something to stand out, if they saw them dance, or be happy, they would call them: 'come here', and then the police would do something to them, threaten them, and such. It used to be like that. Now nobody touches anyone, nobody threatens. I don't know how ready the youth are to gather round the church. There are cafes now and such."

Interviewee: pensioner, village of Gorčince

Churches are now being slowly renovated, but some of them remain in ruins.

"There are churches in Babušnica (ph. 2) and the surrounding area. In Stol, but it is derelict. Then there's one in Vava – it is a small church that they call the Monastery. It can't have the status of a monastery, it can't even have the status of a church. Then, there's a church in Draginac (ph. 3). It is well preserved, in good condition. There's also a sacred place in Gorčince (ph. 4). I think that it's in the best condition. Then there's a church in Gornje Krnjino which is renovated."

Interviewee: pensioner, village of Vava

The practice of forced atheization has taken its toll, so one of our interviewees testifies that in his opinion the people in Lužnica are not as religious as the people in "Šumadija". Some of them explicitly emphasize that the people are very poorly religious. The interviewee gives the example of his father who is 93 years old and who has never entered a church. But that man could still, however, pray, celebrate his saint's day, which the interviewee connects with the tradition. Children were not baptized. It is a unanimous opinion that the level of religiosity is not high and that it is reduced to tradition, and even to being trendy recently. It is interesting to note that rural saints' days are not abandoned, but that a lot of patron saints' days are. One of the reasons is the ageing population and single person households ("there's no one to prepare the feast").

The general impression is that the socialist period has had its own role in the reduction of religious practice when it comes to fasting, and the interviewees also claim that this practice is now rare, even though it was maintained for a long time after the war in the rural population. They say that this practice is now more present in the cities, as the consequence of new religiosity, and extremely rare in the country. Although a lot of them have given up on celebrations, there are other examples as well:

“We used to celebrate even when it was forbidden during the times of Tito, secretly. My mother would put rags on windows to protect ourselves from spying eyes. We used to celebrate St. John the Baptist on January 20. And we used to eat on the ground on Christmas Eve. I remember an event, I was very young. It was in 1949 when some activists barged into our house and kicked all the food. Since my mother was a hard-working woman, and there was always a lot of food in our house, she used to tell them: ‘Children, don’t kick the bread. You’ll come in the morning to get some.’ And it was so. Even children were not baptized around here. The youth would gather on January 19, that’s called *Epi-phany*, and here we call it *Vodice*. Even *Modrogled*,<sup>2</sup> since girls would then get blue in the face.”

Interviewee: pensioner, Radoševac

As far as other religious customs are concerned, the interviewees mention *lazarica*, *dodola*, *koleda* (ph. 5). During the period of socialism, this practice was also forbidden. An important reason for the decreased level of religiosity was fear. Far from the center and permanently under the attack of armies and diseases, the people would give in to the dominant will:

“Here, the owners of human lives were the members of UDBA.<sup>3</sup> One of the negative characteristics of our people is that they are timid. It was enough for a single policeman to show in the village to make half the village scared to death. People abandoned all that was forbidden because of their fear of the authority, who forbade even the harmless folk customs such as *lazarica*. They allowed the girls to go, only if they were to call themselves *titovke* instead of *lazarice*, and wear caps with red stars.”

Interviewee: pensioner, Radoševac

“Belonging to the party contradicted religiosity and “enlightenment”: Then, the difference was between intellectuals which were all atheists since they were all also communists. It’s a fact. If you were not a communist, then you had less chance to advance. For example, in my school there were 90% of communists, from auxiliaries to the director, but the party accepted only the people who were really good, honest, and morally upright. Only few were not communists. There was much less of that in the villages, of course.”

Interviewee: pensioner, Vava

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<sup>2</sup> *Modro* means blue in Serbian.

<sup>3</sup> UDBA – the State Security Administration.

When it comes to rural saints' days, the way to disperse the people who had gathered was to drive away the musicians, which would lead to people going their own ways. After the fall of socialism, a complete revitalization of religion occurred, yet our interviewee is skeptic when it comes to its quality.

"Today people are quickly accepting faith more because it's a trend. I know a lot of them who were full-fledged atheists, like I am, for example, but are now adopting certain religious beliefs as if they were declared religious more or less from the day they were born."

Interviewee: pensioner, Vava

The increase in the level of religious freedoms is one of the reasons for the revitalization of religious customs.

"Today, for example, there's much more freedom. During the period of socialism, I remember, for instance, when it was St. George's Day – *uranak*, one should not go there. If it was a command issued by the party, everyone would hurry up. So, there's much more freedom now. Not greater, but a complete freedom now. Everyone who wants can go to a celebration. Naturally, if they know the customs."

Interviewee: Našukovica

One of the female interviewees emphasizes an interesting case:

"My uncle used to celebrate St. Michael the Archangel, but they forbade him to. He then started celebrating the 29<sup>th</sup> of November since it was in the same month."

Interviewee: housewife, Babušnica

Apart from the bans during the time of socialism, there are other reasons which are considered relevant for the very low level of religiosity that the interviewees speak of. It is even said that people are today more religious in Babušnica itself, and less in the villages.

"When there were those strong family communities, then people were more both traditional and religiously oriented. However, in the last fifty years or more, since World War II onwards, something has changed probably under the influence of ideology, and from the experience with priests who were not real priests. I claim that the priests here didn't care much for the church. I remember, in my village the priest would visit the homes during a religious holiday – that was customary – and people would lock the doors and hide. So, in my opinion, these are the two factors: poverty, then the attitude of priests in general, their behavior which is not in accordance with the church canons. That and the ideology, the one after World War II has caused the weakening or complete disappearance of that religious feeling. It is completely lost in some areas."

Interviewee: pensioner, Vava

The renewal of religiosity is today also evident in Babušnica, yet out of tradition, and not religiousness.

"Today, for example, there are a lot of intellectuals, educated people who are not believers, they are atheists, but they celebrate their saint's



day out of respect toward the tradition and their parents. They continue, so to say, only to follow the tradition. Not from their religious beliefs. For example, my daughter Ružica, she has started celebrating a saint's day with her husband so as to continue the family tradition, but there is no priest when she is celebrating, nor any of the procedures. There's none of that. But I think it's pretty nice."

Interviewee: pensioner, Vava

This finding concerning saints' days being celebrated, yet without a priest or the "procedure", points to the loss of religious aspects of the ritual and survival of only social elements.

### **RURAL SAINTS' DAYS, PRESLAVAS, AND RELIGIOUS PROCESSIONS**

When it comes to rural saints' days, or *preslavas*, as they are called by the people, the situation is very different. From accepting secular holidays for saints' days (May Day, Fourth of July), to a complete loss of that practice, or its recent renewal.

"There were rural saints' days even during the period of the so-called socialism, although they were changed. For example, May Day was celebrated instead of St. Peter's Day or something else. Gorčince, for example, never allowed the change to happen and it didn't alter its saint's day. They have always celebrated St. George's Day. Stol celebrated the Seventh of July instead of St. John's Day which was the village saint's day. Aleksandrovac continued celebrating St. Elijah's. They still celebrate St. Elijah's. While Stol, Gornji Striževac, Izvor, Suračevo, all of them changed their saints' days for the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, May Day, 25<sup>th</sup> of May."

Interviewee: pensioner, Gorčince

When it comes to the village of Radoševac, owing to the enthusiasm of its inhabitants, the local church has been renovated, and both religious and social elements of this religious custom are still present.

"I am inviting you to come on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August to my village of Radoševac. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August there's a fair, and that's what's called *preslava*, when people come from all parts of Serbia and abroad since this is the opportunity for them to see each other. And then a kolo starts, every year. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, in the evening, people always go to the church. I have renovated the church in the village thanks to a man from Aleksinac, who is an MP. He was the Minister of Religion, Milovan Radovanović. Traditionally, it's on the 8<sup>th</sup>, in the evening. The church is called St. Panteleon. And the day after, you can't walk around the village because of all the cars. Now they bring mobile phones and they record everything. It is most interesting when older people like me come and get into a kolo for starters, until the youth joins. They just don't know how to dance."

Interviewee: pensioner, Radoševac

When it comes to religious processions, the situation is also different. From all memory of them completely lost, to the situation where the memory is quite alive, yet there is no ritual. The majority of interviewees emphasize that there are crosses on the territory of villages, which used to be the center of the ritual, but that they are now abandoned and without their function. From complete negation:

“Even if you were to ask someone from Aleksandrovac, from Vava, or from any other village, to explain what the procession is, when it is organized and how, what meaning it all has, nobody would know. Because those who took part in such religious processions are long gone from this world. Then, those crosses exist in every village. Every village has a cross where religious processions were organized, where it would start and finish. It’s all grown up in weeds now. Nobody goes there anymore. It’s only a relic of old times. There are no people. Usually the elderly, older person households. Nobody cares about the church anymore, nor about processions, or anything. They are all disappointed, depressed. There are no young people. And that is the situation.”

Interviewee: pensioner, Vava

“I believe that religious processions have not been organized here, in any village, for decades now. I would have heard it, most probably. I can’t remember a single religious procession organized. Maybe somewhere, in some village, but I think that nobody had the courage to organize it nor had anyone to do it with. Because they would have, certainly, been mocked for initiating such a thing. There’s no such thing.”

Interviewee: pensioner, Gorčince

A saint’s day in a village is the custom which has remained active for the longest time. The analysis of the abovementioned again implies, above all, social, and not religious elements of these events. It is interesting to hear an interpretation of one of the natives of why this type of ritual has stood the test of time, because people come knowing that the village is celebrating.

“Therefore, there was a saint’s day for the entire village. No guests were invited there, but parents and friends came, and they were visited. And whoever came, they were welcome. After lunch, sometime in the evening, people went to the center of the village or a place which was convenient. It was often a larger area, whether it was that plum orchard, down in Aleksandrovac – I was there for St. Elijah’s – or, for example, in my village there was a schoolyard next to the school which was a larger area, and everybody gathered there, both the young and the old came, and then they all started dancing in a kolo. The elderly watched, the youth danced, walked and so on. That was the thing in every village. That was the custom after lunch.”

Interviewee: pensioner, Vava

There are a few vivid memories of religious processions to the village cross (ph. 6), where often the cross was positioned on a tree, an oak, a *zapis* (Petrović 1995, 277). A mixture of pagan and Christianized elements, yet only remaining in the memory. Here are a couple of true images from the memory

of religious processions to the village zapis or the cross by the interviewees from Gorčince and Vava:

“Then there was that going to the Cross. Every village had a cross of the saint that the entire village was celebrating. And around that Cross, there were as many buried stones as there were households. And each household had its stone. For example, each household would go the Cross on St. George’s Day, bring lamb with them, brandy, young cheese, onion. And everyone would sit at their own table – it was called *astal*. Everyone would sit in its own place. The priest would say the prayer, bless everybody, and then everyone would give him a piece of meat, and then they would have lunch all together. And then those sitting next to each other would offer one another brandy, and would eat together. That was that, let’s call it, ritual.”

“And there was the ritual of visiting those zapises, but that was performed during the religious processions. The religious procession would go from the Cross, with the priest at the front, and the *crossbearer* (a person who carried the cross), and one would carry the church banner. They were followed by the youth. It was usually for the Feast of the Ascension, or some other religious holiday. It depended on which holiday was celebrated in which village. Then women would come out of the houses, throw wheat, flowers, bless them, and then they would go through the fields, and all that with the purpose of having a fruitful year. And *mirom* would always get visited. It was a tree, most often an oak into whose bark a cross was inscribed. They would clean the cross. Pray to God for a little while, and then return again. They would go round the entire village. Come back, and there they would prepare a pottage. A sheep would be slaughtered, and meal would be cooked in a large cauldron, a big pot. The pottage was cooked. And it was cooked by those who were in charge of it. Someone would come out of the house, sit there, bring a bowl, and everyone would get a ladleful. That pottage was called the *prayer*.”

“Gorčince also celebrated St. Panteleon. They would always slaughter a calf and gather in a specific place, they called it the Cross. They would go there, prepare lunch together, that is, dinner. They would always go. Every household would go, bring a bread, and there get a serving of whatever was cooked together and what the priest did bless. That used to be St. Panteleon.”

All interviewees speak of the existence of such practice in the past which is completely lost today.

What can be concluded when it comes to the celebration of rural pageants in the region of Lužnica is their worldliness. Cheerfulness is always emphasized, with several accordions playing, a secular place, a plum orchard, a schoolyard where people gather. There is no revitalization, customs are preserved, usually at the social level, without religious elements.

“For example, in Draginac the situation was the same as with us in Gorčince, where the entire village cooked in a single cauldron, ate and shared. And Sveta the nurse tried to spill it, and his fast legs saved him from being caught. But there was enough. It was not officially possible

for them to ban it, for an authority to pass the decision on forbidding it. I think that they didn't have the right to do it, but the police would go around and scatter people, banning the gatherings. A priest was not allowed to go to the Cross where they should gather to cut the bread. That was how they made it possible. Because there was no way to officially pass the decision on banning the whole deal. Lužnica suffered a greater terror, and maybe even the people were liable to reducing the size of the celebration. Maybe it was both. But today it is celebrated in a much smaller scope than it used to be.

My fellow villagers from Gorčince are now trying to do it again. One year they gather, the other they don't. It depends on the company that comes and who organizes it."

Interviewee: pensioner, Gorčince

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

"As the community developed in the economic sense, natural rituals were slowly replaced by social rituals: the memory of the days in the life and death of nature is no longer renewed as much as the memory of the days of glory and downfall of the community (Šušnjić 1998, 167)."

When discussing social and religious elements of celebrating rural and municipal saints' days in Babušnica, one can make the following observations: 1. the level of religiosity is extremely low; 2. forced atheization has had an enormous impact; 3. social elements dominate over religious ones, and 4. the renewal of religiosity in a more substantial scope is prevented by poverty and demographic desolation.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Ph. 1: The Center of Babušnica



Ph. 2: Orthodox Church in Babušnica



Ph. 3: Orthodox Church in Draginac



Ph. 4: Monastery in Gorčince



Ph. 5: Girl in the Women's Folk Costume from Derekula (the area of Zvonce) one Century ago



Ph. 6: The Cross in Aleksandrovac





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## **FOLK CUSTOMS IN EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN SERBIA: WEDDING CUSTOMS AND RITUALS IN THE VILLAGE KORBOVO\***

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Notes about folk customs, usually suppressed under the flows of globalization, represent one of the ways of preserving tradition. The richness of everyday life of people in the past is especially diverse in rural areas of Eastern Serbia. There was a chance to record narration on the customs in the countryside, i.e. wedding customs in Korbovo, a village in the municipality of Kladovo. The intention was to find eloquent respondents who would, in an authentic way, describe thoroughly and without embellishment, how the village residents prepare a wedding and to describe rituals and customs before and after the wedding.

Our respondents were spouses from Korbovo, Marija and Boris Kostadinović. Recommendation to visit these witnesses of old times customs are given by the director of the Cultural center in Kladovo, Mrs Žaklina Nikolić and the president of the ethno ensemble Misia Creativa-Kladovo, Mrs Slavica Boraković (ph. 1).

### **MARIJA AND BORIS TALK ABOUT THEIR WEDDING**

In discussion with our counterparts Marija and Boris Kostadinovic (ph. 2), we learn that they did not have the wedding reception.

“We used to be poor and there were no tents, no cooks like today, pork, bakeries. You burn fire yourself in the oven in order to bake bread first, because for a wedding a lot of bread and ovens are needed and pork should be baked. These were huge expenses and a lot of work, but it was like that in those days...We did not have the wedding reception. We did it just for the family, with no real wedding...”

About the sequence of customs which follow marital relationships Boris Kostadinovic says that it all starts from the marriage proposal:

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"First we propose to the bride, and everything starts from there on. Here is how I got married... The road from my house ran past her house. When I went to the village, school, I passed by her household and her parents would say to her 'see, it would be good if you marry this boy'. Also, my parents were saying to me 'it would be good if you marry this girl'. So, we were prepared for something like that by our parents. I worked in a shop before the wedding in 1963 and I had a bit more authority in the place I live in...'Here, you are getting married to a foreman of a shop' older people used to say to Marija, my future wife. My wife did not complete the elementary education. Later, she did it and she also finished the secondary school of economics in Belgrade, and we worked together in the shop. So we ended our carriers together. We made progress and had two children and five grandchildren. That is our success! And the wedding customs, what can I say. There were weddings for 40 to 50 people. There were no speakers, just tin and village trumpets, a village drummer, live sound. "

Boris adds with melancholy: "When I went to the army I didn't have a ride. My wife put me into the cart, pulled by her parents' horse and that was how I got to Kladovo... and she was pregnant with our daughter then. "

### **WEDDING GUESTS COME ON HORSEBACK**

Marija explained how guests looked like and how they come to the bride.

"Horsemen were going ahead and the rider-guest got a gift, a red or white handkerchief that he put on a horse's reins. Earlier guests who went to the bride did not get towels.

Horsemen made the horses pound the ground in front of the bride's gate. That was the information for the bride that the guests were there. And there were two, three horses and horsemen-guests were in front of other guests, which was very nice. People used to have horses then. A future brother-in-law (the bride's brother) appeared in front of boys-guests and the closed gate, which was usually closed. Then one of the bride's family members asked the guests what they wanted and they answered that they were looking for the bride and that they heard that there was a bride in the house...They say that they heard the bride was very pretty, old enough to get married and that they had a boy for the marriage. Then they ask the guests to pay for the girl in front of the front door of the house, or even at the gate, outside. Once they pay for the bride, each horse is one behind the other, and next to the stairs of the house, they put scarves on horses and riders are happy because that is a reward for going to the wedding... Later on, the bride goes on foot to the church for the wedding because it is not far away; it is in the village Korbovo."

### **DECORATING THE HOUSE AND THE BRIDE'S GOING OUT**

„They put flowers and greenery on the bride's horse fence, but it is not like today. There were no a lot of flowers, but they wanted to have greenery. There were a lot of cattle in the streets and chickens in the



yards, so there were no many flowers or much grass... Greenery is placed around the front door and above the gate. And then the trumpeter and drummers come to inform the whole village that wedding is being prepared. Friends and guests go to the bride, the brother-in-law, the bridesman, the best man. The best man is the most important person on the wedding, then the brother-in-law, the standard-bearer. The bride's parents usually don't visit the groom's parents before the end of the wedding“

Marija says, describing the bride's accessories (ph. 3):

”It was supposed for the wedding dress to be white, people didn't have that much money and material for white clothes, but white blouse and the veil were mandatory. It was not important if it was the quality material. It was important to be white because white meant joy. Other parts of clothes were made of velvet, the skirt was made of velvet, and the blouse was white... Then the godmother enters and carries a tray with gifts for the bride. She is carrying a cloth or velvet, two meters of velvet and a veil. If the bride doesn't have a veil (ph. 4), the godmother puts it over the bride's hand. While she is carrying it, she is boasting of the cloth being made of velvet. That is considered to be a nice cloth and the sign that the godmother is rich. If it is made of silk that means the godmother is not rich and such a gift is not enough for the bride. When you come to the bride, the godmother or another person who made the veil put it on and the jewelry as well. They put a handmade white lace with three strips, one bigger, then smaller, then bigger on the bride. The bride is sitting on a chair and the others are preparing her. Then 'jazmir jase zovu bur' starts to play.

That is the Vlach song and it means something like this:

'Bride, take a nice day,  
A good day from parents,  
From brothers and sisters  
And from flower garden'

This song, think our respondents, should fill the bride with a sense of happiness which she experienced in her parents' house and that it would be he present for the future life.” Remember all good things in life, from house, she takes that from her house, carries with herself a beautiful day so she could be happy.“

The song implies an obligation of a mother-in-law to protect the bride like her daughter:

“And while the music plays,  
Tell your husband's mother  
To look after her like her daughter”.

That is a nice Vlach melody which was used to send the bride off from her parents' house.

### THE BRIDE'S GOING INTO THE GROOM'S HOUSE

When the bride is ready, she is going out with the best man, holding him under his arm, to her mother's yard and gives presents to her best man and godmother, aunts, uncles and other relatives and neighbors (ph. 5). The she gives presents to her and groom's guests. She goes to the groom's house and then to the wedding. Now people get married in a church, it was not like that before... Now there is no marriage without church! There is almost no wedding. It is like that with us. Baptism, marriage, not without church, younger, students, intelligent people, everybody goes to church.

After the church wedding, they all go to the groom's. There, the mother-in-law is waiting at the stairs for the bride and guests to come. The bride throws a sieve on the roof, and stands in front of the house. There used to be a small wooden table where the bride used to be turned around, and the mother-in-law and the brother-in-law, who wears a towel and a pitcher with brandy for a toast with the bride's parents, to call for treat, to say that the bride is as sweet as the brandy.

Boris Kostadinović says:

“So how can I say the bride is turned around on the table, so happiness could turn around in the yard, house, so the bride and others in the house are happy. It is said that the bride is turned around on so that she is hard-working and agile around the house.

Then they start from the house with music and invite guests to the wedding reception, and in the evening guests arrive... Now people only give invitation cards to guests... The brother-in-law, standard-bearer, and groom and father-in-law could go and invite guests. If the wedding is big, then there are several groups which go to different parts of the village to invite guests as soon as possible. There was no electricity then, only gas lamps used for having dinners. The wedding lasts for 3 days. From Saturday evening, then Sunday lunch, and on Monday all women wear traditional costumes.

The same guests come to the groom's three days and the bride's guests come on a third day. During this time, at the bride's parents there was a wedding, with drums and on the third day, on Monday the bride's family visit the groom's and they gathered together and partied... Now the wedding reception is ended on the second day or more likely on the first day with a complete wedding ceremony “.

### SHOWING GIFTS

When, on the third day of the celebration, all guests gather together to rejoice, newlyweds are placed in the middle. Next to the groom are his best man and the others and next to the bride are her hers. Then they dance “kolo”, give presents to the groom's parents-shirts (ph. 6), towels, woolen socks, and weaved pillows, big ones, which is a sign that the bride is from a rich house, because she gave expensive gifts to the father-in-law and others... When giving presents, the bride kisses the hand of the one giving them and

that person gives money to the bride. A musician or a guest reads the names of those giving presents, what they brought and how much it is worth. Then, what the bridesman and other guests brought. The one with a strong voice says then "100.000 dinars from the best man, than from the bridesman... and so on up to the neighbors .During the day, money was read, in the evening house appliances. For example this guest brought two plates, it was like that earlier, or a pot and then they started giving stoves, cupboards...

### WEDDING SONGS FROM KORBOVO

Marija says:

"There are a lot of those songs, but I don't know all of them. To the bride, it is sung 'take a good day from home, nice day'...so she can go to the nice day and to bring it into another house, as her parents and siblings' gift in the garden with flowers...

The mother-in-law waits for the bride at the front door and gives a sieve to the bride so she could throw it. Then they break bread into four pieces and throw on four sides and guests try to grab pieces because that is good for preserving health and treatment of sick people. It is said 'you ate braid's bread, so you won't get sick' After the mother-in-law pulls the bride and the groom inside the house. She gives them home-made bread under the arm or today, a loaf of bread and a bottle of wine, offers them honey when they enter the house. And they close the door after the bride enters, so she can't get out of the house.

Then a kolo is played in the room, two or three musicians play inside and the others' outside. The mother-in-law and the bride dance and sing "dance the mother-in-law, your shirt which the bride gave to you is nice, but it is not yours, today it gives you, tomorrow takes away."

Vlach kolos are played. There is a child, male child. The mother-in-law places the child into her lap so she can raise him and that means she would give birth to a boy. A child gets clothes or knitted socks.

They sing „Aj Marije, lapadurje“<sup>1</sup>, which goes like this in Serbian:

„Come on, Marija to the woods. My love,  
Come on Marija with the axe to the woods, my love.  
I am not inviting you to work, I'm inviting you come with love  
My beautiful, my dear.  
Let's go to the woods Marija  
Let's go but I don't have the axe.  
I'm not inviting you to chop wood, my beautiful, my dear  
I'm not inviting you chop wood, but to make love.  
My beautiful, my dear.  
Let's go to the woods Marija  
Let's go but I don't have the axe.  
I'm not inviting you to chop wood, my beautiful, my dear  
I'm not inviting you chop wood, but to make love“.

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<sup>1</sup> The song means „Let's go Marija to the woods to make love“

Perhaps this translation is not the best. Our mother tongue is Vlach and we started speaking Serbian later at school, but our Vlach is never forgotten. We can speak Vlach, but can't write or read it. Vlach songs are sung on the weddings, there is a couple nearby. The husband is the accordion player and his wife sings Vlach song very nice on the weddings. The tradition of Vlach songs is preserved in Korbovo, while listening to them, people are relaxed and cheerful and Vlach songs "pull money out of your pockets easily"... You can hear them on weddings usually. We have TV station Kladovo, say our respondents, but also some Romanian ones – their first and second channel and TV Krajova from Romania. Every Saturday at 8, we listen to their folk music in the show „Odata vijaca“, that is once in a life time... and then there are folk performers and they sing folk songs only in folk costumes. It is the unwritten rule; you can't sign a folk song if you are not wearing folk costume.

### THE BRIDE'S TASKS IN THE NEW HOUSE

Marija Kostadinović (ph. 7) ends her story:

„Right the next day she starts with the work around the house. She brings water from the well or the Danube, as the youngest in the house. On leaving her parents' house, her mother advised her to be hard-working, get up before others, not to go to bed before others, 'when the lamp goes out, then you lie down...' She brings water, knead bread, bakes it, cooks, earlier there were no stoves, there were ovens... The mother advised 'you go and take the broom, sweep on your first day show what you are like, so they don't force you something', brides didn't just sit idly like today...They took children to the field, in a wooden crib. In our area we didn't take cribs on our backs with a rope, we put them on a cart and when it was sunny, we made shade for a child or put the crib under the cart or a tree...”

### CONCLUSION

Wedding customs is hard to observe outside the context of marriage, marital and family relations, especially in those cultural areas where marital life of spouses starts long before the wedding, as is the custom among the Vlachs at the territory of Kljuc (in Ključ villages).

According to D. Drljača (1979, 85) in Ključ villages the appearance of early unmarried relationships, even more than one marriage, different approaches to the wedding

“from long delays to expensive and lavish celebrations are common. The right time for a wedding nunta used to be late autumn or after Christmas and before Easter fasting, on Sundays only.

Today there is a shift of time schedule, but the custom to have a three-day wedding is still present, and the most important wedding customs are: going to the best man, the bride's taking water, overcoming obstacles in the bride's house (closed gate, hidden bride), the ritual of folk

wedding, i.e. placing the wreath and veil on the bride's head and singing of the guests, the bride's giving presents, the bride's parents forgiveness, blessing the newlyweds and the bride's breaking the bread, transport of the bride's possessions to the groom's house".

The character of social relations and the type of family organization are exercising a strong influence on the choice of the marriage partner. Marriage is often accompanied by so-called agreement of families of future newlyweds, which included the agreement on dowry and other benefits for the groom's family. From the perspective of social development in the modern times, the remains of these wedding customs in some parts of Serbia are seen as an expression of traditionalism that strains relation between the couple and represents something with negative connotation. If, however, we recall the fact that marriage in traditional societies is the possibility of improving social status of families that are establishing kinship relation through marriage relations, then it is easy to conclude that getting married is linked to having benefits, i.e. to improving financial position, prestige and power of families in the society.

Each model of culture, depending on historical and regional characteristics of the area where it develops, produces its own wedding customs and associated rituals, which can be very complicated or very unusual and their main purpose is to increase the importance of marital relationships and highlight the importance of fulfilling the entire spectrum of obligations, duties and rights arising from it.

In modern societies, former wedding customs take on a character of "anachronisms and remains of the past which should be given up", however, many of them survived the so-called clash with modern notions about marriage and convenient manner of execution and the way how should the following wedding ceremony look like: The heritage of wedding customs is preserved even today. The preserving wedding customs and their practice by new generations shows that modern cultural model of Serbian society, if we can speak about one, and not more, preserved "patriarchal mentality and the wedding is still a matter of families and not married couple" (Mladenović 1995, 196). Not engaging in the debate about real reasons for preserving wedding customs, it can be concluded, with a reason, that their generation passing on is one of the ways how to maintain the established cultural identity and the actual cultural contact between generations.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Ph 1: Žaklina Nikolić with Slavica Boraković in head-office of 'Misia Creative'



Ph. 2: Marija and Boris Kostadinovic in their home



Ph. 3: Women bride cloths in Gallery, Kladovo



Ph. 4: Wedding dress, old more than 120<sup>th</sup> years from Korbovo, in Kostadinovic property



Ph. 5: Vlach wedding, with women in national dresses from Korbovo



Ph. 6: Men cloths for weddings, in Gallery



Ph. 7: Marija Kostadinović, Njegos Dragović and Boris Kostadinović







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## WEDDING CUSTOMS IN THE VILLAGE OF BOŽICA\*

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### INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to *Marriage Customs of the World: from Henna to Honeymoons*, George P. Monger (2004, ix) claims that “the propensity of human beings to form partnerships and establish family units is almost universal, and often in establishing these marriage partnerships, some form of ceremony is carried out”. He adds that there are notable similarities of ideas and symbolism across cultures in these ceremonies and in most of them, the ceremony is usually a public event so that the community to which the couple belongs can witness the union. The existing cross-cultural differences frequently reflect cultural and religious views of marriage and the role of the two parties in society.

According to the same author, marriage customs or ceremonies may have the following functions: (1) Ceremonies and customs can be a public announcement to the community that a new family unit has been established; (2) they can help the couple set up home as an independent economic unit; (3) they are popular adjuncts to the legal requirement; (4) they are frequently believed to bring luck and good fortune to the couple and the new family unit. Wedding customs are very frequently linked with superstition, as consistent logic is not a constant feature of folk belief. In *Happy is the Bride the Sun Shines On: Wedding Beliefs, Customs, and Traditions*, Leslie Jones (1995, ix) notes that “superstitions invariably focus on things over which we have no control the weather, death, the fertility of plants, animals, and people, but especially matters of the heart [...] for these reasons, that major rite of passage, marriage, generates thousands of superstitions and beliefs.” These superstitions seem to be intensified forms of beliefs found in everyday life.

Although there are very many universal characteristics related to weddings, every nation seems to be proud of their own wedding peculiarities. These peculiarities, however, seem to die away with the emerging process of modernization. There are practically no European societies isolated from the influences of other cultures. Consequently, wedding practices may change over time through political and external influences. Today’s customs are mu-

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ch different from those which used to be practiced fifty years ago and they represent a mixture of convenient elements from the west and from our own culture. This is why it is important to keep track of the old customs – one of the ways to do so is to explore these customs in remote villages, where they seem to have “survived the assaults of modernity”. Božica is one of the remote villages in the municipality of Surdulica, located close to the border with Bulgaria – for years it has been neglected by the authorities and, therefore, the process of modernization has not had an important role in it.

### **BOŽICA**

The village of Božica (ph. 1) is situated in the southern part of the Municipality of Surdulica. Its districts are peculiar due to the fact that some of them contain only a single household. Generally speaking, the houses in the village are quite basic, since the majority of its inhabitants live there only during the spring-summer season. The houses range from log cabins and cottages to town houses. Some of them come with additional facilities, such as barns, stables or special bread furnaces made of stone. The village is connected to the neighbouring villages by means of rural roads. The area abounds in forests, which are of great value to the locals. Furthermore, the stretch between Božica and Palja is rich in medicinal herbs, and flora and fauna in general. Many people gather the herbs and other forest fruits for the purpose of selling them later. Forests are also important for the ecology of the running waters, as well as for the protection of the region from water and snow erosion, deflation and landslides. The locals also use the forest area for hunting, sports and recreation. The village of Božica (its central part) is a compact settlement which has a school, an ambulance, a post office, several stores, village churches (the old and the new one), a community centre and a tavern. As for the industrial production, the village has a wood processing plant and a floorboard factory.

The village has 290 inhabitants who make their living mostly by growing fruit and vegetables, gather medicinal herbs and forest fruits. Some inhabitants are farmers and they mostly keep cows, sheep and goats. The forests are predominantly made up of conifers and beeches. One of the most appealing characteristics of this area, which could have a significant tourist potential, are the wild horses, which roam the region freely.

Apart from the regional R-122 asphalt concrete road which is in good condition, this area has several other, mostly village roads, leading to Kolutnica, Zlatanovi, Lisac, Dejanovi, Pobit kamen and Gornji Topli dol. All of these are in rather poor condition, lack road signs, horizontal and vertical road markings, as well as landslide and avalanche protection.

The 2002 census showed that the population of Božica was 333, out of which the majority comprised Bulgarians (216) and Serbs (93). There was also one Macedonian living in Božica at the time and the rest of the population refused to reveal their national identity. The population was described as heterogeneous and constantly decreasing. The average number of inhabi-

tants per household was estimated at 2.47. The median age of the inhabitants was 47.3 years.

In Božica, the locals celebrate Petrovdan (St. Peter's Day) on 12 July, and this gathering always attracts a great crowd, including the people from the neighbouring villages. On this day the village traditionally organises many sports events. Many couples also choose this particular day to organise their wedding (ph. 2). The village has its river, which is surprisingly clear and has a number of confluences in the form of small streams.

Until twenty to thirty years ago, the district of Božica used to have very lively wedding customs, which are now in danger due to the extremely small number of weddings in this area. The beauty of the ritualistic customs certainly deserves a study of its own, but this paper will be dealing with the most important wedding-related traditions in this area.

### **THE THRESHOLD CUSTOMS**

Every wedding begins by a bride coming to the groom's house (but not coming inside/crossing the threshold at this stage), where she meets her mother-in-law to be. The groom's mother wears a colourful woven bag on her shoulder, with a home-made scone inside it. In her hand she holds a pail of water and in the close vicinity there has to be a bowl of butter or fat and a sieve with wheat. The bride approaches her future mother in law, kisses her hand first, and then exchanges three kisses on the cheeks with her, which is a part of the Serbian tradition. The mother-in-law then blesses the bride and hangs the bag with the scone on her (bride's) right shoulder. The bride then starts pouring the water from the pail, while her mother-in-law gives blessings by repeating: "May everything in your household run as smoothly as water". After this, the bride takes the butter or fat and spreads it onto the top part of the front door, while her mother-in-law utters the following words: "May all the things in life run smoothly for you". The mother-in-law then takes the sieve and starts tossing the wheat around, repeating the following: "May you bear as many children as the wheat yields crops". The next thing she needs to do is to give a white scarf to the bride as a gift and put another one over her son's shoulder, welcoming them officially to her home. Only then does the bride cross the threshold and enter the house, where the tables have already been laid for the wedding guests. It is believed that houses in which these rituals are not performed will not have good fortune.

### **THE WEDDING FEAST**

The weddings are traditionally organised on Sundays. The wedding feast is laid in the groom's house (ph. 3), usually in the biggest room. The central positions at the table are always reserved for the best man and the maid of honour, and right next to them the so-called "stari svat" and "starosvatika", who are the second pair of witnesses of the wedding ceremony. The feast traditionally begins with starters, after which the bride's brother(s)-in-law bring her from the room she was in into the room where the feast is taking

place and where she greets the guests by kissing their hands, and in turn gets gifts (primarily money) from them. The “reception” lasts till midnight.

The celebration is never complete without traditional folk dances, which the guests perform in the yard. The wedding bands hired for the celebration are almost exclusively brass bands. The drums usually echo through the village, because it is very important for the hosts that as many people as possible find out that a wedding is taking place. Hours after midnight, the newly-weds say goodbye to their parents, the best man and the maid of honour, and go to a separate room to spend their first night together.

### THE WEDDING NIGHT

It seems that the wedding customs in Božica reflect Monger’s claim that “marriage and weddings are often portrayed as female events, as there is usually more preparation for the woman than for the man, and the woman’s preparations are often more elaborate” (Monger 2004, xi). This particular aspect of the ceremony has always had the greatest importance, since that is the night when the bride’s “chastity” is put to test in order to see whether she is entering her new home as a virgin. It is believed that if the bride isn’t chaste, the couple’s offspring will have poor health, and consequently that the marriage itself will not last. With the help of her closest friends and bridesmaids, the bride traditionally puts on a special shirt (which later on serves as evidence of “chastity” if there are bloody traces on it). The women who attends the wedding helps both the bride and the groom take off any article of clothing that was “tied” (e.g. shoelaces, tie, etc.) in order to “untie, i.e. break the evil spells” that could have potentially been cast upon the couple. Their task is also to give detailed instructions to the bride on what to do and how to behave on their first night together.

If the groom is pleased after their first night together, he fires from a gun or a rifle, and the bride changes into a different shirt. And if the bride proved that she was “chaste”, a big celebration would begin once again in the groom’s house. The bride then puts boxwood leaves behind the guests’ ears and a strong plum brandy is served to everyone. The drums resume beating even louder and the folk dances are performed to the music with even more fervour than before. However, if the bride did not prove to be “chaste”, there would be no resumption of the celebration, and in some cases the mother-in-law would curse the bride.

The wedding night shirt is later on taken to the bride’s mother as a sort of credit to her for having raised her daughter well and having sent her to her new home as a virgin. Usually the groom’s brother gets the task of doing this. For this event, he adorns his horse with various ornaments and curiously he has to pretend to be slightly insane while riding to the bride’s house, such is the custom. He would take his rifle with him and fire shots all the way to the bride’s house. Furthermore, his “insanity” would manifest itself as him pretending not to know which house he is going to and therefore straying into various houses in the neighbourhood. The whole purpose of the pretend insanity is to show off in front of as many people as possible. Even-

tually, he arrives at the bride's house and usually enters it on the horse. Needless to say, he receives a warm welcome, and a table with various types of food is immediately laid in front of him. After everyone has had a chance to check the wedding night shirt to make sure the bride really was "chaste", the bride's family starts serving hot plum brandy.

### **TAKING THE BRIDE TO THE STREAM**

Taking the bride to the stream (or other available source of running water) is a remnant of the Old Slavic customs, since the Slavs associated running water with life and living. Only the brides who had proven their chastity are taken to the stream. At dawn the wedding guests would head, together with the bride, for the nearest stream, or any source of running water. The procession is normally headed by a guest bearing a Serbian flag, who is followed by the groom's brothers and the band. The band plays love songs and ballads, celebrating the fact that the bride will bear healthy and strong children (since she was chaste).

Once they arrive at the stream, the bride turns to face the sun and bows three times. This act symbolises her gratitude to God for enlightening her mind and keeping her chaste, by not letting her succumb to the temptations of the flesh. Then she takes a pail and fills it up with water which she spills twice. The third time she fills it up, she takes this water back to the groom's house, as well as to the new home that she will be sharing with her husband. When the ritual is finished, the whole procession takes a different route back into the village, as it is believed that this protects them from the evil spells (ph. 4).

### **CONCLUSIONS**

When we compare the customs and habits listed above to the modern rituals we find in today's weddings, we can see that some of the (less demanding) ones have been retained, though there are those which were slightly changed in order to meet the demands of the modern man. For instance, the wedding feast and blessings are still there, but they are now transferred to a modern environment. On the other hand, testing the chastity of the bride would be considered a discriminatory ritual in our modern society and it seems to have completely disappeared not only from these parts, but also from other regions of Serbia. Rituals such as "taking the bride to the stream" and some of the threshold customs are more or less restricted to the rural environment and they fade away with the increasing number of families moving from villages to cities. On the whole, we may conclude that the survival of wedding customs is determined by the way it fits the modern requirements of a community, by the difficulty of the procedure and by its symbolism and relevance to the very process of getting married. In regard to this, we may claim that Božica can serve as a good reference point to those who want to compile and compare the detailed lists of the old and the new wedding customs.

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- Najdan Stojanović, interviewed by Marija Stanković on 2 January 2012 (the authors received the transcript of the interview)
- The Official Website of the Municipality of Surdulica: <http://www.surdulica.org/> (as accessed on 10 April 2012)

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Ph. 1: *The entrance to the centre of the village*



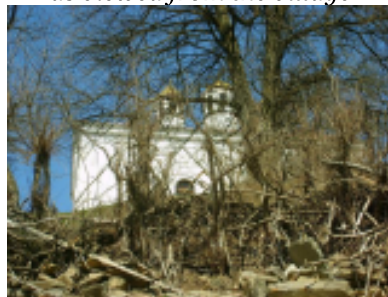
Ph. 2: *The new church in Božica (Vassia Atanassova, 20 Jun 2009)*



Ph. 3: *Houses in Božica's mahala*



Ph. 4: *The new church in Božica as viewed from the village*



Petko Hristov

**RELIGIOUS MARKERS OF IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF LABOUR MOBILITY IN WESTERN MACEDONIA, BULGARIA AND EASTERN SERBIA\***

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Traditional patterns of trans-border seasonal labour mobility involving the majority of the male population of entire regions has existed for centuries on the Balkans, especially in the mountain parts of the peninsula. A specific model of *gurbet* subculture was formed, which the men brought with themselves to the big city and which also transformed the traditional cultural patterns in their home villages. The main principle of traditional temporary labour migrations was that men earn “there” (in the city or abroad) but feed their families “here”, in the home villages. I’ve already discussed some of the questions raised by the study of the so-called “Balkan migration culture” in my previous publications (Hristov 2008, 179-188; Hristov 2009a, 109-126).

This century-long traditional model of “migration culture” (*gurbet* culture’) was transformed several times during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this process, an interesting phenomenon can be witnessed: drastic historical changes do not automatically lead to changes in the nature of temporary labour mobility, and many of the old tendencies were preserved under new political conditions. It is true that a drastic decrease in trans-border labour mobility of men from the studied regions occurred as a consequence of the new political borders after the Balkan Wars and World War One, along with restrictive national legislation in individual states and the complex political environment in most Balkan countries (both victorious and defeated in the wars), further intensified by nationalist propaganda. According to Michael Palairet, during the period between the two world wars the Balkan market for seasonal trans-border migrants virtually collapsed (Palairet 1987, 34).

Because of this, the model of temporary labour among men from these regions changed: their seasonal movement was redirected towards big cities at the hearts of their own countries. However, this mobility pattern still had the traditional characteristics of temporary labour – men were earning in the city but their families stayed at their home villages, where the men returned to spend the inactive winter months. The increase of “internal” tem-

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porary labour migrations, however, prepared the social conditions for permanent emigration towards the cities that became a fact after World War Two and was stimulated by the intense industrialisation programmes of the new socialist governments of Bulgaria and Tito's Yugoslavia.

The nature of labour migrations, their destinations and intensiveness changed once more during the 1960s, when countries in Western Europe began hiring legal guest workers (*gastarbeiters*) from Turkey and Yugoslavia. After the 1970s, these workers got the opportunity to take their families with them and settle permanently in the host country. These migrational processes became more frequent during the 1990s, the "decade of transition", and also involved other Balkan countries such as Albania, Bulgaria and Romania.

In my article I will show just some fragments of my fieldwork observations made during 2001, 2005 and 2009 on the culture of home-returning *gastarbeiters* in Eastern Serbia and the Western part of Macedonia.

The questions that my research raises are as follows. Is it possible to speak of continuity in the cultural models of labour mobility in certain regions of the Balkans (inspired by Caroline Brettell's ideas – cf. Brettell 2003, 3)? Does century-long continuity exist in the development of seasonal/temporary labour migrations (mainly among the men – cf. Palaret 1987, 33)? To what extent does local ethno-cultural affiliation and traditions of labour mobility determine the young men's migration strategies? Are the social networks, both completed and under construction, based on village or on family-kin affiliation? What is the role of religion for constructing one's own identity, both abroad and in the local village? How does the long-term migrant take care of his local community's "places of memory" (*lieux de mémoire*, as church, chapel, mosque) once he returns, and why is this a part of the identity he acquired while "looking in the mirror of otherness" in the conditions of labour migration?

The main question is: how does this "life-in-motion" lead to changes in the everyday life and the cultural specifics of local communities in certain regions as a consequence of social and economic transformations during the last few decades? Are the new temporary labour migrants from Bulgaria going to follow the experience of the *gastarbeiters* from former Yugoslavia, or will they choose permanent migration?

After the end of World War Two, regions from the central part of the Balkans went into the borders of the new "People's republics", which dramatically changed the situation on the labour market and the character of labour relations in Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia. The accelerated industrialization of the 1950s turned seasonal migrants into "socialist workers" and resulted in mass depopulation of villages. Becoming city dwellers, migrants brought to big cities their families and gradually lost their connection to the land. Only elderly people remained in the villages.

During the decades of socialism, considerable internal migration was occurring in Bulgaria – at first in the general "village-city" direction, and in the later decades before the democratic changes of the 1990s, in a "region-region" direction as well (Guentcheva 2008). Considerable changes occurred with regards to feminisation: in the case of Bulgaria, one could see women's



strengthening participation in both internal labour migrations from the village to the city and in everyday labour mobility. The concluded migrant profile in Bulgaria during the socialist period was “female, young, native villager, married, with primary education, working in the industry” (Guentcheva 2008). This trend was preserved in the new social environment during the 1990s, when trans-border mobility to EU countries considerably outweighed internal migrations.

The century-old model of seasonal labour migration was also reversed during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the countries of former Yugoslavia. Starting in the 1960s it began with the recruitment of migrant workers by some Western European countries and, through family reunification in the 1970s, the process then continued, with most Western European countries becoming countries of immigration (Guentcheva, Kabakchieva and Kolarski 2003). During this period, temporary migrants from the territory of former Yugoslavia settled down permanently in Western Europe, mainly in the Federal Republic of Germany. Being invited as legal workers for a certain period of time because of the need of labour force in some economic sectors, *gastarbeiters* from the Balkans soon brought their families along and emigrated permanently in the host country. West Germany “shared” the model and the designation *gastarbeiter* of the “temporary” labour migrants with the rest of the West-European countries. This also radically changed the model of the (temporarily) separated families in the regions I have studied, especially in Macedonia. The traditional *gurbet* model of seasonal migrations and labour outside the region (the families stay in their home places and the men earn abroad, but send money and spend what they have earned at home), was transformed from the beginning of the 1970s into the *pechalbar*’s model of the *gastarbeiter* culture.

Today, many of these *pechalbar*’s villages are already deserted. Nevertheless, nostalgia for the home place still remains – some of these *gastarbeiters* at the end of their lives return from all over the world to their villages in order to die “at home”. In Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia there are also villages which have been completely abandoned for decades, but every year the local people get back there for the patron saint’s feast in order to make the collective offering (*kurban*) and the common table “as if the village were still there” (Hristov 2007, 254).

We can conclude that the prolonged presence of part of ex-Yugoslavia’s *gastarbeiters* in Germany’s multicultural environment led them to actualize their kin networks and local identity, related to their birthplaces on the Balkans. Once they returned to their native villages after retirement, these people at first renovated their own houses and bought homes in the city nearby. Later, though, the former *gastarbeiters* took it as a duty to renovate and continuously preserve the religious (in this case Orthodox Christianity and Islam) and the ritual sacred places of the family and the local community.

A few examples from my field-work.

**CASE 1.**

In the village of Targovište, near Knjaževac, in Eastern Serbia, a former worker in the Mercedes concern who returned from Germany renovated the family chapel (*zavetina*) during the 1990s, considering this as an important “obligation” (ph. 1). This family chapel was built in 1866, as seen from an inscription in the stone cross (ph. 2), and every year the family celebrated their *slava* by the cross: the feast consisted was carried out by “pouring” wine over the ritual bread (*kolach*), dividing it and giving the pieces to family members on the patron saint’s day (in this case, St. George). The retired *gastarbeiter* not only renovated the chapel but also kept the tradition of holding the family’s *slava* near the cross (this was in 2001).

In comparison: the condition of a similar but non-renovated 19<sup>th</sup> (ph. 3) century family chapel in the same village, now part of the city of Knjaževac.

**CASE 2.**

In Halovo village (near Zaječar) which has Wallachian population, a *gastarbeiter* gold-plated the entire iconostasis in the village church upon returning from Germany (ph. 4). According to his fellow villagers, he did this as an act of gratitude to God that he managed to earn enough money in Germany and to return in good health to his native village.

**CASE 3.**

In 2001, in Vevčani, Western Macedonia, a *gastarbeiter* who returned from Germany had begun renovating the special “*pečalbar*” chapel high in the mountain (ph. 5). The Chapel was dedicated to *Spasovden* (Ascension Day), but celebrations were carried out in January when the *gastarbeits* returned home for the Christmas holidays.

In the case of Vevčani, the male population of which has century-long traditions in temporary and seasonal labour migrations to both neighbour Balkan countries and to Germany, Austria and Switzerland, this chapel is a typical “*lieux de mémoire*”, an important part of the migrants’ collective memory and identity (Hristov 2009b, 93). In the spirit of “invented” traditions, the traditional feast calendar in Vevčani has been transformed in such a way as to concentrate all important family holidays during the winter months, when men were at home. That is why the “*pečalbar Spasovden*” is celebrated in January, on the Thursday before St. Athanasius’s Day, in order to ensure good health and success to the men going on *gurbet*.

**CASE 4.**

In Mešeišta village, north of Struga, the traditional empty “*pečalbar*” grave in the local church yard was renovated during the 1990s and a new tombstone was placed with the inscription “*Jabandjijski grob*” (ph. 6). There, beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, relatives carried out all posthumous ritual practices that the Orthodox tradition had for *pečalbars* who died ab-road.

Maintaining sacred places that are related to folk religiousness and have become important markers of local identity is typical not only of Orthodox Christians. I witnessed a similar process of special care being taken for local cult places by home-returning *gastarbeiters* during the summer of 2009 over the course of my fieldwork in the villages of Western Macedonia, inhabited by Slavic-speaking Muslims (so-called *torbeši*).

#### CASE 5.

In the villages of Macedonian Muslims in Western Macedonia, returning *gastarbeiters* restored not only the village mosques and minarets (ph. 7) but also the Christian chapels (ph. 8), visited by both Muslims and Christians. My example is from Janče village where, in addition to the modernised mosque, Muslims also endow the chapel of St. Elijah's Day. It is visited by infertile women, both Christian and Muslim, who are hoping for God's help to conceive.

In the villages of Macedonian Muslims, labour mobility by generations of *pečalbars* has a notable cultural influence, seen not only in everyday life but also in architecture, even that of religious sites. As an example I can point out the clock tower in the mosque yard in Debar, North-western Macedonia: one clearly sees the Mediterranean influence from Northern Italy, which is the primary *gurbet* destination for local builders (ph. 9).

Within the same village – in this case, Broštica, near Debar, with Macedonian Muslim population – by looking at a house's architecture, one can determine where the *gurbet* (labour migration) destination was: the Austrian Alps or Italy (ph. 10 and ph. 11).

There are other examples and regional cases, but what is truly notable for the researcher is that all *gastarbeiters* developed a strong local identity that was related to Orthodox and/or Muslim cult places. My interpretation is that by seeing themselves in "the mirror of otherness" in the multicultural environment of Germany and other European countries these people from the Balkans discovered a strong bond with their birthplaces in the mountainous regions of the peninsula.

When talking about their Albanian neighbours, also fellow migrants in Italy, the *torbeši* point out that there is notable distance between them despite the shared religion, mainly because of the Albanians' different national identity. In the Albanian village of Radolišta, located close to Struga, I witnessed this myself: the *gastarbeiters* had restored the local mosque in a very indicative way (ph. 12).

In Bulgaria, in the years of transition during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, labour mobility of Bulgarians reproduced a number of features of the described trans-frontier *gurbet* model, but with some new elements, known from the *gastarbeiter* culture of temporary labour migrants from former Yugoslavia. At first, groups of several men, but recently more and more often also groups of married women, leave their home places to work in the countries of Western Europe and send money for the support of their

families in Bulgaria. During the 1990s, the predominant trans-border labour migration away from Bulgaria was illegal – people arrived at the host country as “tourists” and their families stayed back in their home places on the Balkans. Later, temporary labour migration developed on the classical scheme of “chain migration”. In some cases their families come to live with them in the accepting country, but even then, the aspiration to return to the motherland, including the desire to flaunt the success, achieved “in *gurbet*”, still remains.

The new opportunities for legal work in many countries that EU membership has given to Bulgaria will show what the trends in the development of migrational processes and labour mobility are. Contemporary financial crisis and labour market limitations in many of the host countries has led in the past few months to the return of a large number of *gurbet* workers in Bulgaria, especially from Mediterranean countries. Soon it will be clear as to whether the “look at the otherness” in Greece, Italy, Spain and other countries will lead to a strengthened bond to one’s own native roots.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Ph. 1: Family Chapel in Targovište



Ph. 2: The Stone Cross in the Family Chapel in Targovište



Ph. 3: Non-renovated 19<sup>th</sup>-century family chapel in Targovište



Ph. 4: Iconostasis in the village church in Halovo



Ph. 5: The special “pečalbar” chapel in the Vevčani



Ph. 6: “Jabandjijski grob” in Mešešte



Ph. 7: The village mosque in the  
Janče



Ph. 8: The Christian chapel in  
Janče



Ph. 9: The clock tower in the  
mosque yard in Debar



Ph. 10: The house's architecture in  
Broštica



Ph. 11: The house's architecture  
in Broštica



## ABSTRACTS

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Sergej Flere

### BASIC FORMS OF TERRITORIALISATION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN EUROPE

#### Summary

In Europe, during the formation of modern society, until contemporary time, basic models of territorial extent of religious life have come about: (1) the Augsburg-Westphalia (2) the Eastern Orthodox and (3) the one typical of globalisation, which has not articulated itself fully. The prior two have impacted upon the development of religious and social life, as they do today as well. In spite of its different intent, the first one opened the way to religious pluralization and the assertion of individual liberty. Today, fundamental changes are under way regarding the territoriality of religious life. Although one may note the phenomenon of regarding the religiously other neighbour as enemy, the basic trend, being also the foundation of the model, is to be found in the trend of competition of religions and groups regardless of state borders. The practice of the European Court of Human Rights in interpreting the European Convention of Human Rights contributes in this direction. Religious groups catering for a charismatic and emotional religiosity have a certain advantage, although a variety of religions use this Court to protect their rights. Nevertheless, the third model is not yet clear in its delineation..

**Key Words:** Europe, models of territorial extent, religious life.

### ОСНОВНИ ОБРАСЦИ ТЕРИТОРИЈАЛИЗАЦИЈЕ ВЕРСКОГ ЖИВОТА У ЕВРОПИ

#### Резиме

У Европи су се током формирања модерног друштва, а до данашњег времена исказали основни обрасци територијалног уређења територијалног распрострањања религије: (1) аугсбуршко-вестфалски (2) православни и (3) својствен глобализацији, који се није потпуно артикулисао. Прва два модела су утицали на развој верског, али и целокупног друштвеног живота, а то чине и данас. Упркос другачијој намери, први је допринео верском плурализму и афирмацији индивидуалне слободе. Данас се одвијају темељне промене у погледу територијалности религијског живота, указујући са црте трећег модела. Мада постоји и појава схватања суседа друге вере као непријатеља, основна тенденција јесте такмичење религија у придобивању верника независно од државних граница. Томе доприноси и пракса Европског суда за људска права, тумачећи Европску конвенцију о људским правима. У томе предност имају верске заједнице које остварују харизматичну и емоционалну религиозност, мада се различите верске заједнице служе тим судом у заштити својих права. Ипак, трећи модел се још није јасно исцртао.

**Кључне речи:** Европа, обрасци територијалног распрострањања, верски живот.

Ivan Cvitković

### THE RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AT “THE BORDER“ – AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER

#### Summary

*A few lines on religious/confessional identities amongst collective identities.* The collective identity, independent from ourselves; the collective identity as a result of the choice, then on a forced identity. The difference is based upon faith in God in the confessional identity, i.e. confessional affiliation. A place of religious-confessional identity in multiplication of identities. The non-grounds of a priori attitude to the collective identity as something that is anachronism. Being occupied with identities.

*The religious/confessional identities at the „the border“.* The importance of the „border“. Why is the „border“ important for the *religious/confessional identity*? There is a high level of self-identification at the “border”. The research *Religious and national relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (1987) has shown that the level of a confessional self-identification was four times higher than self-identification in a form of “I am a believer”. A need to emphasise displaying (claiming) the identity at the “border”. Or, could it be that, perhaps, people at the “border” experience easier their religion, like one of possible options, than their co-believers that are far away from the “border”? Sensitivity of the identity at the “border” to its denial. “Bordering” religious communities are in principle, more conservative and cautious in the encounter with other values and identities (fear for the survival). Those communities are turned more into the past (like the Catholic Church and the Serb Orthodox Church as well as the Islamic Community in our environments). Those are more persistent in following the religious moral, rules of faith, participation in religious services, religious self-identification. The religion at the “border” creates a feeling which separates “us” from “them”. There are more chaplets that are worn, more prayer beads, and more participation in activities of the church at the “border”. Globalisation, national and religious/confessional “borders”. How to connect confessional orthodoxy and everything that is common to all?

*Conflicts at the “border” and their solution.* The „border“ is an area of contacts, encounters, but also of conflicts. There are “conspiracy theories” at the border, “plots against us” that end up in violence. Spiritual violence (pressures to conscientiousness, beliefs, way of thinking etc.) occurs more often at the “border” than in the “inland”. There it can be seen how much exposed is fear of catholicising, converting to an Orthodox or a Muslim. Interpretation of national conflicts as confessional-religious ones (as well). Churches and religious communities in general and resolving of such conflicts.

*Social conditions in which religious/confessional identities have come back in the post-Yugoslav states.* Identification has been redirected from the state and the class to the nation and the confession. Strengthening of religious elites’ influence on the “national” politics. Nationalising of God and national confrontations. The religion as a source of the political (and national) identity card. Signs of national and confessional identity become of much significance. Awakening of memories on victims.

Establishment of close relationships between political and religious elites after the collapse of socialism. Has political strengthening of religious institutions led to the spiritual loss of religion(s)? Are Catholicism, Islam, Orthodox Church more national than ecclesiastic capital? Is the church homogenous? Importance of depoliticising of religious life.

*„We“ and the Other:* The religion is an expressive, visible symbol of identification and of maintenance of the “border”. We meet with the appearance of the Other at the “border” and our identity has been expressed (or in need of its expressing) in relation with the Other. We understand our identity only in the context of a relation with the Other. That identity can be jeopardised if something bad happens in those relations (like in times of arms conflicts etc.). Perspectives of relations. Encountering and/or moving away from one another?

**Key Words:** confessional identity, “border”, conflicts, social conditions, the Other.

## RELIGIJSKI IDENTITET NA „GRANICI“ – SUSRET S DRUGIMA

### Rezime

*Ponešto o religijsko/konfesionalnim identitetima među kolektivnim identitetima.* Kolektivni identitet neovisan od nas samih; kolektivni identitet kao rezultat izbora, te prisilni identitet. U konfesionalnom identitetu razlikovanje se zasniva na vjeri u Boga, odnosno konfesionalnoj pripadnosti. Mjesto religijsko/konfesionalnog identiteta u višestrukosti identiteta. Neutemeljenost apriornog odnosa prema kolektivnom identitetu kao nečem anakronom. Zaokupljenost identitetima.



*Religijsko/konfesionalni identitet na „granici“.* Važnost „granice“. Zašto je „granica“ značajna za religijsko/konfesionalni identitet? Na „granici“ kategorija pripadanja postaje važna, te je visok stupanj konfesionalne samoidentifikacije. Istraživanje *Religijski i nacionalni odnosi u Bosni i Hercegovini* (1987) pokazalo je da je stupanj konfesionalno samoidentifikacije bio četiri puta veći od samoidentifikacije „vjernik sam“. Potreba za naglašenim po(do)kazivanjem identiteta na „granici“. Ili možda ljudi na „granici“ lakše doživljavaju svoju vjeru kao jednu od mogućih opcija, nego njihovi suvjernici daleko od „granice“? Osjetljivost identiteta na „granici“ na njegovo osporavanje. „Granične“ religijske zajednice, u pravilu su više konzervativne i oprezne u susretu s drugim vrijednostima i identitetima (strah za opstanak). Više su okrenute prošlosti (pokazuju to kod nas Katolička i Srpsko-pravoslavna crkva i Islamska zajednica). One su istrajnije u slijeđenju religijskog morala, vjerskih propisa, participacije u obredima, vjerskoj samoidentifikaciji. Religija na „granici“ stvara osjećanje koje „nas“ izdvaja od „njih“. Na „granici“ se više nose brojanice, tespihi, više participira u crkvenim aktivnostima. Globalizacija, nacionalne i religijske/konfesionalne „granice“. Kako povezati kon-fesionalnu pravovjernost i ono što je svima zajedničko?

*Konflikti na „granici“ i njihovo rješavanje.* „Granica“ je područje kontakata, susreta, ali i konflikata. Na „granici“ su prisutne „teorije urota“, „zavjere protiv nas“ koje završavaju u nasilju. Na „granici“ je češće, nego u unutrašnjosti“ duhovno nasilje (pritisci na savjest, uvjerenje, način mišljenja...). Tu je izraženiji strah od pokatoličenja, popravoslavljenja, poislamljenja. Interpretacija nacionalnih konflikata (i) kao konfesionalno-religijskih. Crkve i religijske zajednice uopće i rješavanje takvih konflikata.

*Društveni uvjeti u kojima je došlo do „vraćanja“ religijsko/konfesionalnim identitetima* u postjugoslavenskim državama. Identifikacija s države i klase „preusmjerena“ je na naciju i konfesiju. Jačanje utjecaja religijskih elita na „nacionalne“ politike. Nacionaliziranje Boga i nacionalne konfrontacije. Religija kao izvor političke (i nacionalne) legitimacije. Na značaju dobivaju znaci nacionalnog i konfesionalnog identiteta. Buđenje sjećanja na žrtve.

Uspostava bliskih odnosa između političkih i religijskih elita nakon urušavanja socijalizma. Je li političko jačanje religijskih institucija vodilo duhovnom gubitku religije(a)? Jesu li katoličanstvo, islam, pravoslavlje više nacionalni kapital, nego crkveni? Je li Crkva (e) homogena? Važnost depolitizacije religijskog života.

*„Mi“ i Drugi:* Religija je izrazit, uočljiv simbol identifikacije i održanja „granice“. Na „granici“ se susrećemo s pojavom drugog, a naš identitet i dolazi do izražaja (ili potrebe njegovog iskazivanja) u odnosu s drugim. Naš identitet shvaćamo samo u kontekstu odnosa sa Drugim. Taj identitet može biti ugrožen ako se nešto loše desi u tim odnosima (kao u vrijeme oružanih sukoba i sl.). Perspektive odnosa. Susretanje i/li udaljšavanje?

**Ključne riječi:** konfesionalni identitet, „granica“, konflikti, društveni uvjeti, Drugi.

Vladimir Đurić  
**RELIGION AS AN ELEMENT OF NATIONAL IDENTITY OF  
NATIONAL MINORITIES IN BORDER AREAS (Legal Aspects)**

**Summary**

Religion, with other characteristics such as language, traditions and cultural heritage, is the very essence of what makes a social group a national minority. However, not every one of the-se differences creates a national minority. This article analyzes first the international and constitutional legal aspects of religion as an element of national identity of national minorities. Although the viewpoint can be supported that the state has the obligation to promote conditions for preserving the identity of national minorities, and in spite of the fact that religion might be the way of identifying the group, it is debatable how far the state needs to put in place conditions for the group in

general so that it can maintain and preserve its religious identity. This not only because the freedom of religion of each member of national minority includes the right to change its faith, but also because the issue whether the protection of national identity includes the right to develop religious identity and to establish national churches and religious communities. Very important issue is whether the promotion of conditions for preserving the identity of national minorities by the state can violate the constitutional separation between state and church and autonomy of churches and religious communities, as well as whether the development of religious identity can be in function of imposing of national identity to the group which don't share that identity. Special attention was paid to analyses of those issues in case of national minorities in border areas.

**Key Words:** religion, identity, national minorities, minority rights, churches and religious communities.

### РЕЛИГИЈА КАО ЕЛЕМЕНТ ИДЕНТИТЕТА НАЦИОНАЛНИХ МАЊИНА У ПОГРАНИЧЈУ (Правни аспекти)

#### Резиме

Религија се, уз остале карактеристике као што су језик, традиција и културно наслеђе, сматра самом суштином онога што једну друштвену групу чини националном мањином. Међутим, не чини свака од тих различитости националну мањину. У раду се најпре анализирају међународноправни и уставноправни аспекти религије као елемента националног идентитета националних мањина. Иако се може подржати становиште да држава има обавезу да обезбеди услове за очување идентитета националних мањина, и упркос чињеници да религија несумњиво може да буде начин идентификације групе, дискутабилно је колико далеко држава треба да иде у обезбеђивању услова да би група очувала и одржавала свој религиозни идентитет. Ово не само због слободе вероисповести сваког припадника националне мањине која значи и слободу промене вероисповести, већ и због питања да ли заштита националног идентитета укључује и право на развијање религиозног идентитета и стварање националних верских организација. Посебно питање је да ли обезбеђивање услова за очување идентитета националних мањина од стране државе може да наруши уставну одвојеност државе од цркве и аутономију цркава и верских заједница, као и да ли развијање религиозног идентитета може да буде у функцији наметања националног идентитета групи које га не дели. Посебна пажња у раду је посвећена анализи тих питања у случају националних мањина у пограничју.

**Кључне речи:** религија, идентитет, националне мањине, мањинска права, цркве и верске заједнице.

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Dragan Koković

### CUSTOMS AND CULTURE – MEANING OF THE BORDER

#### Summary

The reception of foreign cultural influences and the transplanting of foreign institutions should be done with caution since this kind of penetration could lead to counterproductive results. Slobodan Jovanović noticed that excessive and inadvertent taking over of foreign patterns of behavior, most of all, of political institutions, led to the emergence of foreign impact opponents who ascribed, more or less, all our troubles to those translated institutions. Stressing that we looked for our political patterns mainly in the West, the foreign impact opponents were also labeled as opponents of the West. Some of them were truly moderate claiming, which was perfectly acceptable, that in transplanting foreign institutions we should proceed gradually and cautiously without losing the sight of our domestic circumstances different from tho-

se in the West. Yet, there were other opponents of the West who believed that in our country there were self-made political institutions that could have developed quite successfully even without any foreign patterns but whose development went wrong exactly because our domestic institutions wanted to crossbreed with foreign ones.

**Key Words:** Customs, Tradition, Culture, Cultural Patterns, Conflict of Cultures.

### ОБИЧАЈИ И КУЛТУРА – ЗНАЧЕЊЕ ГРАНИЦЕ

#### Резиме

Примање страних културних утицаја, пресађивање страних установа треба вршити обазриво, јер таква врста надирања може довести до контрапродуктивних резултата. Сло-бодан Јовановић је приметио да је претерано и безразложно преузимање страних образаца понашања, политичких установа, пре свега, изазивало појаву противника страних утицаја који су више или мање све наше недаће стављали на рачун тих пресађених установа. Истичући да смо наше политичке образце тражили поглавито на западу, противници страних утицаја обележавани су као противници запада. Неки од њих били су доста умерени и тврдили, што је било сасвим на месту, да при пресађивању страних установа, треба ићи постепено и обазриво, не губећи из вида наше домаће прилике, које се разликују од прилика на западу. Али, било је и других противника запада који су веровали да је у нас било самониклих политичких установа које су се могле и без туђих образаца успешно развијати, али чији развитак је извитоперен управо стога што су се на те наше домаће установе хтеле накалемити стране.

**Кључне речи:** обичај, традиција, култура, културни образци, сукоб култура.

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Miloš Jovanović, Miloš Tasić

### DOES GOD SPEAK MY LANGUAGE, TOO?

#### Summary

The paper deals with the case of building a religious object of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the village of Malajnica near Negotin. Firstly, a short history of the above case is given, and the attention is then directed toward the framework of canon and civil law which regulates the relationship of sister Orthodox churches. Lastly, based on an in-depth interview with Bojan Aleksandrović, a priest of the Romanian Orthodox Church, an insight into reasons and motives behind the construction of the church is presented, as well as his personal interpretation of the reactions of the Serbian Orthodox Church, local authorities, and general public.

**Key Words:** Romanian Orthodox Church, Malajnica, Serbian Orthodox Church, “the Vlach issue”, Canons.

### ДА ЛИ БОГ ГОВОРИ И МОЈИМ ЈЕЗИКОМ?

#### Резиме

Текст се бави случајем изградње верског објекта Румунске православне цркве у селу Малајница код Неготина. Најпре се даје кратка историја наведеног случаја, а затим се пажња усмерава на оквир канонског и грађанског права које регулише односе сестринских православних цркава. На крају се, на основу полуструктурисаног дубинског интервјуа са свештеником Румунске православне цркве Бојаном Александровићем, добија увид у разлоге и мотиве за подизање цркве, те његова лична интерпретација реакција Српске православне цркве, локалних власти и шире јавности.

**Кључне речи:** Румунска православна црква, Малајница, Српска православна црква, „влашко питање“, канони.

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Ivana Ilić Krstić  
Milovan Vuković

## ECUMENISM – THE NOTION AND ITS GENEALOGY

### Summary

Modern age is characterized by numerous and often contradictory processes. On the one hand, certain processes divide humankind and create a distance between people; on the other hand, certain processes are aimed at bringing people closer and creating a single universal society or universe. Although the history of ecumenism as a social phenomenon is rather short, by no means does that diminish the importance of studying it. We are witnesses to the fact that religions have parted ways throughout history and differently interpreted their ultimate values embodied in God, the Buddha, Allah, or another denominator. With the development of human civilization, technological progress, and all globalization processes, a need has emerged for more intensive communication and dialogue between different nations and, accordingly, between their respective religions. That is why the discourse concerning the very concept of ecumenism and its historical genealogy is so significant for the explanation of ecumenical processes, both between Christian religions and between Christian and non-Christian religions.

**Key Words:** universal society, historical genealogy, religions, ecumenical processes, ecumenism.

## ПОЈАМ ЕКУМЕНИЗМА И ЊЕГОВА ГЕНЕАЛОГИЈА

### Резиме

Савремено доба карактеришу многобројни процеси, који су не ретко и веома контрадикторни. На једној страни поједини процеси разједињују човечанство и удаљавају људе једне од других, док пак други процеси имају за циљ, колико је то могуће, да приближе човека човеку и створе једно свеопште друштво или васељену. Екуменизам као друштвени феномен је веома кратке историје, међутим то не умањује значај његовог проучавања. Сведоци смо, да су се религије кроз историју удаљавале једна од друге, да су другачије тумачиле своје највише вредности отеловљене у Богу, Буди, Алаху или пак у некон другом имену. Са развојем људске цивилизације, технолошким напредком и свим глобализацијским процесима, створила се потреба за интензивнијом комуникацијом и дијалогом између разних народа, па тако и између њихових различитих религија. Зато је овај дискурс, о самом појму екуменизма и његовој историјској генеалогии, од значаја за објашњење екуменских процеса како унутар хришћанских, тако и између хришћанских и нехришћанских религија.

**Кључне речи:** универзално друштво, историјска генеалогиија, религије, екуменски процес, екуменизам.

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Mihailo Antović

## EVOLUTIONISM AND CREATIONISM: ARGUMENTS FROM COGNITIVE SCIENCE

### Summary

The problem of origins of morality is an important question in evolutionary psychology and cognitive science. Unlike religious systems, which mostly ascribe moral norms to a supernatural being, authors affiliated with evolutionary psychology view morality as a biological adaptation that developed by natural selection. The disagreement presents one of the stumbling points in the sharp conflict of creationists and evolutionists. The present paper calls upon the theoretical and empirical systems of modern cognitive science in order to suggest a way to reduce the split between the two. The thesis is based on three premises: (1) The position of evolutionists support-

ing a biological basis of simple moral behavior is endorsed, followed by examples of modern research of empathy on the neurophysiological (mirror neurons, V. Ramachandran) and biochemical levels (oxytocin, P. Churchland). (2) Memetic evolution (D. Dennett) and double-scope blending (M. Turner) are evoked as mechanisms that enabled the rapid development of cognitive capacities in the period of about 50,000 years B.C., which may have included the sudden expansion of norms, such as those found in the morality of the Old Testament. (3) Additional double-scope blending is postulated for the period around *Anno Domini*, which resulted in the development of New Testament morality, proposing that the individual undertake uncompromising struggle with evil in himself, based on love. A possible error of creationists may be found in the frequent disregard of the first two theses, in spite of currently quite convincing empirical evidence (thesis one) and coherent theoretical systems (thesis two). While their methodology does not seem to be able to explain the phenomenon of *primum movens*, on multiple levels, evolutionists could also be wrong in fully ignoring the third thesis, perhaps because it is not directly related to evolutionary adaptation. For this reason, their criticism often fails to hit the target because they seek the foundations of faith in the literal reading of dogmatic texts (the well known problem of the seven day origin of the world) rather than in man's eternal need for self-perfection. Even if they cannot agree on the ontological question of the existence of God, representatives of both schools may benefit from the appreciation of these advantages and drawbacks of their respective systems. The author holds the opinion that, taken together, the three proposed theses may have scientific grounds, and still remain compliant with the Christian worldview.

**Key Words:** cognitive science, creationism, evolutionism, empathy, religiosity.

### **ЕВОЛУЦИОНИЗАМ И КРЕАЦИОНИЗАМ: АРГУМЕНТИ ИЗ КОГНИТИВНИХ НАУКА**

#### **Резиме**

Једно од значајних питања у еволуционој психологији и когнитивним наукама је и проблем порекла морала. За разлику од религијских система који моралне узусе углавном приписују натприродном бићу, присталице еволуционе психологије посматрају систем моралних норми као вид биолошке адаптације који се развио природном селекцијом. То неслагање представља једну од тачака оштрог сукоба између креациониста и еволуциониста. Овај рад позива се на теоријске и емпиријске системе савремених когнитивних наука у покушају да укаже на пут којим се дати сукоб може ублажити. Теза се базира на три премисе: (1) Уважава се став еволуциониста о биолошкој основи базичног моралног понашања, уз примере савремених истраживања емпатије на неурофизиолошком (неурони пресликавања, В. Рамачандран) и биохемијском нивоу (окситоцин, П. Черчленд). (2) Елаборирају се познате тезе о меметичкој еволуцији (Д. Денет) и двос-труком концептуалном сажимању (М. Тарнер) као механизмима који су омогућили рапидан развој когнитивних способности у периоду око 50.000 г п.н.е, што може да укључи и наглу експанзију норми попут оних које налазимо у „старозаветном“ моралу. (3) Поставља се хипотеза о поновном двоструком сажимању насталом око почетка нове ере, што је омогућило развој „новозаветног“ морала, који појединцу предлаже бескомпромисну борбу са злом у себи, базирану на љубави. Могућа грешка креациониста је у честом игнорисању прве две тезе, упркос данас доста убедљивим емпиријским доказима (прва) и кохерентним теоријским системима (друга). Уз то што својом методологијом не могу да објасне феномен *првог покретача*, на много нивоа, еволуционисти, чини се, греше јер потпуно игноришу трећу тезу, можда зато што се код ње и не ради о еволуционој адаптацији. Из овог разлога, њихова критика често не погађа циљ

јер проналази основе вере у буквалном тумачењу догматских текстова (познати проблем настанка света за седам дана) пре него ли у вечитој човековој потреби за самоусавршавањем. Ако се око онтолошког питања постојања Бога и не могу сагласити, присталице оба тabora могле би имати користи од увиђања ових предности и недостатака у сопственим системима. Аутор је мишљења да, посматране заједно, понуђене три тезе могу да имају научно утемљење, а да истовремено остану усклађене са хришћанским погледом на свет.

**Кључне речи:** когнитивне науке, креационизам, еволуционизам, емпатија, религиозност.

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Ružica Cacanaska

### **RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS IN THE BORDER AREA – CASE STUDY KOLESHINO**

#### **Summary**

The integral concept of religion generally means religious convictions, developed in a doctrine and, certainly, in a whole range of practices, which strengthen, develop and implement the significance of the doctrine.

This paper will present a case study of a border village in Macedonia, Koleshino, which is famous for its religious diversity. The existence, as well as the preservation of that diversity represents *diferencia specifica* exactly for this Macedonian village. A special emphasize in this study will be placed upon the influence of the border area exerted on the structuring of the religious life, that is, the effect exerted by its close environment, and especially its connection to the relevant centers (religious bases, in the country or abroad).

**Key Words:** religious practice, religious customs, religious diversity, minority religious communities.

### **РЕЛИГИЈАТА И РЕЛИГИОЗНИТЕ ОБИЧАИ ВО ПОГРАНИЧНОТ ПРОСТОР – СТУДИЈА НА СЛУЧАЈ КОЛЕШИНО**

#### **Резиме**

Интегралниот концепт на религијата подразбира генерално верски убедувања, развиени во доктрина и секако цела лепеза на практики, кои го продлабочуваат, развиваат и имплементираат значењето на доктрината.

Во овој труд ќе се направи студија на случај на пограничното село во Македонија, Колешино, кое е познато по својот религиозен диверзитет. Постоенето, како и зачувувањето на тој диверзитет, претставува *diferencia specifica* токму за ова македонско село. Посебен акцент во оваа студија ќе биде даден на влијанието на пограничјето кон структурирањето на религиозниот живот, односно на влијанието кое го остварува непосредното опкружување, а особено поврзувањето со соодветни центри (религиозните бази, во земјата или во странство).

**Клучни зборови:** религиозна практика, верски обичаи, религиозен диверзитет, малцински верски заедници.

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Ivan Markešić

### **FOLK BELIEFS: ON THE EXAMPLE OF LIKA'S VILLAGES OF KOMPOLJE, HRVATSKO POLJE AND SRPSKO POLJE**

#### **Summary**

The Lika's villages of Kompolje and Hrvatsko Polje (in which are included the earlier settlements of Srpsko Polje and Bjeljevine) are situated in the Republic of Croatia, in the Ličko – senjska county, Otočac district.

The area discussed in this article was named Kompolje (*Catholic and Vlaško*) back in the times of the Military Border. After the demilitarisation and the introduction of la-

nd registry Kmpolje was divided into two villages: Hrvatsko Kmpolje and Srpsko Kmpolje (Vlaško Polje); by the end of the 19th century they received their official names: Kmpolje and Vlaško Polje, and after the 1st World war they were named: Kmpolje and Srpsko Polje, which remained until the end of 1992. when the villages were renamed again. Since that time the villages are named Kmpolje and Hrvatsko polje (in which are included the earlier settlements of Srpsko Polje and Bjeljevine).

Since the area discussed is located near the border and influenced by both croatian-serbian and catholic-eastern orthodoxy, the author in this article shows folk beliefs in those villages of Lika with a distinct review of catholic and orthodox forms of those beliefs. The work is based on the research of Jure Grčević which was conducted by the early 1950, and published in the monography *Kmpolje. Folk life and beliefs* (Otočac 2000). Those beliefs originated right on the border, during contacts and meetings of members of catholic and eastern orthodoxy faiths. The topics discussed, amongst other things, are folk beliefs in the beginning of the world and its survival, in the existence of supernatural power that rules this world, the sources of (supernatural) power that some people possess, belief in the existence of creatures that are alike humans, in the existence of strength possessed by beasts and monsters and the belief in the afterworld.

Additionally, the author also explores the divination, spellwork and magic that governed and gave meaning to the every-day "Life-World" (Lebenswelt) of those people as well as the religious (catholic and orthodox) saints and their powers and influences without which the religious life of these people as members of the (croatian) Catholic Church and (Serbian) Orthodox Church would be unimaginable.

**Key Words:** Croatia, Lika, Otočac, Kmpolje, Hrvatsko Polje, Srpsko Polje, catholicism, eastern orthodoxy, folk beliefs, divination, spellwork.

## **NARODNA VJEROVANJA: NA PRIMJERU LIČKIH SELÂ KOMPOLJE, HRVATSKO POLJE I SRPSKO POLJE**

### **Rezime**

Lička sela Kmpolje i Hrvatsko Polje (u koje ulaze ranija naselja Srpsko Polje i Bjeljevine) nalaze se u Republici Hrvatskoj, u Ličko-senjskoj županiji, na području općine Otočac.

Kraj koji se ovdje obrađuje u nekadašnjoj Vojnoj krajini zvao se Kmpolje (Katoličko i Vlaško). Nakon razvojačenja i uvođenja katastra Kmpolje je podijeljeno na dva sela: Hrvatsko Kmpolje i Srpsko Kmpolje (Vlaško Polje); krajem 19. stoljeća sela dobivaju službeni naziv: Kmpolje i Vlaško Polje, da bi nakon I. svj. rata dobila nazive: Kmpolje i Srpsko Polje, koji će ostati sve do kraja 1992. kada se vrši preimenovanje naselja. Od tada postoje Kmpolje i Hrvatsko Polje (u koje su ušla ranija naselja Srpsko Polje i Bjeljevine).

Kako je riječ o graničnome području i međusobnim hrvatsko-srpskim i katoličko-pravoslavnim utjecajima, autor u ovome radu prikazuje narodna vjerovanja u tim ličkim selima s posebnim osvrtom na katoličke i pravoslavne oblike istih vjerovanja. On to radi na temelju istraživanja Jure Grčevića provedenog početkom 1950-ih godina, a objavljenim u monografiji *Kmpolje. Narodni život i običaji* (Otočac, 2000). Ta vjerovanja su nastajala upravo na granici, na dodiru i susretu pripadnika katoličke i pravoslavne vjere. Riječ je, između ostaloga, o narodnim vjerovanjima u postanak i opstanak svijeta, u postojanje nadnaravne moći koja vlada ovim svijetom, izvorima (nadaravne) moći koju posjeduju pojedini ljudi, o vjerovanjima u postojanje stvorova nalik ljudima, u postojanje snage koju imaju nemani i nakaze kao i o vjerovanjima u drugi (zagrobni) svijet.

Uz to, autor se još bavi gatanjima, bajanjima i čarolijama koji su uređivali i osmišljavali svakodnevni „svijet života“ (Lebenswelt) tih ljudi kao i crkvenim (katoličkim i

pravoslavnim) svecima i njihovim moćima i utjecajima bez kojih bi nezamisliv bio religijski život ovih ljudi kao pripadnika (hrvatske) Katoličke, odnosno (srpske) Pravoslavne crkve.

**Ključne reči:** Hrvatska, Lika, Otočac, Kompolje, Hrvatsko Polje, Srpsko Polje, katoličanstvo, pravoslavlje, narodna vjerovanja, gatanja, bajanja.

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Vladimir Bakrač

## RELIGIOUS AND FOLK CUSTOMS IN THE NORTHWEST OF MONTENEGRO

### Summary

In this work we start from the statement that it is interesting to deal with religious and folk customs. We state that customs are closely knit to tradition and they survive in spite of the changes in culture. On the other side, it is very interesting to explore folk and religious customs for their diversity, depending on geographic area. We would not agree upon the fact that if we met religious and folk customs on one area, we met all others. Religious and folk customs may be alike but not the same in all areas. This caused that our research is focused on the northwest of Montenegro (Piva, Golija and Banjani, all on the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina) as it is the area with dominantly Orthodox people. Saint Vasilije Ostroski is highly respected in this part of Montenegro so that one part of this research is dedicated to cult which is cherished to this saint.

We also deal with other customs from the northwest part of Montenegro. We assume that almost everyone regardless of the age or whether they live in the country or in the town, attended in person or at least read about certain religious and folk customs. Thus we want to focus attention on some customs which may be met in Orthodox communities, and which are autochthonous for that area. For example, it is very interesting to know the customs of the wedding in Piva area, celebrating Patron Saint, celebrating Christmas and Easter in this part of Montenegro. The aim of this research is to get the information on one place about religious and folk customs in the border area between Montenegro and Herzegovina.

**Key Words:** Religion, Orthodox, folk religion, folk customs, religious customs.

## ВЈЕРСКИ И НАРОДНИ ОБИЧАЈИ У СЈЕВЕРОЗАПАДНОМ ДИЈЕЛУ ЦРНЕ ГОРЕ

### Резиме

У прелудијуму раду полазимо од констатације да је интересантно бавити се вјерским и народним обичајима. Констатујемо да су обичаји тијесно повезани с традицијом и опстају упркос промјенама у култури. С друге стране, посебно је интересантно истраживати народне и вјерске обичаје због њихове различитости, у зависности од географског подручја. Не бисмо се могли сложити са констатацијом да, ако упознамо једне вјерске и народне обичаје на неком подручју, упознали смо све. Вјерски и народни обичаји могу бити слични, али не и исти у свим срединама. Ово је условило да се наше истраживање усредреди на сјеверозападни дио Црне Горе (Пива, Голија и Бањани у пограничном дијелу са Босном и Херцеговином), као подручја са доминантно православним становништвом. У овом дијелу Црне Горе нарочито се поштује Свети Василије Острошки, тако да дио рада посвећујемо култу који се његује према овом светитељу.

У наставку се бавимо и неким обичајима из сјеверозападног дијела Црне Горе. Претпостављамо да је свако од нас без обзира на генерацијску доб или да ли живи у селу или граду, лично присуствовао или барем читао о неким вјерским и народним обичајима. Отуда настојимо да пажњу усредредимо на неке обичаје који се сусрећу у православним срединама а који су аутохтони за поменуто под-



ручје. На примјер, веома је интересантно упознати се са обичајима пивске свадбе, слављењу крсне славе, Божића и Ускрса у овом дијелу Црне Горе. Основни циљ рада је замишљен тако да се на једном мјесту информишемо и боље упознамо са неким (наравно, не свим) вјерским и народним обичајима у пограничном дијелу Црне Горе и Херцеговине.

**Кључне ријечи:** Религија, православље, народна религија, народни обичаји, вјерски обичаји.

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Zoran M. Jovanović

Jasmina Petrović

**ON CERTAIN CHRISTIAN AND CHRISTIANIZED CULTS IN SOUTH-EASTERN SERBIA (An Example of Fostering the Cult of Miraculous Springs and the Cult of the Mother of God the Source of Life among the Inhabitants of Dimitrovgrad and the Surrounding Area)**

**Summary**

The paper deals with the customs that are directly connected with the church in the village of Donja Nevlja in Niš Eparchy (the municipality of Dimitrovgrad), dedicated to St. Elias at present day, and a spring close to the church whose water is believed to have miraculous powers (treating eye disease) by the local population. It is still honored by believers by dropping coins, thus making the spring a kind of a wishing spring. This action of gifting the source, known since the ancient times throughout the Christian world, should be interpreted as a form of sacrifice, that is, a materialized prayer-appeal, but also as an attempt to establish a "contract" with God and/or his intermediary, that is, a holy person who would, with the help of God, answer the prayer. The fact that this church was first dedicated to the Mother of God the Source of Life points to a former powerful cult of the Mother of God in the village of Donja Nevlja (with no apparent reason why the dedication of the temple changed). Since the roots of all these cults descend from the ancient belief in the life-giving power of the Mother of God (as the source of life – Christ), as well as in the miraculous powers of certain water springs, the connection of the pagan, Christian and Christianized cults (the cult of water, the cult of springs, the cult of the Mother of God) indicates that "God has not abandoned" the Orthodox inhabitants of the municipality of Dimitrovgrad at least in faith and customs, as not only theologians, but also scholars of religious traditions would say, with the characteristics of the pagan era, the Old Testament, the New Testament and the modern era. Finally, that there is "something" in the aforementioned complex with the spring and the church is evidenced by the fact that the hill, at whose base is the site which is the subject of the paper, is called "Lečevište" (health resort). The question of whether there was a real reason for such a name will remain an enigma until we obtain new information.

**Key Words:** the cult of the Mother of God, the cult of water, the cult of springs, Donja Nevlja, Dimitrovgrad.

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**О ПОЈЕДИНИМ ХРИШЋАНСКИМ И ХРИСТИЈАНИЗОВАНИМ КУЛТОВИМА У ЈУГОИСТОЧНОЈ СРБИЈИ**

**(Пример неговања култа чудотворних извора и Богородице Источника живота међу житељима Димитровграда и околине)**

**Резиме**

Рад је посвећен обичајима који су у непосредној вези са црквом код села Доња Невља, у Нишкој епархији (општина Димитровград), данас посвећеној светом Илији, и извором наомак храма, за који постоји веровање локалног живља да вода која из њега извире поседује чудотворне моћи. Отуда је до данас чашћен металним новчићима верујућих, чиме је источник постао и својеврсни извор

жеља. Такво даривање извора, познато од давнина широм хришћанског света, треба тумачити као вид жртве, тј. материјализоване молитве-молебнице, али и као покушај успостављања „уговора“ с Богом и/или његовим посредником, тј. светом особом која би сама тј. уз Божију помоћ услишила молбу. Податак да је поменута црква најпре посвећена Богородици Извору живота указује на некадашњи снажан култ Мајке Божије на подручју села Доња Невља (без јасног разлога због чега је посвета храма у неком тренутку промењена). Будући да корени свих наведених култова потичу од древног веровања у живоносност Богородичину (као извора живота – Христа), као и чудотворност појединих изворишта воде, веза паганских, христјанизованих и хришћанских култова (култа воде, извора, Богородице) указује да православне житеље општине Димитровград макар у вери и обичајима „Бог није напустио“, како би рекли не само теолози, него и проучаваоци верских обичаја, с обележјима паганског, старозаветног, новозаветног и данашњег доба. Коначно, да у поменутом комплексу, с извориштем и црквом, има „нечег“ сведочи и то што брдо, у чијем се подножју налази локалитет који је предмет рада становништво назива „Лечевиште“ (Лечилиште). Да ли је за такав назив било повода, остаће енигма до нових сазнања.

**Кључне речи:** култ Богородице, култ воде, култ извора, Доња Невља, Димитровград.

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Suzana Marković Krstić  
Aleksandra Kostić

## THE GREAT DAY (EASTER) IN PRESLAP

### Summary

This paper focuses on the peculiar celebration of Easter in the mountainous village of Preslap, close to Crna Trava, a location whose certain parts are covered with snow, even during these spring-time holidays. Although the customary way of celebrating the Great Day (Easter) is to-day quite different from what it was like in earlier times, the current celebrations of this day offer numerous elements for understanding the customs and people's way of life, specific to this docile area in southeast Serbia in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Albeit today there is no mass gathering, common meal, Easter celebration followed by brass-band music and the traditional kolo dance in the location of Del, above the village, there is still the joint gathering of families, godparents and neighbors, friendly exchange of Easter eggs, and Easter buns with eggs inserted in the crumb, used as gifts, first for the godparents and children, then for young ladies, neighbors and friends. However, during this joyous holiday, those who died, even many years ago, are not forgotten. Eggs (boiled, but not painted), muffins and buns are taken to the cemetery.

**Key Words:** Easter, the Great Day, housekeeper, eggs, buns.

## ВЕЛИГДАН (УСКРС) У ПРЕСЛАПУ

### Резиме

У фокусу истраживачке пажње и овог рада је особена слика слављења Ускрса у брдско-планинском селу Преслап, надамак Црне Траве, чији су поједини предели и у време ових пролећних празника прекривени снегом. Иако је обичај слављења Велигдана (Ускрса) данас знатно измењен у односу на ранија времена, данашњи начин слављења овог празника нуди мноштво елемената за разумевање обичаја и начина живота људи, специфичних за овај питоми крај на југоистоку Србије, у другој деценији XXI века. Иако данас нема масовног окупљања, заједничког обедовања и слављења Ускрса уз „плек-музику“ (банде, односно оркестре трубача) и кола на месту званом Дел, изнад села, још увек има породичног, кумовског и комшијског окупљања, дружења и размене фарбаних ускрш-

њих јаја, као и „самуница“ (ускршњих хлебчића) са уметнутим јајима у средини, којима се дарују најпре кумови („кумаче“) и деца, потом млађе жене („младице“), комшије и пријатељи. Међутим, и за време овог радосног празника не заборавају се они који су умрли, чак и пре много година. На гробље се износе кувана, али нефарбана јаја, као и „кравајчићи“ и самунице.

**Кључне речи:** Ускрс, Велигдан, чуваркућа, јаја, самуница.

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Zoran R. Jovanović

### **CHILDREN'S RISEN SMILES: INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S EASTER EGG TAPPING FESTIVAL IN BOSILEGRAD**

#### **Summary**

The text is composed of three parts. In the first part are given examples of rituals before *Christianity* that are similar to the tradition of celebrating *Easter* and *Easter egg painting*. It is described the *Orthodox Easter* way of celebrating, the techniques of dyeing and decorating Easter eggs and the semiology of the color which is most commonly used. In the second part it is presented the chronology of the *International Children's Easter egg tapping Festival in Bosilegrad*, from its beginnings to nowadays. The third part is dedicated to the course of this year's festival, interviews with its participants, the atmosphere of the festival and its multicultural message.

**Key Words:** Orthodoxy, Social Capital, Serbia, Religious Practice.

### **ВАСКРСЛИ ДЕЧИЈИ ОСМЕСИ: МЕЂУНАРОДНИ ДЕЧИЈИ УСКРШЊИ ФЕСТИВАЛ У БОСИЛЕГРАДУ**

#### **Резиме**

Текст је састављен од три целине. У првој су наведени примери предхришћанских ритуала који су слични традицији слављења ускрса и фарбања ускршњих јаја. Описан је православни начин слављења ускрса, технике бојења и украшавања ускршњих јаја и семиологија боја које се, при том, најчешће користе. У другом делу рада представљена је хронологија *Међународног дечијег ускршег фестивала у Босилеграду*, од његових почетака до данишњих дана. Трећи део рада посвећен је овогодишњем току фестивала, разговорима са његовим учесницима, атмосфери на фестивалу и његовим мултикултуралним порукама.

**Кључне речи:** Easter, eggs, tradition, children, manifestation.

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Danijela Voza

### **CARNIVAL PRIVEG – THE CUSTOM OF THE VLACHS IN THE NORTHEASTERN SERBIA**

#### **Summary**

Cult of the dead and belief in the afterlife are deeply rooted in the Vlachs' national psyche. This is confirmed by Priveg – custom of the cult of the dead, retained in the ritual practice of Vlachs Ungureans of the northeastern Serbia from the ancient times to the present days. There are two basic forms of Priveg – family and carnival. This article describes and analyzes carnival (rural) Priveg – as a ceremony of the entire village community and its surroundings. The custom takes places on the days of Meat and White carnival and is based on the fire burning dedicated to all the dead people in the village.

**Key Words:** Carnival Priveg, meat and white carnival, Vlachs', northeastern Serbia.

### **ПОКЛАДНИ ПРИВЕГ – ОБИЧАЈ ВЛАХА СЕВЕРОИСТОЧНЕ СРБИЈЕ**

#### **Резиме**

У народну психу Влаха дубоко је укоренењен култ мртвих и веровање у загробни живот. То потврђује и Привег – обичај у оквиру култа мртвих који се од давнина

до данашњих дана задржао у обредној пракси Влаха Унгурјана североисточне Србије. Постоје два појавна облика Привега – породични и покладни. У овом раду, описује се и анализира покладни (сеоски) Привег, као светковина у којој учествује цело село и околина. Обичај се одиграва на Месне и Беле покладе, а у основи свега стоји паљење заједничке ватре намењене свим покојницима села.

**Кључне речи:** Покладни Привег, Месне и Беле покладе, Власи, североисточна Србија.

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Lela Milošević Radulović  
Dragana Stjepanović Zaharijevski

#### **OLALIJA – A CUSTOMARY CELEBRATION OF BELI POTOK**

##### **Summary**

Beli Potok, a village in the municipality of Knjaževac in the Timok region, is characterized by an inactive everyday reality without any economic, demographic, institutional and cultural progress. Some basic forms of sociability survive in the fostering of customary ceremonies.

The only common custom which has survived in the village is the ignition of the holy fire called (*olalija*) of the White Carnival. Fire is the symbol of gathering and fellowship. It is believed that a periodic renewal of this ceremony strengthens the ties with all forces that can impact human life.

Before the sociological analysis lies the challenge of exposing the direction of the reduction and the transformation of this tradition, and the identification of its implicit forms and latent functions.

**Key Words:** olalija, Beli Potok, fire, custom, function.

#### **ОЛАЛИЈА – ОБИЧАЈНА СЕТКОВИНА БЕЛОГ ПОТОКА**

##### **Резиме**

Бели Поток, село у општини Књажевац у Тимочној крајини, карактерише замрла свакодневица без економског, демографског, институционалног и културног напретка. Неки основни облици друштвености преживљавају кроз неговање обичајних церемонија.

Једини заједнички обичај који је опстао у селу јесте паљење свете ватре (*олалија*) на Беле покладе. Ватра је симбол окупљања и заједништва. Верује се да се периодичним обнављањем ове церемоније ојачава веза са свим силама које могу имати утицај на човеков живот.

Пред социолошком анализом јесте изазов разоткривања правца редуковања и трансформације овога обичаја, али и утврђивање његових имплицитних форми и латентних функција.

**Кључне речи:** олалија, Бели Поток, ватра, обичај, функција.

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Jovan Živković  
Sonja Veličković

#### **WITCH-SCOLDING – PRESENT ANIMISM**

##### **Summary**

Days holiday Karaveštice is part of the old Serbian religion and mythology. The paper deals with the importance of the day and shows how Christianity takes certain customs, despite that they come from animistical period. At the same time suggests that certain values from the period of folk religion still limited awareness of man and retain his world view through a system that is at social closed.

**Key Words:** folk religion, polytheism, customs, witches, magic.

## КАРАВЕШТИЦЕ – АНИМИСТИЧНОСТ У САВРЕМЕННОСТИ

### Резиме

Дани празника Каравештице је део старе српске религије и митологије. Рад се бави значајем тог дана и указује на то како хришћанство преузима одређене обичаје, упркос што они потичу из анимистичког периода. Истовремено се указује да одређене вредности из периода народне религије и данас ограничавају свест човека и задржавају његов поглед на свет кроз систем који је на нивоу друштвене затворености.

**Кључне речи:** народна религија, политеизам, обичаји, вештице, магија.

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Dragan Todorović

Danijela Zdravković

### KALAVEŠNICE IN RADOVNICA

#### Summary

Carnivals (Poklade), as a public holiday that is widespread in Europe and America, are rooted in celebrating the cult of the Sun and the arrival of spring. Nowadays, they are mostly associated with the beginning of Great Lent, and they are celebrated by indulging food and drink, and wearing masks. The last week before Lent is called "Bela nedelja", and the last day of this week "bele" or "sirene poklade" (white carnival).

In Radovnica, "Bele poklade" are called "kalavešnice" and they are ritually celebrated by building fire on at least three piles of hay and jumping over them in gardens of people's houses with all family members present; children "bark" at a boiled egg that hangs on a thread and abundant dinner is served.

**Key Words:** Kalavešnica, Radovnica, Southeastern Serbia.

## КАЛАВЕШНИЦЕ У РАДОВНИЦИ

### Резиме

Покладе су као народни празник распрострањене у Европи и Америци, са паганским коренима везаним за обележавање култа Сунца и доласка пролећа. Данас се углавном везују за почетак хришћанског обележавања великог поста уочи Васкрса и обележавају уживањем у храни, пићу и прославама под маскама, познатим као карневал. Последња недеља пред васкршњи пост зове се „Бела недеља“, а последњи дан ове недеље „беле“ или „сирене“ покладе.

У Радовници се „Беле покладе“ називају „калавешнице“ и ритуално се обележавају паљењем и прескакањем најмање трију гомила од сена у дворишту домаћинства у присуству укућана, дечијим „лајањем“ на кувано јаје обешено о танак конопач и обилном вече-ром.

**Кључне речи:** Калавешница, Радовница, југоисточна Србија.

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Milan Tasić

### THE RITUAL OF CALLING FOR THE RAIN IN THE VILLAGES AROUND KLENIKA – SOME FURTHER PARALLELS

#### Summary

We convey the well-established ritual song *Hey dodo, dodole*, from the villages around Klenike, municipality of Bujanovac. This is a magical rite of calling for the rain, rooted in the distant (common) history of the Slavic and Indo-European people. In the song we can recognize pagan Slavic elements, as well as non-Slavic (Indo-European) elements.

**Key Words:** magic, ritual, dodola, drought, Perun.

## ОБРЕД ПРИЗИВАЊА КИШЕ У СЕЛИМА ОКО КЛЕНИКА – НЕКЕ НАЈДАЉЕ ПАРАЛЕЛЕ

### Резиме

Ми овде преносимо устаљену обредну песму *Ој додо, додоле*, из села око Кленика, у општини Бујановац. Реч је о магијској радњи призивања кише, коју познаје најдаља (заједничка) прошлост и словенских, и индоевропских народа. У песми препознајемо паганске елементе словенства, а онда и исто такве елементе код несловенских (индоаријевских) народа.

**Кључне речи:** магија, обред, додола, суша, Перун.

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Dragoljub B. Đorđević

Vladan Petrović

### SIROVARI OF SAKANOVAC

#### Summary

Sirovari – a fine folk custom – is not only maintained in the Serbian villages of the Preševo region. It can be found in Leskovac Morava and Pčinja. But it is also performed across the border – in Macedonia and Bulgaria. Many of its elements have been reshaped: from the ritual clothes, over masks, to songs and the kolo; many have been preserved since the old days. It seems as if the essence has been lost, and today's practitioners, even in the case of Cakanovac, are not exactly capable of providing a reasonable presentation and explanation of the custom; they do not remember it clearly and cannot recall it from the collective memory without difficulty. Some of them think that the purpose of sirovari is to exorcise the karakondžula, others to announce and celebrate the New Year, while others still assume that it has to do with the initiation of boys and their acquiring the right to marry. And all of them are right, indeed, since according to the ethnological literature, sirovari are somewhere performed so as to exorcise the karakondžula, elsewhere to celebrate the New Year and wish happiness, and still elsewhere to initiate the young people into the world of adults. The villagers of Cakanovac are also right in one more thing: it is important that the custom has survived, that it is practiced and will be practiced, and every generation will attribute its own meaning to it.

**Key Words:** folk customs, sirovari, *rites de passage*, Cakanovac, Serbia.

### ЦАКАНОВАЧКИ СИРОВАРИ

#### Резиме

У Сировари – леп народни обичај – не одржава се једино у српским селима прешевског краја. Има га у Лесковачкој Морави и у Пчињи. Али се упражњава и преко границе – у Македонији и у Бугарској. Многи његови елементи су преобликовани: од обредне одеће, преко маски, до песама и кола; многи се чувају још од старине. Суштина као да се загубила, а данашњи практиканти, барем у случају Цакановчана, нису баш у стању да је разгветно изложе и објасне; нејасно се присећају и тешко је дозивају из колективног памћења. Једни мисле да је сврха сировара истеривање караконцула, други најава и прослава нове године, док трећи претпостављају да обред има везе са иницијацијом младића и стицањем права на женидбу. И сви имају право, јер заиста, по сведочењу етнолошке литературе, негде се иде у сироваре да би се истерале караконцуле, другде да би се дочекала нова година и пожелео берићет, а у трећем подручју да млади пређу у свет старијих. Цакановчани су и у још једној ствари у праву: важно је да се обичај одржао, да се одржава и да ће се одржавати, а свака ће га генерација попуњавати сопственим значењима.

**Кључне речи:** народни обичаји, сировари, *rites de passage*, Цакановац, Србија.

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Njegoš Dragović  
Vesna Trifunović

**FOLK CUSTOS IN EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN SERBIA:  
WEDDING CUSTOMS AND RITUALS IN THE VILLAGE KORBOVO**

**Summary**

Wedding customs and rituals, even in a society depending on regional characteristics, are complicated and unusual. Marriage is accompanied by appropriate ceremonies – appropriate wedding rituals. A wedding usually consists of two parts; this is the case in the village Korbovo, located in eastern Serbia in the municipality of Kladovo: (a) giving a girl/bride in her father's house, (b) bringing the bride to the house of her husband-to-be. In rural, patriarchal areas, marriage bond gains a lot of importance, therefore, all acts of this ceremony followed by additional variety of customs and rituals, whose ultimate goal is to provide happiness in their life, healthy children and good relations for the newlyweds.

The first part of the wedding takes place in front of witnesses (a priest or authorized representatives of the social community); the second part is dedicated to the public-relatives, friends, and neighbors and consists of entertaining guests and exchanging gifts between the guests and newlyweds. The value of gifts exchanged between guests, families of the newlyweds is a measure of social prestige and a kind of personal and family prestige. Weddings in Vlach communities are especially rich, because families start with preparations for exchanging wedding gifts very early: children, according to their parents' decision, get engaged in an early age and get married early. Parents, therefore, have to prepare timely for the wedding reception in order to meet demands of the value system of the communities they live in.

**Key Words:** folk customs, rituals, wedding, bestowal, Korbovo.

**НАРОДНИ ОБИЧАЈИ У ПОГРАНИЧЈУ ИСТОЧНЕ И ЈУГОИСТОЧНЕ  
СРБИЈЕ: СВАДБЕНИ ОБИЧАЈИ И РИТУАЛИ У СЕЛУ КОРБОВО**

**Резиме**

Свадбени обичаји и ритуали су, и у оквиру једног друштва у зависности од регионалних особености, често компликовани и необични. Склапање брака је праћено и одговарајућим церемонијама – одговарајућим свадбеним ритуалима. Свадба се, најчешће, а то је случај и у селу Корбово, смештеном у источној Србији у општини Кладово, састоји из два дела: (а) предаја девојке/младе у кући њеног оца, (б) увођење младе у кућу будућег мужа. У сеоским патријархалним срединама брачној вези се придаје велики значај, стога су сви чинови ове церемоније праћени додатним разноврсним обичајима и ритуалима, чији је крајњи циљ да се младенцима обезбеди срећа у заједничком животу, здраво потомство и слога у новом дому.

Први део свадбе, венчање, се одвија пред сведоцима (свештеником или овлашћеним представницима социјалне заједнице); други део је намењен јавности – сродницима, пријатељима, суседима и састоји се у гошћењу званица и размени дарова између гостију и младенаца. Величина (вредност) поклона који се размењују између сватова, гостију и породица младенаца представља мерило друштвеног угледа и вид личног и породичног престижа. Нарочито су богате свадбе у влашким срединама, јер породице веома рано почињу да се припремају за размену свадбених дарова: деца се, према одлуци родитеља, у раном узрасту „вере“ и рано ступају у брак. Родитељи, зато, морају благовремено да се припремају за свадбену гозбу, како би одговорили захтевима вредносног система средине у којој живе.

**Кључне речи:** народни обичаји, ритуали, свадба, даривање, Корбово.

Dejan Krstić

### FAMILY PATRON SAINT'S DAY (SVETAC) IN THE MIDDLE TIMOK

#### Summary

Due to its specific ethnogenesis and a mild influence of the Church, the area of the Middle Timok (the Beli Timok valley with the surrounding slopes of the Old Mountain and the Tupiznica) is distinguished by its richness, diversity and ancientness of its customs. Among the most prominent are the votive and family patron saint's day customs that still exist in people.

This paper elaborates ethnographical material concerning family patron saint's day ("svetac"), which was collected during my own field research, and which comes from four villages of the Middle Timok (Osljane, Marinovac, Jelasnica, Novo Korito).

**Key Words:** middle Timok, family patron saint's day, "svetac", the ritual breaking of bread, ritual table.

### СЛАВА (СВЕТЪЦ) У СРЕДЊЕМ ТИМОКУ

#### Резиме

Подручје средњег Тимока (долина Белог Тимока са околним падинама Старе планине и Тупижнице), због специфичне етногенезе и слабијег утицаја цркве, одликује се садржајношћу, разноврсношћу и архаичношћу обичаја. Једни од најкарактеристичнијих су заветински и славски обичаји, који у народу и данас живе.

У овом раду се износи етнографски материјал о обичају слава (светъц), сакупљен сопственим теренским истраживањем, који потиче из четири села средњег Тимока (Ошљане, Мариновац, Јелашница и Ново Корито).

**Кључне речи:** средњи Тимок, слава, "светъц", обредно резање хлеба, обредна трпеза.

Danijela Gavrilović

Marija Cvetković

### RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL ELEMENTS OF CELEBRATION OF MUNICIPAL AND RURAL SAINTS' DAYS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BABUŠNICA

#### Summary

This paper aims to present the image of the contemporary celebration of municipal and rural saints' days in the municipality of Babušnica, based on the presence and absence of certain elements of religious and social rituals, their loss, or recurrence, in relation to the former way of celebration.

The next step in the analysis is the placement in the process of forced and voluntary atheization of this region, and revitalization of religion in recent decades.

The third step in the analysis tends to identify the dynamics of ritual function of these units, primarily determining the extent to which these practices are integrative and disintegrative in relation to the population of different ethnic origins.

The method of in-depth interviews will be used. Apart from Babušnica, the analysis will include the villages on the territory of the municipality.

**Key Words:** religion, rural saints, Babušnica.

### РЕЛИГИЈСКИ И СОЦИЈАЛНИ ЕЛЕМЕНТИ СЛАВЉЕЊА ОПШТИНСКЕ И СЕОСКИХ СЛАВА У ОПШТИНИ БАБУШНИЦА

#### Резиме

Овај текст има за циљ да на основу присуства и одсуства одређених религијских и социјалних елемената обрета, њиховог губљења, или поновног појављивања, да слику садашњег слављења општинске и сеоских слава у општини Бабушница, у односу на некадашњи начин прослављања.



Следећи корак у анализи јесте смештање овог налаза у процес насилне и добровољне атеизације овог простора, те ревитализације религиозности у последњих неколико деценија.

Трећи корак у анализи претендује да препозна динамику функција ових обредних целина, најпре да утврди у којој мери су ови обичаји интегративни или дезинтегративни у односу на становништво различитог етничког порекла.

Користићемо методу дубинског интервјуа. Поред Бабушнице анализа ће обухватити и села на територији општине.

**Кључне речи:** религија, сеоске славе, Бабушница.

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Ivana Vlajković  
Dušan Stamenković

### WEDDING CUSTOMS IN THE VILLAGE OF BOŽICA

#### Summary

The village of Božica is situated in the municipality of Surdulica, in the Pčinja District. The population of this village has decreased dramatically since the 1990s, and at present amounts to about 290, compared to 511, which was the population count according to the 1991 census. Despite its size, Božica is interesting to sociologists because of the old customs which have been preserved there, especially those concerned with weddings, which cover practically all of their aspects, from the wedding feast – which is set up in the largest room of the groom's house, while the bride has to stay in a separate, guest room, to the wedding night, which is the most important aspect of a wedding, as that is when the bride's chastity is put to the test. It also includes the water-related customs, the remnants of the Old Slavic customs, in which running water was perceived as a living entity. Traditionally, the bride is taken to a nearby source of running water at dawn, where she thanks God for enabling her to stay chaste until her marriage.

**Key Words:** the village of Božica, Southern Serbia, wedding customs.

### СВАДБЕНИ ОБИЧАЈИ У СЕЛУ БОЖИЦА

#### Резиме

Село Божица налази се у Пчињском округу, у општини Сурдулица. Број становника у овом селу драстично се смањило у односу на деведесете године, и сада броји око 290 становника, док је на попису становништва из 1991. Овај број износио 511. Упркос својој величини, Божица је социолозима привлачна због тога што су се у њој очували стари обичаји, међу којима су нарочито занимљиви они свадбени, који покривају готово све аспекте једног венчања, од свадбене трпезе, која се поставља у највећој просторији младожењине куће (док је млада у одвојеној, гостинској соби) преко прве брачне ноћи, којој се придавао највећи значај, јер се тада проверавало да ли је млада „чиста и поштена“ до тзв. „одласка невесте на воду“, што представља остатак обичаја Старих Словена, који су на воду која тече гледали као на живо биће. Невеста се традиционално одводи на „живу“ (текућу) воду у зору, када би се захваљивала Богу што је просветлио њен ум и омогућио јој да до брака остане „поштена“.

**Кључне речи:** село Божица, југ Србије, свадбени обичаји.

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Petko Hristov

### RELIGIOUS MARKERS OF IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF LABOUR MOBILITY IN WESTERN MACEDONIA, BULGARIA AND EASTERN SERBIA

#### Summary

This research is based on my fieldwork experience from 2001 to 2009 in the Eastern part of Serbia (regions of Zaječar, Knjaževac and Pirot, among Serbian, Wallachian and Bulgarian population), in Bulgaria and in the Western part of the Republic of

Macedonia (especially in the region of Debar and Struga, among Macedonian Orthodox Christians and Macedonian Muslims, the so-called *Torbeši*). All these cases concern local communities with tradition in *gurbet* (labour migrations) among the male population: as *pečalbars* on the Balkans during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as *gastarbeiters* in Austria and Germany during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as present-day temporary labour migrants in Northern Italy, especially from Macedonia.

The main questions that I attempt to answer are: How does this “life-in-motion” lead to changes in the everyday life and the cultural specifics of local communities in certain regions as a consequence of social and economic transformations during the last few decades? What is the role of religion for constructing one’s own identity, both abroad and in the local village? How does the long-term migrant take care of his local community’s “lieux de mémoire” (church, chapel, mosque) once he returns, and why is this a part of the identity he acquired while “looking in the mirror of otherness” in the conditions of labour migration? Are the new temporary labour migrants from Bulgaria going to follow the experience of the *gastarbeiters* from former Yugoslavia, or will they choose permanent migration?

My article is build around the answers of these and other questions, which will focus on the need for an image of the Other for constructing one’s self-identity, among both the Orthodox Christian population (Bulgarians, Serbs, Wallachians and Macedonians) and Muslims population (Macedonians and Albanians) in Western Macedonia. I present several particular cases of *gastarbeiters* who returned to their birth places and played a role in preserving local cult sites that became important “lieux de mémoire” for the formation of local identity

**Key Words:** labour migration, identity, religiousness, co-existence, *lieux de mémoire*, Orthodox, Muslims, Balkans.

#### РЕЛИГИЈСКА ОБЕЛЕЖЈА ИДЕНТИТЕТА У КОНТЕКСТУ РАДНИЧКИХ МИГРАЦИЈА У ЗАПАДНОЈ МАКЕДОНИЈИ, БУГАРСКОЈ И ИСТОЧНОЈ СРБИЈИ

##### Резиме

Ово истраживање засновано је на раду на терену који је обављен у периоду између 2001. и 2009. у источном делу Србије (у општинама Зајечар, Књажевац и Пирот, међу српском, влашком и бугарском популацијом), у Бугарској и у западном делу Републике Македоније (нарочито у општинама Дебар и Струга, међу православним Македонцима и Македонцима муслиманима, такозваним *Торбешима*). У свим овим случајевима ради се о локалним заједницама код којих постоји традиција *гурбета* (сезонских миграција) међу припадницима мушког дела популације у виду *печалбара* на Балкану у току прве половине двадесетог века, *гастарбајтера* у Аустрији и Немачкој у току друге половине двадесетог века, а у данашње време сезонских радника у северној Италији, углавном из Македоније.

Основна питања на која покушавам да дам одговор јесу: Како ова врста „живота у покрету“ доводи до промена у свакодневном животу и културним специфичностима локалних заједница у одређеним областима, као последица друштвених и економских промена у току неколико последњих деценија? Која је улога религије у конструисању идентитета појединца, како у иностранству, тако и у родном селу? Како се дугогодишњи сезонски радник опходи према „месту памћења“ (фр. *lieux de mémoire*) локалне заједнице (црква, капела, цамија) онда када се врати, и зашто је то део идентитета који је попримио док је „гледао у огледало другачијег“, у условима сезонског рада? Да ли ће данашњи привремени

сезонски радници из Бугарске пратити искуство *гастарбајтера* из бивше Југо-славије или ће се селити за стално?

Мој чланак заснива се на одговорима на ова и нека друга питања, која ће се усредсредити на потребу да имамо слику Другог како бисмо изградили сопствени идентитет, како међу православном популацијом (Бугари, Срби, Власи и Македонци), тако и међу муслиманском популацијом (Македонци и Албанци) у западној Македонији. Представићу неколико засебних случајева *гастарбајтера* који су се вратили своја родна места, а по-том играли важну улогу у чувању локалних културних места која су постала „места памћења“ за потребе формирање идентитета локалне заједнице.

**Кључне речи:** радне миграције, идентитет, религиозност, коегзистенција, *lieux de mémoire*, православље, муслимани, Балкан.

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