

POWER AND THE DEFINITION OF THE SACRED; POPULAR RELIGIOUS REGIME FORMATION IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

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UDK 39:291.4:323(497.15)
 Izvorni znanstveni članak
 Priljeno 16. II. 1993.

The dichotomy sacred-profane has long been fundamental to the study of religion and has resulted in the assumption of the existence of two separate realms. The rigidity of that separation as well as its static implications have met with severe criticism. One of its consequences was the development of a more dynamic approach of secularization; but curiously, sacralization, the logical opponent, has received virtually no attention at all. This article is an ethnographic attempt to overcome that one-sidedness. It illustrates that sacralization and secularization may be approached as dynamically related elements in a power process aimed at the collective definition of the status of a mountain in a Herzegovinian rural community. At a more general level, the article pleads for systematically investigating processes of meaning in terms of processes of power.

“... we (...) are led to believe that the order we see is not of our own making, but rather an order that belongs to the external world itself.” David Kertzer (1988)

INTRODUCTION

Among participants of popular devotions and students of religion the assumption seems to prevail that the world consists of two separate domains, the sacred and the profane¹. This established view can be traced back to such influential sociologists as Emile Durkheim or Mircea Eliade, who refers to the sacred and the profane as “two modalities divided by an abyss” (1959:14). It has nonetheless been the target of criticism. Evans-Pritchard (1956) and Malinowski (1925), for example, observed that this dichotomy was far too rigid and failed to leave any leeway for situational flexibility. Recently, Eade and Sallnow endorsed this view when observing that “the sacred and the profane exist as categories created by different interest groups who define boundaries according to the social groups to which they belong”

¹This article is based on literature, Franciscan archival documents, and field work conducted at intervals from 1985-91. It was written some 15 months before the (civil) war broke out in Yugoslavia. During short visits in the late summer of 1991 and spring of 1992, I noted that inter- and intraethnic tensions were increasing, and that the mountain which adopts a central place in this article, once again became the focus of vicious local power politics. I hope to describe this in the near future. Almost all the names used here are pseudonyms. I would like to thank my informants in Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere in Europe for their assistance and hospitality. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ger Duijzings, Petar Jelečanin, Ed Koster, Daan Meijers, Leonard Oroč, Fred Spier and Kitty Verrips for their comments and suggestions. Of course I myself bear the sole responsibility for the contents of this article.

(1991:13). Others have criticized the static nature of the established approach, in which the sacred is viewed as a given. They have propagated a dynamic approach centering on the genesis and evolution of sacred representations and practices (e. g. Asad, 1983; Douglas, 1982; Firth, 1981; Kertzer, 1988; Lukes, 1975). In short, it is the process of sacralization rather than "the sacred" that should be the subject of study.

This article elaborates upon this view. It examines the sacralization of Šipovac (locally called Križevac, Mountain of the Cross), the mountain that occupies such an important position in the complex of ritual activities at the pilgrimage centre of Međugorje in Herzegovina. At a more general level, it attempts to promote the systematic study of sacralization in conjunction with secularization².

Sacralization can be conceived as an aspect of religious regime formation, more specifically as a strategic instrument³. Specialists within these regimes utilize this instrument to establish and consolidate their power. Sacralization implies defining an object, a phenomenon or an element in the landscape in religious terms and underpinning this definition by way of ritual activities. Specialists endeavour in this way to further a sacral monopoly. Their strategy aspires to impose "their" definition and the ritual activities it entails on as many people as possible, excluding all the while those of other specialists and laymen within other religious regimes. Although sacralization is performed by religious entrepreneurs, in its outcome it is equally determined by unanticipated conditions and the unintended effects of the conduct of these religious entrepreneurs. This is one of the reasons why sacralization should be viewed as a relatively autonomous process with its own dynamics.

MOUNT ŠIPOVAC - A TOPOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION

From the valley of the Neretva River, a path carved into the stone ascends via a myriad of hairpin bends to the Brotnjo plateau in the southwest of Herzegovina. The five villages that join to form the parish of Međugorje are in the southern part of the plateau. The pilgrimage site is centered around two of these villages, Međugorje and Bijakovići. With approximately 400 houses, Međugorje is twice as large as Bijakovići. The two villages are separated by a strip of fertile land about 1000 metres wide and 3000 metres long, divided into small plots. For centuries, this "oasis" in the barren, rocky region has been a bone of contention, causing hostility between the two villages.

Like a sheltering arch around the villages, a spur of the Trtla Mountains separates them from the rest of the southern Brotnjo plateau. The spectacular finishing point of the mountain range is the 1200-metre high peak of Mount Šipovac. From its top, one has a view of almost the whole Brotnjo. This awe-inspiring peak is officially within the borders of Međugorje. The rest of the mountain range is on Bijakovići territory. The villagers have built their homes like a ribbon along the foothills just above the fertile valley.

² Cf. Goudsblom (1988:204), who noted that there is not really any counterconcept to secularization. The author feels this is related to the dominant view that people "have actually always been religious", a view Douglas (1982) also referred to with more than a hint of scepticism.

³ The theoretical concept of religious regime is discussed at greater length in Bax (1987). See also Wolf (1991). For the implications of adopting this perspective for the study of "popular religion" see also Bax (1991).

The feelings aroused by the steep mountainsides with here and there a sparse touch of green are highly ambivalent. It is a popular hunting region, but it is also the home of the lethally poisonous *poskok* snake and the wolves that attack the villages in the winter. It is where people come to hide out from the guerilla, the police and until recently the blood feud, but it is also where people come to "settle accounts". Precious water comes from the mountains, but so do the dreaded hot fall winds and hail storms that can destroy entire vineyards and tobacco crops. In short, the Trtla Mountains bring joy and danger alike and have always appealed to the imagination, especially Mount Šipovac.

THE FRANCISCAN CONQUEST AND THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF GRMLJAVINAC (1340-1460)

Since time immemorial, people have been convinced the Trtla Mountains are inhabited by spirits and anthropomorphic powers (cf. Vego, 1981; Soldo, 1964; Đorđević, 1953). The intentions of these beings are not apt to be kindly, but the conviction is widespread that sacrifices can mollify them. Gromovnik, the spirit of thunder, is still feared today. From his refuge on the Šipovac, which the elderly still call Grmljavinac (Mountain of Thunder), he can go into a veritable rage of fury. In the heat of summertime, he routes gushes of scorching fall winds into the valley, causing spontaneous fires, and in autumn his devastating hail storms are equally feared.

The people of Međugorje have always suffered most severely from Gromovnik, since they live closest to the heat of his breath. In the adjacent part of Bijakovići, his deeds have long made everyone shudder just as fearfully.

In 1337, Franciscan priests came to this region at the request of a Bosnian monarch. They were confronted with a relatively extensive ritual aimed at averting the dangers and appeasing Gromovnik (Quaestio, 1979). In the "dangerous season", the family elders of Međugorje would climb the mountain. Uttering incantations, they would sprinkle water and strew young plants and young fruit. Once they had arrived at the top, they would sacrifice a young sheep or goat. And they closed the ceremony by lighting fires around the peak.

Very little can be said with any certainty about the origins of these representations and practices: the "sacralization" of the mountain. Vego (1981) and Soldo (1964) felt they were linked to a religion of the Bogumiles that had been prevalent there in the past. It was an early heretical movement that had dominated parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as is evident from the numerous colossal gravestones or *stećci* that can still be seen in the region (cf. Fine, 1975). Judging from the number of gravestones, Međugorje was a religious centre at the time. None of these giant gravestones have ever been found in Bijakovići. This might have to do with the power relations between the two villages at the time. For the performance of the ritual, the people of Bijakovići had to rely on the family elders of Međugorje, whom they paid for their services. If however the ritual failed to have the desired effect, the villagers of Bijakovići would take reprisals. The antagonism between the two villages could be heated, and the destruction of personal property and even manslaughter were not uncommon (Quaestio, 1979).

One of the first tasks of the Franciscan missionaries was to obliterate this religious regime, which they felt just served to sow dissension, and to establish their own regime. Instruments used in the process sometimes bore a resemblance to those of modern-day Peace Corps workers. They taught villagers to build their houses of stone so they would not go up in flame as easily. They helped villagers cope in times of drought by digging deeper wells and saving water in reservoirs. They also taught them to plant rows of cypress trees as natural windbreakers at their fields. They organized a warning system and set up mutual aid groups to help extinguish fires. Another aspect of their strategy was focused on incorporating the holy mountain into their own regime. Two facets are striking in this connection. Firstly, they shifted the ritual midpoint to the family units within the villages. This resulted in a mixture of clan ancestor worship and Roman Catholic rituals, as I have described at length elsewhere (Bax, 1992). Secondly, on the Catholic holidays they organized processions to Mount Šipovac to venerate Christ, God and the Virgin Mary and invoke their protection.

The Franciscan Christianization campaign was particularly successful in Bijakovići. In Međugorje, however, the builders of the new regime met with opposition from the established religious specialists, whose power position was undermined (Vego, 1981; Quaestio, 1979). It nonetheless looked as if a prominent "paganistic" place of sacrifice to subdue the forces of nature was being transformed into a Roman Catholic place of worship. The Ottoman occupiers soon put a stop to this. Around 1460, these empire builders reached the northwest border area of their empire. They closed off the mountain for the local population and started to use it as a military stronghold.

OTTOMAN RULE AND REHABILITATION FOR GROMOVNIK (1460-1870)

The Turkish rule was long, severe and at times cruel. But the Turks were also opportunists. They implemented a policy mainly aimed at the extraction of maximal surpluses (Cole, 1981; Drobnjaković, 1960). The Franciscans, always versatile and resourceful, ingeniously tapped into this. In exchange for organizing and guaranteeing the regular payment of tribute, a number of priests managed to gain a certain extent of latitude in the religious field. Backed by the "Muslim enemy", they were thus free to build up their own religious regime in Bijakovići, including a churchyard and a chapel (Bax, 1992). But the war economy of the sultan was a demanding one, and as soon as the Brotnjo seemed to have been pacified, a similar agreement was made with the other "party". For a regular remuneration, which they recouped from the population, the clan elders of Međugorje were granted the sole right to hold ritual meetings on Mount Šipovac in honour of Gromovnik. Repeated efforts of the Franciscans to undo this "injustice" were all in vain. They did manage, for a certain fee, to get permission to administer the sacraments at the homes of the Međugorje villagers who requested them. According to Franciscan sources, this enabled clergymen to keep some manner of foothold in what had now become the territory of their opponents (Quaestio, 1979). In this fashion, the divide-and-rule policy of the Turkish occupier contributed toward the rise and the long-term perpetuation of two separate local religious regimes, each with its own sacral centre and both characterized by limited expansion potentials.

SERBIAN PENETRATIN, ETHNIC VIOLENCE AND THE GENESIS OF MOUNT KRIŽEVAC (1875-1941)

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire suffered a rapid decline. Due to internal problems and external pressure, it had to relinquish more and more of its territory. At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Austria Hungary gained control over Bosnia, a province rich in raw materials, and the adjacent province of Herzegovina. Geopolitical considerations played an important role in this usurpation. The Habsburgs were wary of the Italian interest in this part of the Balkans because the Croats, who were then strongly represented in the western part of the region, had traditionally felt more closely associated to the culture of Ancient Rome. In order to keep the usurpation drives of other states in check, the Habsburgs stimulated a migration movement that had already gained momentum among the Turks. They thus promoted the further development of a multi-national society, which would be more difficult to incorporate. In addition to Austrians and Slovenians, Serbs were also encouraged to seek employment in the rapidly developing industries. Serbs were the main group to settle virtually throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina as farmers and tradesmen with the capital they had accumulated. This meant a considerable reinforcement of the Serbian element in the ethnic patchwork.

According to elderly informants, it must have been around the turn of the century - and the archives of the Franciscans in Humac confirm this - that a group of newcomers settled on the fallow land on the border between Međugorje and Bijakovići. Members of three clans of Serbian shepherds had purchased a sizeable strip of barren land there and the right to water their cattle at the nearby Lukoc River from the Habsburg authorities. For the tiny community, it must have been an ominous invasion. History proved them right: ethnic differences date back to that period and were to set the tone for almost half a century of social, political and religious life⁴.

Time and again, the large herds of sheep and goats broke loose and caused considerable damage to the crops of the local Croats. Dissension and irritation were also caused by the Serbian longing for a sacred place of their own. Local sources have it that they offered money to the clan elders of Međugorje to build a church of their own on the lowest slope of the Šipovac. But the plan did not materialize⁵.

After the fall of the Habsburg Empire in 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was founded and new opportunities opened up for the Serbian community to further develop. From the start, Serbia strived for a hegemonic position in the Kingdom. It was not until after 1919, when the Serbian monarch abolished all the democratic institutions by way of a coup and replaced them by fervent anti-Croatian functionaries who were backed by the

⁴ I was not to have access to any detailed information about the ethnic conflicts at the time until the summer of 1991. It had been kept "secret" and as I realized in retrospect, my informants had always managed to steer my questions in some other direction. This sudden openness had to do with the ethnically based battle already raging in full force in Croatia and on the verge of breaking out in my research region as well.

⁵ The Habsburg ruler had never ordered an actual military occupation of the mountain, nor had the mountain ever been transferred to the Franciscans, as there was widespread distrust of these nationalistic, militant leaders. But when the Serbian opponent wanted to set up a religious "outpost" there, the secular authorities intervened and for the time being, the mountain was off limits for everyone.

Četnici, a militant Serbian division of the state police, that these possibilities were to expand considerably. With official support - and here elderly Croatian informants speak of pure intimidation by *Četnici* - the Serbian community was able to confiscate the farmland of the original population. The land allegedly belonged to people who had either joined or at any rate sympathized with the newly founded Croatian Peasants' Party, a political organization that aspired to greater independence and the improvement of the position of peasants, many of whom were in a wretched situation due to the rapidly penetrating money economy and the escalating economic crisis (Bičanić, 1936). Part of the hard core of this party consisted of *Ustaše*, the later adversaries of the *Četnici* (cf. Bax, 1992).

Supported by the expansionist (Serbian) government, the Serbs launched a new "assault" on Mount Šipovac. This time it was successful and a house of prayer, be it of modest dimensions, was built on the mountain. A Serbian Orthodox religious regime thus seemed to have been formally established. But that was not all. Đure Smoljan, a Serbian merchant who had made his fortune elsewhere, had settled with some of his relatives in the centre of Međugorje. He provided his local fellow tribesmen with groceries and he acquired the sole right to purchase *mošt* (grape juice) and grain from the local farmers. Smoljan became an extremely powerful man, and it was on his initiative that plans were made for the construction of a Serbian Orthodox monastery at the foot of the Šipovac. Local opposition was firmly suppressed with the help of *Četnici* and the construction work could begin. It looked as if Mount Šipovac would become the centre of a dominant Serbian religious regime. Added to the confiscation of land and the economic exploitation, this too served to make for a fertile breeding ground for the *Ustaše* movement, which had a major nucleus here in the Second World War. The movement became the organizational hub of the resistance against the "foreign invaders". The destruction of property, the mutilation of individuals and even manslaughter were soon to be everyday occurrences. The Serbs responded in kind, sometimes with even greater violence, and were backed in the process by mobile units of *Četnici*. Quite a few people fled, and especially the Croats sought refuge in the United States and Canada, where they later supported the cause by donating money. "It was like in the Krajina of today", an elderly respondent informed me in the summer of 1991. He had lost four brothers during this period, and added that his family was not an exception in this respect.

The trials and tribulations of violence and economic crisis were made even more trying by a drought that lasted three years (Bičanić, 1936; Maček, 1957; Soldo, 1964). In an interview about this "black period", Janko Babić, the young chaplain of the parish at the time, observed: "The time was ripe for a Divine intervention". What he was presumably trying to say was that the Franciscan leadership felt the time was ripe for intervention and for the establishment of their hegemony over the other religious regimes. Janko Babić continued: "Father Brno, the leading priest of the parish, was summoned to Rome in 1932. In a dream, Pope Pius XI had been told to build a huge cross on the highest mountain in Herzegovina in honour of the nineteen hundredth commemoration of the crucifixion of Christ. According to the Holy Father, having this cross in the vicinity would mean salvation for numerous believers". The pope promised the priest financial backing for the execution of the Divine task. After he returned home, father Brno conveyed this message to the people. "Everyone was yearning for the drought to end, and since it meant extra earnings for all and sundry,"

Babić added matter-of-factly, "almost everyone joined in, even a couple of Serbs and relatives of the clan elders of Međugorje". A building contractor was hired and almost every day, young and old came together to chop stones and carry them 1200 metres up the steep mountainside, along with the mortar and water and whatever else was needed for the construction of the cross. A year later, the fourteen-metre high edifice had been completed. "And from that day on," Babić concluded, "nature has never again produced the same kind of disastrous effects". An annual procession of prayer to the mountaintop, which was renamed Križevac in 1933, ensued. This is how the Franciscan hegemony was once again established and how the mountain came to signify reconciliation and unity (under Catholic supervision). Gromovnik's regime seemed to have disappeared from the public sphere once and for all, and has been confined since then to the private, domestic sphere. And the Serbian regime was not to survive for long, as will become clear below. Some elderly people said with contempt in their voices that those "unwashed barbarians" were lazy good-for-nothings; they would come to the site carrying stones from the supply they happened to have at hand for the expansion of their own religious edifices.

TITO'S STAR SHINES EVERYWHERE - INCLUDING ON MOUNT TITOVAC (1941-1981)

The relative peace was not to last long. Old clan feuds were revived and intertwined with ethnically linked acts of revenge. "One hand on the trigger at all times", was the way one veteran described the tension in the thirties. The following decade was to bring large-scale traumatic changes. With the support of the Axis powers, the Independent State of Croatia was founded. The Ustaše were soon in control. Officially supported by the Roman Catholic clergy in the beginning, this movement implemented a "Croatization" policy that outdid the Četnici in pure cruelty (Petranović, 1963). All the Serbs who lived on Croatian territory had to disappear. It was an outright massacre. In the Brotnjo region that was part of the new Croatian state, the Ustaše were equally ruthless. The parish of Međugorje was "swept clean" of Serbs, as an ex-member of the Ustaše put it in 1991. He accompanied his words with the gesture of someone brushing dirt off his hands. The despised aliens were driven together at a spot a few kilometres from the village, the story has it, where they were shot and tossed into the ravine⁶. Međugorje was "liberated" from "the other race". But the region had to pay a vast price. Groups of Četnici later attacked the Croats in much the same way, and later still it was Tito's partisans who "pacified" this Ustaša hotbed with a brutality no one was apt to ever forget. Elsewhere I describe these horrendous times, and the wounds that have never completely healed (Bax, 1992). In theory, they came to an end when World War Two was over and Tito established his regime. But the former partisans who then took over the administration instituted a veritable reign of terror in the Brotnjo. My informants have repeatedly told me that barely a family in this part of the plateau survived the atrocities unscathed. Incarceration, torture, rapes, confiscations - these were only a few of the horrors of Tito's reign. Even the Roman Catholic clergy, who had certainly not remained on the sidelines during the bitter

⁶ No one knows the exact figures, but the estimates vary from 200 000 to anywhere from 800 000 to 900 000.

tribal battling in the Second World War, suffered severe losses. Of the clergy who had not fled the country, many were massacred by Tito's men. Together with part of the local population, the priests of Međugorje toiled on the Titovac, the name the Šipovac went by at the time. The monastery and the church of the Serbs were demolished, and the villagers had to use the stones to build a five-pointed star, the symbol of Communist Yugoslavia, on the old plinth of the razed cross at the top of the mountain. The Titovac became a state shrine where the "heroes of the people" were annually commemorated under the supervision of Communist Party bosses. Anyone who failed to attend these ceremonies ran the risk of a jail sentence or worse.

THE QUEEN OF PEACE CHOOSES HER OWN MOUNTAIN (1981-1984)

It was the spring of 1978. An old woman by the name of Vida Pavlović was in the vegetable garden next to her house in Bijakovići spreading out the fertilizer that had been so carefully saved up. Her neighbour and her nephew came by to inform her that her youngest son, her darling, had been found at the nearby well, his throat slit. He was the last surviving son, her other two sons and her husband had been killed in the war and her only daughter was still missing. Vida knew right away who had done it and despite her age, she swore to get revenge; her nephew was a witness to this. No longer bound to this life by any family ties, she went out with her husband's rifle and shot the man who had murdered her son, and then killed herself.

In the past few years, I have heard about a number of these blood feuds set during and after the war. Incited by the conduct of the partisans and often aroused by disputes about rights to land that had been confiscated by Serbs, the old clan feuds flared up again. In legal and religious circles in the region, this was taken to be an alarming development. The new wave of violence and dissension was particularly menacing for the local church. Bishop Žanić saw it as a pretext for the expansion of his own sphere of influence and a way to further reduce the power of the Franciscans, traditionally the leaders of the people. With the help of government authorities, Mons. Žanić had been making every effort to encroach upon the domain of the Franciscans. The bishop implemented a policy of fragmentation and isolation, bearing a surprising similarity to what is happening militarily today (1991) in Croatia⁷. The Franciscans had already lost the Mountain of the Cross, and now felt there were indications that the centre of Međugorje parish would soon fall into the bishop's hands as well. Then they would be sure to lose the smaller villages of the parish including Bijakovići. It is thus understandable that the Franciscan leaders should have taken advantage of whatever opportunities were at hand to put a stop to the usurpation. The apparitions of Mary that started in 1981 and are still going on today were one of these opportunities. "The Mother of God came to give us a helping hand - and we helped her" was the unambiguous comment of a priest who worked there at the time. Elsewhere, I have dealt with this intra-church rivalry, its background and the pacifying effect of the Franciscan regime (Bax, 1990a; 1990b; 1992); here a different

⁷ When I came in the late summer of 1991 and went to this open cemetery with only a simple commemorative plaque, bullets whizzed past me into the wood. My informant, who had put on a disguise for the occasion, had warned me that groups of armed men had been sighted at various historical places in the region. Creeping like tigers, we were able to leave the field of fire of the Četnici, which is what my informant felt sure they were.

aspect is relevant. For the promotion of a devotion, a sacred place is usually, though not always, called for (cf. Eade and Sallnow, 1991). Mount Titovac, invested with an immense sacral value, had been placed outside the religious domain and thus could not be activated, which is why the Franciscans aimed at Bijakovići. Mary not only appeared on Bijakovićian territory, via a series of messages the Holy Virgin also informed her audience that Mount Crnica (second in height only to the Titovac) was the place she would sanctify (Rupčić, 1983). "The Queen of Peace chose her own mountain", one of the local priests observed.

Thus a new type of shrine emerged: a holy "station" visited daily by the Virgin Mary, who conveyed her messages and instructions to an international audience.

THE KRIŽEVAC RETRIEVED; SACRAL EXPANSION AND DIFFERENTIATION (1983-1991)

The mass influx of pilgrims did not fail to affect the nearby peasant village. In no time, a considerable portion of the population had made a fortune⁸. After deducting sums for bribes to officials for building permits and so forth, the money was soon converted into boarding houses. The constructions industry, the service industry and the local transportation industry all flourished and relatives were called back from their work abroad to come help out. The seers and their families also managed to considerably improve their position.

No wonder the people of Međugorje, the village on the other side of the valley, could not witness all this without envy and jealousy. All the old antagonism was in the air again. The church and the parish may have been on Međugorje ground, but most of the pilgrims wanted to stay as close as possible to the holy mountain. The people of Međugorje looked for ways to get a share of the revenues coming in from the religious tourists.

The situation altered in their favour when the Franciscan leaders of the devotion were confronted with several serious problems. Stimulated by the pilgrims, the seers gained a level of independence that certainly had not been the intention. An organization of their own, daily excursions to the Crnica, and alternative prayer services at their homes, where the messages from the Virgin Mary played a crucial role, all combined to form a threat to the established, clerically led devotional regime. In order to avert this danger, the local clergy stimulated the emergence of a group of "second generation seers". It is alleged that these youngsters, living at the foot of the Titovac, also received messages from the Holy Virgin. Indeed, they took over the role of their predecessors: at the church, in receiving guests, and in having their messages spread to an equally wide audience. The entire religious communication apparatus has been rallied to stimulate the novices and their messages and to make every effort to isolate the first generation of seers.

These manoeuvres aroused the resentment of the local Bijakovići people. They thwarted their rivals and prohibited their access to the mountain. In order to settle this question and channel the tensions, several of the Franciscans joined forces with a few of the lay believers to create an alternative on their own "turf". With the capital that had been

⁸ This is just one more illustration of Max Weber's premise that on the level of organization and dynamics, religion and politics are virtually identical. Cf. Collins (1990), who used Weber as his point of departure and went on to advocate devoting renewed attention to this field of research. Cf. also Wolf (1991).

accumulated by then, the Franciscans took legal action (allegedly on behalf of local villagers who fronted for them) to get the Titovac back under the control of the original owners, the Croatian Petrović and Širola clans, who still dwelled at the foot of the mountain. A bribe here and there did a world of good. Little more than a year later (1984), the old owners had their mountain back. But the star, the symbol of the secular ruler, had to disappear as well. That was one more thing money could do. In the end, the cross was restored in its old glory.

But the mountain also had to intrigue people and induce them to come to it. And in this connection, a sacralization process was put into motion. (I was able to experience various of its components first hand in Međugorje in 1990, though not a word was said about it in Bijakovići, where the very idea was dismissed with contempt.) Recurrent themes included the sudden appearance and the equally sudden disappearance of large fires on the mountain, brightly shining balls that were attracted by the cross, healing for the people who had watched them intensely, the sun bowing before the cross, sparkling aureoles, and gleaming figures of Mary and Christ. All of these things were said to happen there, though no one actually witnessed anything himself. The propaganda machine worked, as everyone in Bijakovići could attest. "It is not Apparition Hill, but it definitely is special. I ought to go there one of these days". This was the kind of comment I would hear the pilgrims make.

It was not long before the Križevac became a popular attraction. Ever since 1985, every day a group of pilgrims has gone to the mountain top, where an outdoor Mass is held, and the Virgin Mary is said to convey her messages. Miraculous healing take place there, and once a week a nocturnal torchlight procession is organized to the Križevac. There is also ample material evidence that this is a flourishing religious enterprise. Homes have been converted into boarding houses and shops and stalls selling food, sweets and devotional objects now line the foot of the Križevac. Sidewalk cafés and restaurants have sprung up, there are two taxi stands and there is even a photographer to immortalize whatever pilgrims might be interested in, side by side with a cardboard seer.

As of old, Bijakovići and Međugorje still keep a careful eye on each other. Each and every manoeuvre one of them makes is soon to be countered by the other. As soon as "the competition" offers a better buy, prices are adjusted accordingly. One of the effects of all this is that the two centres have come to look more and more alike. This is presumably another reason why, as far as I know, the pilgrims have never been that interested in the fact that the two mountains had such totally different backgrounds. Both of them are sacred places where God's special grace is revealed every day via the Virgin Mary and her helpers, the seers. As Stirrat (1984) put it, pilgrims have a mythical or cosmological approach rather than a historical one. For the local villagers, with far more historical awareness in this respects, the differences are all the greater. The people of Bijakovići view their mountain as the only real one. In Međugorje, however, much more emphasis is put on the economic miracle that the Mother of Jesus bestowed. The two parties do agree on one point: both fear Gromovnik's fiery breath. For despite modern techniques, fires still spontaneously break out. Fire prevention is no longer backed by collective rituals; at most a certain extent of attention is still devoted to it in the home. But representations can sometimes be very stubborn, which is perhaps another reason why the elderly are still apt to refer to the mountain as Grmljavina.

CONCLUSION

In this article, a complicated political process was described, a power struggle focussed on the definition and domination of Mount Šipovac. Stages of sacralization alternated with stages of secularization in a relatively fixed pattern. The establishment of a new secular rule implied secularization. The dominating religious regime was relegated to the background, the mountain was closed off and pronounced military terrain. But to make regular control over the peasant population a feasibility, coalitions were entered into with religious leaders for varying lengths of time, thus once again setting in motion a process of sacralization as regards Mount Šipovac. The leaders within what was becoming a subordinate religious regime, often in pursuit of the recovery of their power, sacralized new domains or attributed a new meaning to already existing ones. The establishment of the Križevac, the genesis of Apparition Hill and the recent reconquering of the Titovac are just a few examples in this connection.

The course of the power struggle that went on for centuries on end and the development of the mountain's signification constituted a function of the religious and political integration of the local community into larger social frameworks. Initially a sacrificial site for quasi-autonomous local clans and only periodically visited by a few of the clan elders to appease a pantheistic god, the Šipovac changed into a Christian place of reconciliation of a parochial nature, and was then transformed into a widely visited international sacral "power station". Growing numbers of people became more and more directly involved in a sacralization process, which exhibited a clear tendency toward monopolization. But this development unintentionally generated a counter-movement in the sacral centre itself. As a result of the enormous expansion of the devotional centre, growing numbers of people became increasingly involved in providing material services for the pilgrims. This took place at the expense of their direct commitment to the sacral aspect. In other words, a process of relative secularization took place among the local population, a process evident at other devotional centres as well (cf. McKevitt, 1988; Vissers, 1989; Sallnow, 1991; Kselman, 1978). A development of this kind can expand far beyond the sacral centre and can even influence the entire devotional regime. Various pilgrimage sites and the devotional movements linked to them have thus fallen into obscurity or complete decay (cf. Crumrine and Morinis, 1990). Religious specialists have been known to try and alleviate an insidious development of this kind by bringing the tasks related to accommodating the pilgrims under their own direct supervision. Their virtually total monopoly over the accommodations at Lourdes, Fatima and Guadalupe are good examples.

In the course of time, problems in mastering and subduing nature have been transformed into problems of gaining control over human relations (cf. Spier, 1990). This development, which Elias (1971) referred to as a universal societal process, makes it easier to understand why the religious regime of Gromovnik was marginalized. On the other hand, the very fact that meteorological conditions for fire, rainstorms and hail are never completely predictable and manageable, makes it in part understandable why these old sacral representations live on. Process of managing nature and managing human beings are not synchronous, as

Elias (1956) observed. Perhaps this again is one reason why old "superstitions" can survive side by side with modern-day technology in so many societies.

In closing, some tentative observations that require more systematic attention. Up to 1991, the Šipovac has remained the object of extraordinary appreciation. One might wonder about the reason why, especially as so many previously holy mountains have long since largely or at any rate partially lost their surplus value. The first step toward an explanation might be found in the relation between the church and the state. In many societies, the state has acquired permanent prevalence over religious formations. In former Yugoslavia, however, the state had always remained poorly developed in this respect. Close and mutually antagonistic ties between religion and politics and relatively small differences in power between the regimes were characteristic of this country. The church and the state perceived each other as highly menacing and there was considerable mistrust in both directions, and this extended to include the field of material symbolic instruments of power. In the more general terms of the theoretical perspective adhered to here, this means the elites that belong to these two different sorts of regime of more or less equal strength largely turn to (and have always turned to) material symbolic representations in order to attract and keep the attention of their clientele. If new leaders are to establish their power in a situation of this kind or reinforce or consolidate their position, then a considerable extent of societal pressure is exerted upon them to do this at or as near as possible to some spot that already has a certain extent of sacral value (cf. Spier, 1990). This is one of the most effective ways to weaken the opponent's symbolic instruments of power and to reinforce those of one's own regime.

This simple notion is not only applicable to the case in question here. Similar processes have taken place and are still taking place today all across the globe. In Europe and South America, churches are constructed on pre-Christian shrines and crosses or national monuments are built on holy mountains. Buddhist and Inca temples have been founded on older holy places, and pilgrimage centres have sprung up at the graves of holy men and women. The destruction of more than four hundred churches in Croatia by army troops, who then planted "Serbian" flags on the ruins, fits into the same pattern.

Replacing one material symbol with another does not necessarily alter the representations in the minds of the clientele. Material representations are simpler to change than religious ideas.*

⁹ I shall deal elsewhere at length with the political economy of this pilgrimage site.

¹⁰ More details on this can be found in Bax, 1990b.

* Opaska uredništva: za iznesene teze u tekstu odgovara autor.

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MOĆ I DEFINICIJA SVETOGA; NASTAJANJE PUČKOGA RELIGIJSKOG REŽIMA U BIVŠOJ JUGOSLAVIJI

Sažetak

Autor istražuje proces sakralizacije brda Šipovac, središnjega mjesta hodočašća u Međugorju (Hercegovina), koje ima važnu ulogu u cijelome kompleksu ritualnih aktivnosti toga kraja. Rad sadrži uvodni teorijski okvir, te povijesno-političku pozadinu događanja oko brda Šipovac: od poganskoga štovanja Gromovnika, preko prevlasti franjevac, razdoblja turske okupacije i ponovne franjevačke dominacije, do srpskoga prodora, zatim socijalističkoga preimenovanja u brdo Titovac, pa sve do ukazanja Gospe 1981. godine, te gotovo cijeloga desetljeća Gospina slanja poruka mira preko *vidjelica*.

Teorijski okvir istraživanja čini analiza poimanja svetoga i profanoga u sociološkoj i antropološkoj literaturi. Autor se priklanja onim shvaćanjima koja u definicijama ovih pojmova zapažaju njihovu dinamičnu dimenziju i karakter (tj. sveto kao proces) te ga primjenjuje na etnografsko istraživanje. Članak se temelji na relevantnoj literaturi, franjevačkoj arhivi i dokumentaciji te na terenskom istraživanju (autor je u nekoliko navrata boravio na terenu u razdoblju od 1985. do 1991. godine). U nekoliko kraćih posjeta Hercegovini koncem 1991. i u prvoj polovici 1992. godine autor je zapazio izrazit porast među- i unutar-etničkih napetosti, što se odrazilo i na događaje oko brda Šipovac.