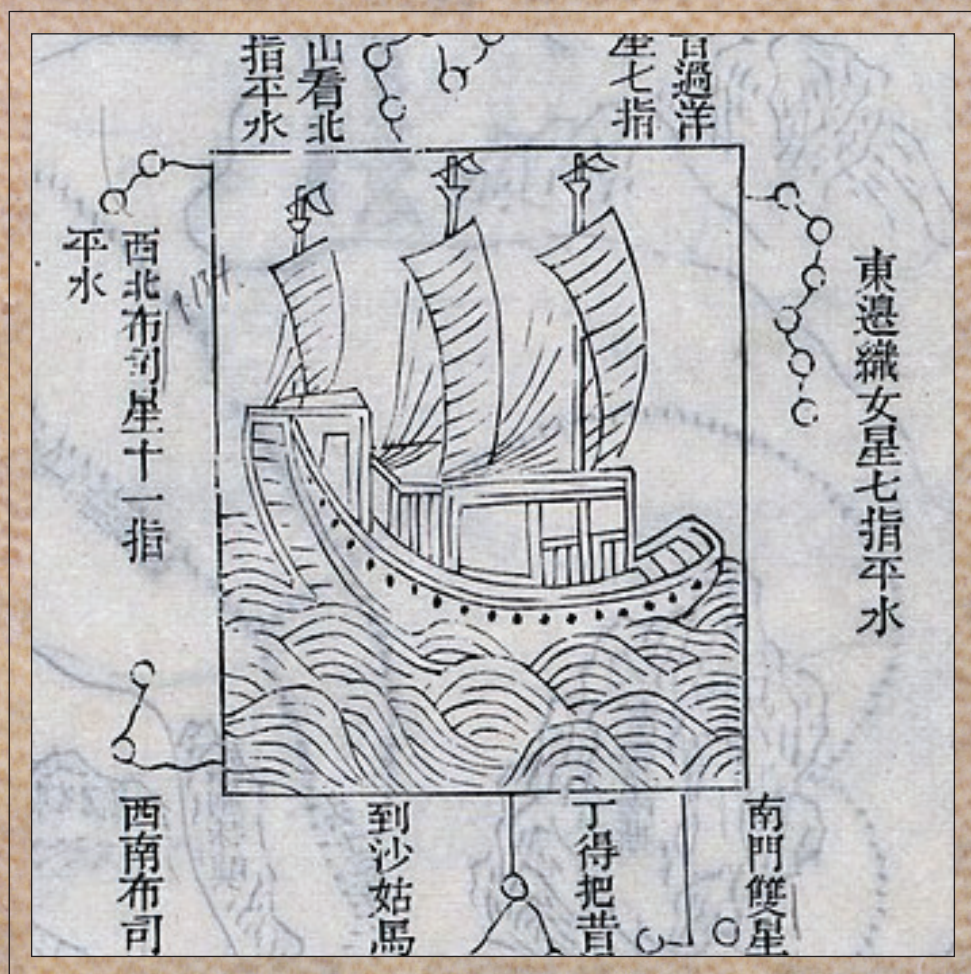




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SAILING THROUGH TIME: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NAVIGATION TECHNIQUES IN ZHENG HE'S NAUTICAL CHART AND EUROPEAN PORTOLAN CHARTS IN THE EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

‘Zheng He’s Nautical Chart’ and Portolan Charts were navigational tools used in China and Europe contemporaneously during the early fifteenth century and are visual representations of the navigation techniques practiced by Chinese and European mariners. However, there is a lack of comparative study of the navigation techniques presented in the charts, which often results in misunderstandings. This article bridges the gap by providing a detailed comparison of the navigation techniques through analysing the chart, historical records, and secondary research. It concludes that the similarities between Chinese and European navigation techniques far outweigh the differences. The finding indicates the diversity and unity inherent in human responses when confronted with comparable challenges.

Keywords: Zheng He’s Nautical Chart, portolan charts, navigation techniques, history of navigation techniques, China, Europe

NAVIGANDO NEL TEMPO: UNO STUDIO COMPARATIVO DELLE TECNICHE DI NAVIGAZIONE NELLA CARTA NAUTICA DI ZHENG HE E NEI PORTOLANI EUROPEI NEI PRIMI ANNI DEL QUINDICESIMO SECOLO

SINTESI

“La Carta Nautica di Zheng He” e i portolani sono strumenti di navigazione utilizzati in Cina ed Europa contemporaneamente nei primi anni del quindicesimo secolo e sono rappresentazioni visive delle tecniche di navigazione utilizzate dai marinai cinesi ed europei. Tuttavia, manca uno studio comparativo delle tecniche di navigazione presentate nelle carte, il che spesso genera malintesi. Questo articolo colma questa lacuna fornendo un dettagliato confronto delle

tecniche di navigazione attraverso l'analisi delle carte, dei documenti storici e della ricerca secondaria. Conclude che le somiglianze tra le tecniche di navigazione cinesi ed europee superano di gran lunga le differenze. La scoperta evidenzia la diversità e l'unità intrinseche delle risposte umane in presenza di sfide comparabili.

Parole chiave: Carta Nautica di Zheng He, portolani, tecniche di navigazione, storia delle tecniche di navigazione, Cina, Europa

INTRODUCTION

Nautical charts constitute a crucial cartographic tool for mariners and serves as a visual representation of navigation techniques. The earliest nautical charts, portolan charts, were first introduced in medieval Europe and commonly used for navigation across the Mediterranean and Atlantic from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. While portolan charts were widely used in Europe, mariners from Zheng He's fleet produced China's oldest surviving nautical chart, known as the 'Zheng He's Nautical Chart', representing a noteworthy accomplishment of Zheng He's maritime expeditions (1405–33).

Over the years, scholars from diverse cultural backgrounds have extensively studied these two types of charts, producing numerous academic studies (e.g., Campbell, 1987; Nicolai, 2014; 2016; Mills, 1970; Pfederer, 2012). However, while there is little non-Chinese study comparing the navigation techniques depicted in these charts, the limited Chinese studies on the subject often struggle with oversimplified narratives, framing one side as either 'advanced' or 'backward' in comparison to the other (Zhang, 2004; Zhu, 2005; Yang, 2006; Lai, 2014; Liang, 2016). This article aims to provide a more detailed comparison of these two types of charts and the navigation techniques presented. It seeks to explore the similarities and differences in the applied navigation techniques between China and Europe during this period, bridging the research gap and prompting a reflection on the simplistic narrative that focuses on dissimilarities.

ZHENG HE'S NAUTICAL CHART AND THE REPRESENTED NAVIGATION TECHNIQUES

'Zheng He's Nautical Chart' (hereafter Zheng He Chart), or *Zheng He Hanghai Tu* (郑和航海图) in Chinese, was a set of nautical charts compiled in the Ming-dynasty military treatise *Wubei Zhi* (武备志) by Mao Yuanyi in 1621. Originally presented in scroll format, Zheng He Chart was adapted into 22 pages when incorporated into

Wubei Zhi, comprising 20 pages of nautical charts and 2 pages of ‘stellar diagrams’ (*Guoyang Qianxing Tu*, 过洋牵星图). A detailed analysis of these diagrams is provided in the following section.

Numerous studies have examined the navigation techniques documented in the Zheng He Chart (e.g., Zhu, 2005; Zhang & Chen, 2017; Chen, 2019). Building on these works, the author identifies five key techniques presented in the chart and categorizes them into three overarching groups: positioning and orientation (compass orientation, landmark positioning, and *guoyang qianxing* (过洋牵星), distance and speed measurement, and navigation safety (water depth measurement using sounding leads)).



POSITIONING AND ORIENTATION

Zheng He Chart features a significant number of annotations and instructions, referred to as ‘needle positions’ (*Zhenwei*, 针位) along the sailing routes specified in Zheng He Chart. The needle positions specify the orientation of the compass needle, demonstrating the extensive use of the compass by Zheng He’s fleet during its voyages to the Western Oceans. The use of compasses is further corroborated in historical records from Zheng He’s maritime expeditions. For instance, Gong Zhen, who participated in the seventh expedition, noted in his preface to *Records of Foreign Countries in the Western Oceans* (西洋番国志): ‘All [compasses] were made by cutting wood into discs, inscribing *tiangan dizhi* [天干地支, direction indicators], and floating the needle on water to indicate the direction of the vessel. [The compasses] were employed continuously, day and night for months without interruption’ (Gong, 2000, 5).

The record confirms that Zheng He’s fleet utilized engraved wet compasses as navigational instruments during their voyages. Gong Zhen later mentioned in the same text about the recruitment of ‘fire watchers’ (*huo zhang*, 火长, i.e., navigators): ‘They were provided with a *Zhenjing Tushi* [针经图式, Charts and Manuals of Compass Navigation] and were assigned specific duties. These responsibilities were of utmost importance, and negligence was strictly prohibited.’ (Gong, 2000, 5). *Zhenjing Tushi* refers to navigational guidebooks and charts with instructions for sailing. It is evident that the compasses and navigational charts were employed in tandem. Similar writings of other expedition members can be found in the records of other accompanying personnel (Fei, 1954; Ma, 2005).

These accounts suggest that the compasses used during Zheng He’s voyages to the Western Oceans were likely wet compasses. These devices consisted of a magnetic needle floating freely on the water’s surface within a bowl, enabling it to rotate and align with the Earth’s magnetic field to indicate direction. When stationary, the ends of the magnetic needle pointed toward the north and south directions. These compasses were inscribed with Chinese sexagenary cycle and trigrams, dividing the full circle into 24 directional sectors, each corresponding to 15° in the modern 360-degree system. A ‘single needle’ (*dānzhēn*, 单/丹针) denoted a primary direction (e.g., *Single Ding Needle* (丁针) or 195°), while a ‘sewn needle’ (*fèngzhēn*, 缝针) indicated an intermediate direction bisecting two adjacent sectors (e.g., *Kun-Shen Needle* (坤申针) or 232.5°). Collectively, the single and sewn needles provided 48 precise directional indicators, enabling highly accurate navigation for the fleet.

Based on this evidence, it is possible to infer how Zheng He’s fleet employed navigational charts and compasses: The navigator would start by confirming the north direction on the compass. Subsequently, he would refer to the chart or guidebook to determine the specific needle position and corresponding direction. Adjustments to the course were made by reading the degrees on the compass, ensuring accurate alignment with the intended route. For example, the instruction on the chart, ‘Setting sail from Taicang port and follow the *single Yi needle* (丹乙针)’, would require the fleet to head southeast in the *Yi* (乙) (105°) direction after departing from Taicang port.

Another crucial positioning technique depicted in the nautical chart is landmark positioning. Some scholars have highlighted that this technique is one of the chart's most distinctive feature. For example, Liang Xun believes that landmark positioning used by Zheng He's fleet 'can be considered as the first in the world in terms of its navigation function and accuracy' (Liang, 2016, 33). Similarly, Yang Xiaohong points out that landmark positioning in Zheng He Chart demonstrates high practicality, and the depiction of various landmarks in the chart significantly enriches its content, making it more informative than contemporary European Portolan Nautical Charts (Yang, 2006, 92).

Landmark positioning refers to the use of distinctive artificial structures and natural features along the coast or at sea as reference points for navigation during voyages. For example, Gong Zhen wrote in *Records of Foreign Countries in the Western Oceans*: 'The shapes of islands in the sea are not the same. The islands can be observed at various positions. Their shapes are taken as references, and the course is adjusted accordingly' (Gong, 2000, 5). The text indicates that the fleet adjusted its course according to the relative positions and shapes of landmarks. Similar descriptions of landmark positioning can be found throughout Zheng He Chart. For example, in one segment of the route, the instruction indicates that when *Mount Tantou* lies abeam, *Jiangpian Reef* is visible to the east, *Dafo Mountain* to the west; thereafter, *Dongxiqi Mountain* appears abeam. The text implies that Zheng He's fleet employed cross-bearing method to identify the ship's position using different landmarks.

In addition to the chart illustrating the sailing route, there are four supplementary *Guoyang Qianxing Tu* attached to Zheng He Chart. These four stellar diagrams visually codify the *guoyang qianxing* technique, a sophisticated method of celestial navigation. At the centre of each diagram, a sailing ship is depicted navigating the open sea, surrounded by the stars and constellations relevant to astronomical navigation in the region. Directional bearings, star names, and altitude measurements of the stars needed for astronomical navigation are annotated. The title and relevant explanations are clearly labelled to the right of each diagram.

Scholars define *guoyang qianxing* as a method of determining a vessel's latitude position at sea by observing the elevation of astronomical objects (Liu, 1989, 46–70). The term *guoyang qianxing* literally means 'cross the seas guided by the stars'. In practical terms, sailors would use a Chinese latitude hook to observe the height of astronomical objects while at sea. When using the hook, the navigator would hold the centre of one end of the board and extend his arms, orienting his gaze toward the sky. The upper edge of the board aligns with the targeted star, and the lower edge aligns with the horizontal line. They would then compare the observed height with the corresponding instructions marked on the diagram to determine the vessel's heading and position. The units used in this technique are 'finger' (指) and 'angle' (角). This technique involves measuring the angular height of astronomical objects above the sea horizon to ascertain the vessel's position and heading.

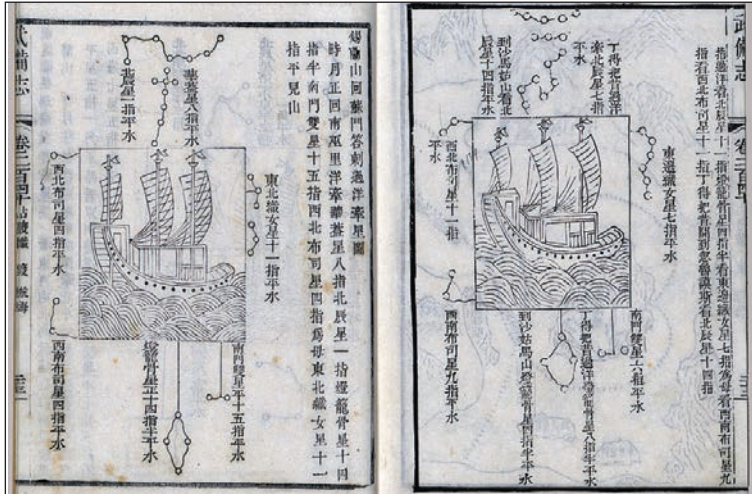


Fig. 2: Two of the four Guoyang Qianxing Tu in Zheng He Chart (Wikimedia Commons).

The four *Guoyang Qianxing Tu* included in the *Wubei Zhi* are titled: *From Ceylon¹ to Sumatra, Guoyang Qianxing Tu*, *From Longxian Yu to Ceylon, Guoyang Qianxing Tu*, *From Guli to Hormuz, Guoyang Qianxing Tu*, and *From Longxian Yu to Ceylon*. It should be noted that all the locations depicted in these four diagrams are situated in the open sea within the Indian Ocean west of the Strait of Malacca, where the fleet must travel in open waters away from shore. This indicates that, in the absence of natural and artificial features for landmark positioning, Zheng He's fleet relied on astronomical navigation techniques.

The use of astronomical navigation is also recorded by Gong Zhen in the preface to *Records of Foreign Countries in the Western Oceans*. He wrote:

The vast sea stretches endlessly, with water and sky connecting seamlessly. Looking around, there is no trace of any structures. It is only by observing the rising and setting of the sun and moon to distinguish between west and east, and the height of the stars that positioning became possible (Gong, 2000, 5).

The text implies that, while sailing in the open sea without visible landmarks, Zheng He's fleet relied on observing astronomical objects to ascertain their position.

1 After consulting works of Naval Marine Surveying and Mapping Institute in 1985 and 1988, it is clear that Ceylon is present-day Sri Lanka. Longxian Yu is present-day Pulau Beras in western Sumatra, Indonesia, and Guli is present-day Kozhikode or Calicut in India. The following comparisons of ancient and modern place names are all derived from these sources.

DISTANCE AND SPEED MEASUREMENT

Distance and speed measurement is closely related to positioning and orientation during maritime navigation. An accurate measurement of speed and distance is crucial for correctly determining a ship's heading. In Zheng He Chart, the instructions for the sailing routes extensively use *geng* (更) as the unit of time interval. In Ming Dynasty, ten *geng* constituted one day, making one *geng* equivalent to 2.4 hours. During Zheng He's maritime expeditions, the measurement of time usually relies on traditional Chinese methods, such as incense burning. When a ship maintained a constant speed over a period, multiplying the number of *geng* by the speed would yield the distance travelled.

There is debate regarding whether *geng* represents a unit of time or distance (Liu, 2016). Nevertheless, measuring a ship's speed is essential for any voyage. According to records of the early Ming-dynasty work *Shunfeng Xiangsong* (顺风相送), the method used for speed measurement was the 'throwing wood for speed measurement' method (Xiang, 2000). Modern Chinese scholars have identified this as a method involving throwing a piece of wood from the ship's bow into the sea, and then a person on board walks at the same speed as the drifting wood moves towards the ship's stern (He, 2016; Zhang & Chen, 2017). The ship's speed can be calculated by dividing the known length of the ship by the time it takes for both the person and the wood to reach the ship's stern simultaneously. It is then possible to infer the location of the ship based on the speed and the time travelled. Although the method seems primitive, it was a practical way of measuring speed in the absence of precise measuring tools.

NAVIGATION SAFETY

Safety is of utmost importance for any maritime activity. Two methods to ensure safety can be identified from Zheng He Chart. The first method involved marking navigational hazards such as rocks, shoals, and sandbars on the nautical chart, enabling the fleet to navigate around them. For example, in the charts, dense black dots represented shallow sandbars, large rocks indicated reefs, and a pattern of dense black dots interspersed with a few small circles denoted atolls and hidden sandbars.

Another method involved marking water depths to enable the fleet to assess whether it was safe to navigate through a particular area. Depth measurements on the nautical chart were represented by the unit *tuo* (托). Recent research has shown that the depth measuring tool used by Zheng He's fleet was sounding lines – thin ropes with a plummet at their ends (Wang, 1995; Zhu, 2005; Chen, 2019). A lead weighing about eight to nine kilograms was tied to a long cotton rope coated with oil and lowered into the water. The boundary between water and oil, observed upon retrieving the sounding lead, indicated the water depth. If sand was found on the lead when it was retrieved, it signalled shallow waters, indicating a suitable spot for the ship to anchor. If no sand was found, it meant the water was too deep or had a rocky bottom, and anchoring the ship was not advisable. The terms *da tuo* (打托) and *da shui* (打水) on the nautical chart referred to the sounding lead depth measurement technique, with one *tuo* representing the span of a person's

outstretched arms. For example, ‘seeing *Daqi and Xiaoqi Mountains* and the sounding is six or seven *tuos*’ meant the water depth after sighting *Daqi and Xiaoqi Mountains* is six or seven *tuos*. In this way, water depth measurement was also helpful for the fleet to determine its location.

It should be noted that any successful navigation relies on the combined use of different techniques. For example, two navigation route instructions in Zheng He Chart read as ‘Passing *Cha Mountain* to the northeast, using the “*Xun-Si needle*” [巽巳针] position [142.5°], after four *gengs*, the ship sees *Daqi and Xiaoqi Mountains*, and the sounding is six or seven *tuos*’, and ‘Heading within the five fingers of *Huagai star*², reaching within four fingers of *Beichen star*³ using then *Gui-Chou needle* [癸丑针] position [22.5°], after sixty-five *gengs*, the ship reaches *Geerdefeng*⁴ and *Hafueryu*⁵’.

These instructions indicate the integrated application of the five navigation techniques – compass orientation, landmark positioning, *guoyang qianxing*, distance and speed measurement, and water depth measurement with sounding leads – in both coastal and open-sea voyages. This integration is clearly represented in Zheng He Chart. From this point of view, Zheng He’s fleet demonstrated a high level of skill in using diverse navigation techniques to conduct ocean navigation.

PORTOLAN CHARTS AND THE REPRESENTED NAVIGATION TECHNIQUES

The term ‘Portolan Charts’ does not refer to a specific chart, but to a category of charts used in Europe from the thirteenth century. Its name originates from the Italian word *portolano*, meaning a rutter. The rutter serves as a collection of written sailing directions, whose texts list places, with distances and directions to reach them.

The oldest surviving Portolan chart is the *Carta Pisana*, which is believed to have been produced at the end of the thirteenth century. According to the statistics provided by Richard Pfloderer, from the oldest *Carta Pisana* to the late eighteenth century when portolan charts were replaced by other tools, a total of 1,826 charts with identifiable production dates were produced (Pfloderer, 2012, 140). Among these, there are 60 charts that are contemporaneous with Zheng He’s voyages, created between 1400 and 1450. For a comparison with Zheng He Chart, the portolan charts discussed in this section will be the charts produced before 1500.

Portolan charts are typically drawn on a single skin of leather, vellum, or parchment. Scholars have concluded the following characteristics of portolan charts (He & Han, 2020; Campbell, 1987): The most obvious of the common denominators that link *Carta Pisana* to later works is the network of interconnecting rhumb lines. The networks of lines on the charts, which radiate from the numerous ‘wind roses’

2 Huagai Star is part of Cassiopeia constellation.

3 Beichen Star is Polaris.

4 Geerdefeng is Cape Guardafui in present day Somalia.

5 Hafueryu is Cape Hafun in present day Somalia.

situated at different points on the map, are generated through compass observations. These lines represent paths of constant bearing, indicating specific directions for navigation. The lines are arranged in a coherent pattern, with sixteen equidistant intersection points around the circumference. The circle is, therefore, divided into sixteen equal parts, and each is joined to others through the centre point on the opposite side. Each circle is joined to most or all the others, providing a total of thirty-two directions, which are drawn in different colours. Another characteristic is the frequent exaggeration of coastal features and the simplification of land. Because of their navigational purposes, features related to sailing are emphasized in the charts. For example, islands and capes are often enlarged, while navigational hazards such as reefs and shoals are clearly indicated. Compared to maritime features, inland parts of the charts are often left blank or filled with imaginative contents.

As a crucial navigational tool from the medieval period to the early modern period, portolan charts are visual representations of the medieval and early modern European navigation techniques. To facilitate a comparison with the Zheng He Chart, this section will also categorize the navigation techniques presented in portolan charts into three categories: positioning and orientation, distance and speed measurement, and navigation safety.

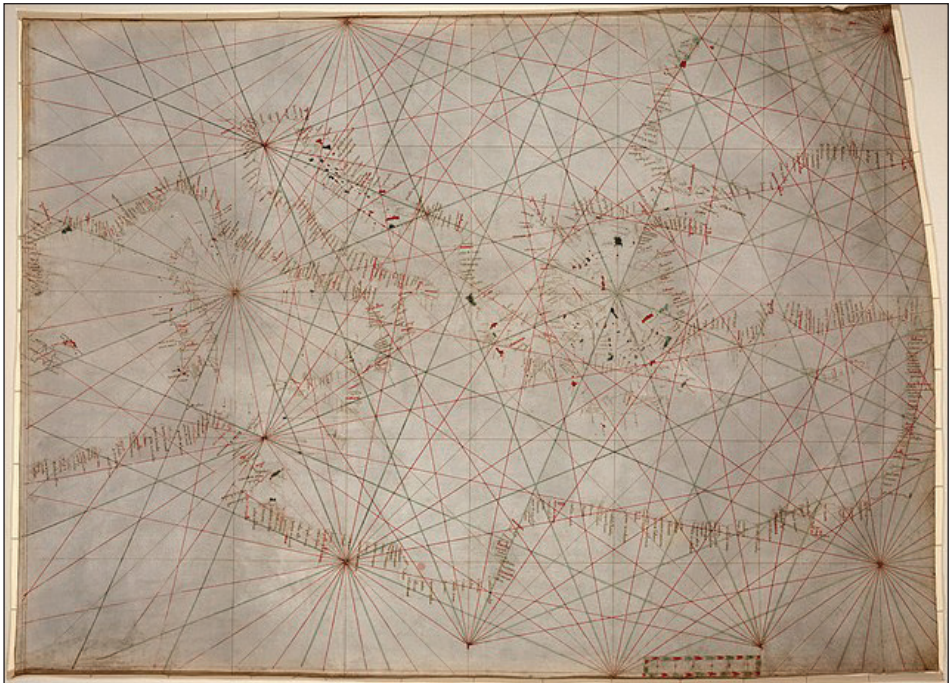


Fig. 3: A fourteenth-century portolan chart probably from Genoa. The rhumb line networks and wind roses can be seen in the chart (Wikimedia Commons).

POSITIONING AND ORIENTATION

As stated above, the term ‘portolan’ was derived from the Italian word for rutter – *portolano*. Scholars have discussed the relationship between the chart and the rutter (cf. Nicolai, 2014). Nevertheless, it can be concluded that both were closely related and cooperatively employed in navigation. Rutters, apart from depicting and identifying aspects such as water depth, anchorages, and landmarks, also contain extensive information on coastal and oceanic routes. Descriptions of these routes encompass details like compass directions, distances, geographical features, and landmarks, providing navigators with crucial guidance. Similar to Zheng He’s fleet, which used charts and *Zhen Jing* for navigation, European ships also utilized portolan charts and rutters together as essential tools for navigation.

Networks of rhumb lines is one of the significant features of portolan charts. The straight lines that intersect on portolan charts depict the sixteen (and later thirty-two) directions (or headings) of the mariner’s compass from a specific point. The main lines are aligned with the magnetic north pole, providing a navigational reference for mariners. The feature may indicate a strong relationship between the compass and portolan charts and some scholars even termed portolan charts as ‘compass charts’ (cf. Nicolai, 2016, 11–12). Although there are debates regarding whether the compass played a role in the invention of portolan charts (He & Han, 2020, 79; Campbell, 1987, 384–385), there is evidence indicating a close connection between the compass and portolan charts. The earliest European records of compass use date back to 1190, indicating that by the time portolan charts emerged, compasses were already in use in Europe. There are some historical texts that prove the co-use of charts and compass. For example, in the early fourteenth century, Italian writer Francesco da Barberino mentioned three navigational tools – maps, compasses, and hourglasses (Barberino, 1905, 125–126). In 2018, French scholars Michienzi and Vagnon studied communications among Italian mapmakers in the late fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries found in the Datini Archive in Prato, Italy (Michienzi & Vagnon, 2018, 22–33). They discovered that portolan charts were often sold along with compasses and dividers. These charts not only required high quality and precise craftsmanship but also the endorsement of experienced mariners and cartographers. One buyer even explicitly requested that a purchased chart be securely affixed to a compass for practical use. Based on these findings, it can be inferred that portolan charts were used in navigation and were commonly employed in conjunction with compasses.

There is little record on how exactly portolan charts were used in actual navigation practices. Therefore, researchers must rely on the information depicted on the charts and limited surviving historical texts for reference. For example, in the biography of the Castilian privateer Pero Niño by medieval

largar	avanzar		quartar	ritorno	
p una quarta	20	98	p 1 ^a quarta	51	5
p do quarta	38	92	p 2 ^a quarta	26	24
p tre quarta	55	83	p 3 ^a quarta	18	15
p quatro ^a	71	71	p 4 ^a quarta	14	10
p cinque ^a	83	55	p 5 ^a quarta	12	6 1/2
p six quarta	92	39	p 6 ^a quarta	11	4
p sete quarta	98	20	p 7 ^a quarta	10 1/2	2 1/2
p oito quarta	100	0	p 8 ^a quarta	10	0

Quarter (Angle of Deviation)	Alargar (Distance from course)	Avanzar (Advance on true course)	Quarter (Angle of return)	Ritorno (Return to course)	Avanzo di ritorno (Advance during return)
1	20	98	1	51	50
2	38	92	2	26	24
3	55	83	3	18	15
4	71	71	4	14	10
5	83	55	5	12	6 1/2
6	92	39	6	11	4
7	98	20	7	10 1/2	2 1/2
8	100	0	8	10	0
For every 100 miles			For every 10 miles alargar		

Fig. 4: The original toleta table (above) in Andrea Bianco's chart (Wikimedia Commons) and its transcription (below).

Spanish historian Gutierre Díez de Gamez, it is mentioned that in 1404, sailors aboard Pero Niño's ship 'set up their compasses furnished with magnet stones' and 'opened their charts and began to prick and measure with the compass' during a storm (Gamez, 2000, 39–40). Additionally, in 1483, the German priest Felix Fabri mentioned that sailors, when unable to see land or stars, could still determine their position by drawing curves from one line to another and from one point to another on the chart (Fabri, 1897). As Campbell (2023) argued, the direction finding in European navigation had become entirely magnetic by the time of the Carte Pisane (ca.1270), and the wind roses and rhumb lines on portolan charts were used in correlation with the compass to navigate. Based on these records and studies, scholars (Ash, 2007, 513; Bennet, 2017, 55–60) have concluded the following methods for using portolan charts.

To begin, the navigator draws a straight line between the departure port and the destination port on the chart. Then, he will identify a line that runs parallel or close to parallel to the intended route among the numerous rhumb lines on the chart. Subsequently, he follows this line back to the wind rose, adjusting the heading based on the angle of the line indicated on the rose. Additionally, there is often a scale marked on the chart, allowing the navigator to use rulers and dividers to calculate the distance between the two points. From this distance, they can then determine the time required to reach the destination based on the ship's speed.

In practice, navigators must account for currents, wind, and other environmental factors. These natural conditions may cause the ship to deviate from the planned course, requiring adjustments to the heading. Therefore, a revision of the course is needed. This revision is typically accomplished using a method called *toleta de marteloio*, commonly referred to as 'toleta'. Toleta is a simple method that utilizes trigonometry calculations to determine the angles needed for heading adjustment and the distance required to return to the true course, using the compass and timer. Some charts already include precomputed toleta tables, making it accessible even for less-educated sailors. Toleta can be employed in various ways. For example, in the portolan chart used by the Venetian captain Andrea Bianco in 1436 (Fig. 4), angles and distances are correlated, enabling navigators and sailors to quickly determine the corresponding distance to be travelled after identifying the travel angle.

From left to right, each column represents the following parameters: Angle of Deviation (Quarter), Lateral Distance from Course (Alargar), Advance on the True Course (Avanzar), Angle of Return (Quarter), Return to the Original Course (Ritorno), and Advance Achieved During Return (Avanzo di Ritorno). Assuming the ship is travelling in any direction but is forced to divert because of the wind and current. If the navigator tracks the deviated angle and travelled time, he could easily determine how far the ship has deviated. He could then choose a return angle and then calculate the distance the ship needs to return to true course and the distance the ship would cover upon returning to the intended

course. With the aid of the compass, portolan chart, and toleta table, the navigator can follow the course and adjust for deviations caused by natural conditions.

DISTANCE AND SPEED MEASUREMENT

From the discussion on the use of portolan charts during voyages, it is evident that an accurate measurement of speed is necessary for any successful journey. Without speed information, it would be impossible to make a calculation of the required distance and time for reaching the destination, thereby posing a risk of deviation from the intended course when employing toleta tables. According to research, in early fifteenth-century Europe, the method for measuring a ship's speed typically involved observing the vessel's progress relative to floating objects on the sea surface and extrapolating to estimate its speed (Ash, 2007, 510). Normally, the method would involve dropping wooden chips from the ship's bow, timing their passage between two fixed points on the vessel using a sandglass or a simple rhyming phrase. As the distance between these two points is known, the speed could be calculated by dividing the distance by the recorded time. This method bears strong resemblance to that employed by Zheng He's fleet. The method was still being used in the 1490s when Columbus took his voyage to America (Kelly, 1987, 130–131).

NAVIGATION SAFETY

The documentation of maritime hazards in guidebooks plays a crucial role in ensuring safe voyages. However, using symbols to mark dangerous elements on charts may be more intuitive and widely applicable than textual descriptions, especially for the less educated medieval sailors. Black symbols representing hazards were already present in *Carta Pisana*. According to the studies by Campbell and Barritt, portolan charts primarily employ the following symbols to represent navigational hazards (Campbell & Barritt, 2020): black symbols in the form of a cross, sometimes surrounded by black dots, are used to represent isolated rocks. When multiple such symbols are placed together, they collectively represent extensive rock formations or sandbanks. Red symbols in the form of dots are used to indicate shallow waters. In addition to the generic symbols for hazards, special forms are employed in specific regions. For instance, in a 1467 Grazioso Benincasa chart (Fig. 5), *Chaussée de Sein*, a channel off the French west coast near Brest, was marked as particularly hazardous. *Île de Sein* is represented by a red triangle, smaller islands are painted in red circles with shades, and the extensive rocky formation extending westward is depicted by a long strip of black dots. These symbols not only indicate the hazards but also constitute the only indication of information related to water depth on portolan charts (Campbell, 1987, 378).



Fig. 5: Chaussée de Sein as shown in a 1467 Grazioso Benincasa chart (Wikimedia Commons).

In general, portolan charts are the visual representations of the accumulated navigation experiences passed down through generations of mariners in the Mediterranean and surrounding regions. The charts illustrate the sophisticated navigation techniques prevalent in late medieval Europe, including the use of sea charts, compasses, and rutters for positioning and orientation. These techniques also involve route calibration with toleta tables, measuring ship speed with floating objects, and marking hazards with symbols to ensure safe navigation. The practicality of these charts contributed to their enduring use in Europe for several centuries until their eventual disappearance in the late eighteenth century. Some charts, such as the 1375 Catalan Atlas produced by the Majorcan School, were highly valued for their exquisite craftsmanship (Beguš, 2014) and were collected by members of the European upper class.

DISCUSSION

Technique Comparison

Though developed from different cultural backgrounds, the navigation techniques presented in these charts bear a strong resemblance, with only minor differences in details. First, both Chinese and European mariners heavily relied on

the compass, which is clearly presented on the nautical charts. The dense compass positions in the instructions in Zheng He Chart and the obvious wind roses and rhumb line networks in the portolan charts highlight the central role the compass played in maritime practices in both regions. Additionally, both charts emphasize the roles of guidebooks and rutters. The difference is that the route instructions are inscribed on the chart in the Chinese case, while the rutter remains separate in the European context.

Second, the methods for measuring a ship's speed in both traditions are nearly identical – estimating speed based on the time it takes for a floating object to travel between two fixed points. The key difference lies in the timing tools used: Zheng He's fleet relied on incense, while European navigators used hourglasses and rhyming phrases.

Third, both charts use similar methods for marking navigation hazards. They even choose to label some hazards in the same pattern, such as using dense dots to depict shoals. However, cultural differences can also be read through the hazard symbols. For example, Zheng He Chart uses traditional Chinese landscape painting techniques to depict reefs, while the Portolan Chart uses symbols such as crosses for representation. After marking these hazards, sailors would rely on their personal experiences to navigate, a practice that is entirely identical for both Chinese and European mariners.

Technique Exchange

Both Zheng He Chart and portolan charts illustrate navigation techniques that originated from other regions and cultures, indicating probable exchanges and communications of these techniques before 1500.

One of the typical examples of technique exchange and communication is the introduction of compass from China to Europe. Although there is a lack of direct evidence of such introduction, scholars (e.g., Bentley & Ziegler, 2010) believe that the magnetic compass originated in China and spread to Europe during the medieval period. This argument is based on the earliest record of compass use and the similar shape of the device in the two regions (Needham, 1962; Li, 1992; Pan, 2002; Huang, 2017). The introduction of the magnetic compass to Europe is related to the hypothetical predecessor of the portolan chart which seems to have emerged in the early thirteenth century. It can be argued that the application of compass in navigation significantly contributed to the development of European navigation, which has been demonstrated above, and are closely related to the appearance of portolan charts (Lane, 1963, 606). European mariners utilized the Chinese invention, and the use of the compass in navigation is visually presented in portolan charts.

Likewise, several navigation techniques represented in the Zheng He Chart are also the result of technological exchange and communication between China and other cultures. These include *guoyang qianxing* and water depth

measurements with sounding leads. For example, Liu (2013) argues that the *guoyang qianxing* technique was learned from the ‘foreign firewatchers’ (番火长) employed by Zheng He’s fleet. *Guoyang qianxing* was commonly used in the Indian Ocean region and was first recorded in China after Zheng He’s voyage. Liu infers that Chinese mariners may have learned the technique from their foreign employees, records of whom disappeared after Zheng He’s fourth voyage. Liu concludes that their disappearance resulted from Chinese navigators’ acquisition of the technique, rendering foreign assistance unnecessary for the fleet. However, other scholars (e.g., Chen, 2016) argue that *guoyang qianxing* was a pre-existing technique in the Islamic world that was adopted by Zheng He’s fleet. Others (e.g., Park, 2012) suggest that the introduction of this technique might have resulted from the pre-Ming exchange of knowledge, especially in terms of astronomy (Hamdani, 1992; Liu, 2019; Mak, 2022). In either case, *guoyang qianxing* serves as an excellent example of how Chinese navigation benefited from cross-cultural technique exchanges.

Similarly, Chen (2019), after examining archaeological evidence and historical records, argues that Chinese water depth measuring technique was also learned from others. The tools, units of measurements and practices employed by Zheng He’s fleet were almost identical to those found in the Mediterranean, where records of the technique can be traced back to ancient Greece. From a chronological perspective, the water depth measuring technique applied by Chinese mariners likely came from similar practices in the Mediterranean region.

Technique Choice

Both Zheng He Chart and portolan charts represent techniques that are not demonstrated in the other. For example, portolan charts lack any depiction of astronomical navigation techniques. However, this absence does not necessarily indicate a lack of awareness or reluctance among Europeans to adopt astronomical navigation methods. Research has affirmed that astronomical navigation was adopted by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century in response to the challenges outside the Mediterranean (Canas, 2017). Rather, the lack of astronomical navigation in portolan charts is more due to its limited function in the Mediterranean. Campbell (1987, 441) concluded the belated adoption of astronomical navigation in Europe. First, it was because of the relatively small size of the Mediterranean. Vessels rarely sailed without the line of sight of land for more than a week, making it almost impossible for navigation errors to accumulate. Second, early astronomical navigation instruments, such as astrolabes, had an error margin of 18 kilometres, which is deemed too excessive for Mediterranean navigation. However, the situation changed after the Portuguese began to explore along the West African coast in early fifteenth century. In these navigations, there are cases where the ship must sail without the sight of land for longer periods. Under such circumstances, astronomical navigation was

promptly introduced and widely adopted. It became a prominent technique for European navigators during the subsequent expeditions outside the Mediterranean, while navigation within the Mediterranean remained little different from the medieval pattern until the eighteenth century (Campbell, 1987, 441).

Similarly, Liu's (2016) research suggests that along coastal routes, astronomical navigation becomes less practical due to reefs, sandbanks, and complex maritime conditions. In such areas, landmark positioning is more effective, particularly in regions with significant navigational hazards. However, in the expansive waters of the Indian Ocean, where artificial and natural reference points could no longer be sighted, astronomical navigation becomes more applicable and perhaps the only method for orientation and positioning. This explains why the *guoyang qianxing* technique depicted in the Zheng He Navigation Chart is only presented in areas to the west of the Strait of Malacca, while needle position instructions dominate instructions east of the strait.

CONCLUSION

Zheng He Chart and portolan charts are visual representations of the achievements of Chinese and European maritime navigation during the same historical period. After examining the navigation techniques presented in the charts, the author concludes that, despite minor differences in detail, the overall navigation capabilities of China and Europe during this period were comparable in sophistication. Mariners from distinct cultural backgrounds, when confronted with similar navigational challenges, instinctively employed similar tools and methods. Moreover, both sides benefited from the exchange of experiences and practices, highlighting extensive and close interactions between diverse cultures. Ultimately, the choice of navigation techniques often depended on the specific needs of particular regions. The absence or lack of adoption of certain techniques does not necessarily indicate technological inferiority; rather, it may reflect their incompatibility for specific local contexts.

Navigation techniques embody the ingenuity and strategic decisions of mariners in addressing the challenges of maritime navigation. Moving forward, while investigating these techniques, it is crucial to examine the historical contexts, considering factors such as the geographical, hydrological, and meteorological conditions, as well as economic and cultural backgrounds in which navigation techniques were situated. Adopting a comparative and cross-regional approach helps prevent simplistic classifications of technology as either 'advanced' or 'backward.' As demonstrated in this article, differences in navigation techniques often indicate the different strategies adopted by mariners in response to varied environmental conditions. The absence of a particular technique in a region may result from the conscious choices based on experience and needs. The study of technological history will inevitably involve considerations of the origins and spread of certain techniques. Researchers should recognize that the origin and

development of technology constitute a dynamic process, which is influenced by multiple interacting factors. The analysis of whether the absence or presence of a technology stems from incapability or conscious choices requires a comprehensive examination of the specific context. The examination of technological similarities and differences, as represented in the charts, highlights humanity's common responses to shared challenges and underscores the diversity in the cognitive processes and cultures in addressing problems. The unity and diversity of human culture require researchers to move beyond studies confined to single nation-states or cultural spheres and re-examine technological innovations and cultural interactions throughout human history.

PLOVBA SKOZI ČAS: PRIMERJALNA ŠTUDIJA NAVIGACIJSKIH TEHNIK NA DŽENG HEJEVI POMORSKI KARTI IN EVROPSKIH PORTULANSKIH KARTAH V ZGODNJEM 15. STOLETJU

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POVZETEK

»Dženg Hejeva pomorska karta« in portulanske karte so reprezentativni primeri sočasnih kitajskih in evropskih pomorskih kart. Raziskovalci iz različnih držav so obe vrsti kart podrobno proučevali, kar je pripeljalo do obilice znanstvenih študij te problematike. Kljub temu pa trenutnim raziskavam manjka primerjalna študija, saj so se redke dostopne primerjave osredotočile zlasti na razlike med obema vrstama kart ter jih tolmačile v okviru naracije »naprednega« proti »zaostalemu«. Ta članek na podlagi podatkov s kart, zgodovinskih dokumentov in sekundarnih raziskav nudi podrobno primerjalno študijo navigacijskih tehnik. Najprej predstavi navigacijski tehniki upodobljeni na Dženg Hejevi pomorski karti ter na portulanskih kartah iz zgodnjega 15. stoletja skozi pozicioniranje in orientacijo, meritve razdalj in hitrosti ter varnost navigacije. Članek nadaljuje s primerjalno analizo teh tehnik, ki pokaže velike podobnosti med njima, nato pa s premislekom o medkulturnih izmenjavah in lokalnih izbirah predstavi možne razloge za redke razlike med tehnikami. Avtor zagovarja tezo, da so bili kitajski in evropski mornarji, soočeni z izzivi plovbe, aktivni udeleženci v komunikaciji, razširjanju, izbirah in lokalizaciji navigacijskih tehnik, ter sklene, da sta bili njihovi navigacijski tehniki v 15. stoletju na enaki ravni. Kljub določenim razlikam, podobnosti med kitajsko in evropsko navigacijsko tehniko namreč močno prevladajo nad razlikami. Spoznanje kaže na raznolikost in enotnost v odzivih ljudi, kadar so soočeni s primerljivimi izzivi.

Ključne besede: Dženg Hejeva pomorska karta, portulanske karte, navigacijske tehnike, zgodovina navigacijskih tehnik, Kitajska, Evropa

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LEGITIMIZING THE MAMLUK SULTANATE: MILITARY PROWESS, RELIGIOUS RHETORIC, AND APOCALYPTIC NARRATIVES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the legitimation of the Mamluk state, focusing not only on its military victories over Crusaders and Mongols but also on its religious rhetoric, alliances with the 'ulamā', and ties to the Abbasid caliphate. Rulers like Baybars and Qalāwūn consolidated power by invoking the legacy of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, portraying themselves as divinely chosen defenders of Islam. In a period of natural disasters and eschatological concerns, their successes alleviated societal fears. By analyzing historical chronicles and reassessing existing scholarship, this article explores how political authority was shaped through divine grace, religious discourse, and symbolic connections to the caliphate.

Keywords: medieval history, Mamluk, politics, legitimacy, jihad

LEGITTIMAZIONE DEL SULTANATO MAMELUCCO: PRODEZZA MILITARE, RETORICA RELIGIOSA E NARRAZIONI APOCALITTICHE NELLA COSTRUZIONE DELL'AUTORITÀ POLITICA

SINTESI

Questo articolo esamina la legittimazione dello stato Mamelucco, concentrandosi non solo sulle sue vittorie militari contro i Crociati e i Mongoli, ma anche sulla sua retorica religiosa, sulle alleanze con gli 'ulamā' e sui legami con il califfato abbaside. Governatori come Baybars e Qalāwūn consolidarono il proprio potere invocando l'eredità di al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, presentandosi come i difensori divinamente scelti dell'Islam. In un periodo di disastri naturali e preoccupazioni escatologiche, i loro successi alleviarono le paure sociali. Analizzando le cronache storiche e rivedendo la letteratura esistente, questo articolo esplora come l'autorità politica sia stata plasmata attraverso la grazia divina, il discorso religioso e i legami simbolici con il califfato.

Parole chiave: storia medievale, Mamelucchi, politica, legittimità, jihad

INTRODUCTION

The process by which the mamluks¹ transitioned into a state² (*dawla*) is a subject of significant scholarly debate, with various perspectives among scholars. For instance, Amalia Levanoni suggests that the assassination of al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam Turanshāh marked a revolutionary moment that led to the mamluks’ seizure of power (Levanoni, 1990, 136). This perspective underscores the critical role of Turanshāh’s demise in catalysing a shift in rule, enabling the mamluks to establish themselves as a ruling entity. Winslow Clifford, however, examines the state formation of the Mamluks³ within a different framework, vehemently criticizing the notion that the mamluks became a state as a result of the revolution or the assassination of Turanshāh. Instead, he analyzes the matter through the understanding of patronage relationships. Clifford argues that the downfall of the Ayyubid dynasty was precipitated by restrictions against the Ṣālihiyya-Bahriyya mamluks, who were part of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s retinue (Clifford, 2013, 65). This perspective emphasizes the necessity of analyzing the formation of the Mamluk state not merely through individual or dynastic factors but rather through the complex socio-political relationships that shaped its emergence.

However, there are those who assert that the Mamluks became a state by reducing the concept of *jihad* to mere belligerence, using it on a different plane. Indeed, according to Denise Aigle, in the early period, the Mamluks had to highlight their

- 1 Mamluks (amirs or soldiers) served in the armies of states established in various regions from the ‘Abbāsīd period. From the ninth century onwards, they served in various Islamic states and distinguished themselves as *abnā al-dawla*. They not only served in the army but also had a say in the administration and had a direct influence on the enthronement or dethronement of the caliph/sultan. Finally, during the Ayyubid period, they served in the military factions of various rulers. They were decisive in gaining the upper hand in their struggles against each other. It did not seem possible to maintain power without the support of the mamluks. However, it is also true that although the mamluks held power de facto, they were unable to formalize this situation and become an independent state (Crone, 1980, 74; al-Abbādī, 1986, 12; 2014, 131; Thorau, 1992, 24; Clifford, 1995, 72, 116; Taqūsh, 2009, 114).
- 2 According to Arab linguists, the term *dawla* was employed to denote a temporary and localized monopoly of political authority. Historically, the term has also been used to signify a *divinely ordained cycle* or the notion of *governance* within the monotheistic trajectory of human history. In essence, both meanings converge upon the same conceptual framework. The term *Dawlat al-Atrak* used by the Mamluks denotes a supranational entity characterized by extensive leadership practices and value systems. It was also applied to include mamluk soldiers, particularly during the Mongol era and thereafter. This is because, in the Egypt-Syria region, political leadership was accessible regardless of an individual’s origin or past. Incorporating the characteristics of numerous regions and localities, *Dawlat al-Atrak* emerged as a transcendent form of universal and timeless political order. In late medieval Syria-Egypt texts, the concept of state (*dawla*) was employed to signify the discontinuity of political order. From this perspective, the idea emerged that as many states existed as there were sultans. This understanding contrasts sharply with the notion represented by *Dawlat al-Atrak*. Notably, in the understanding of Ibn Taghribardī, the concept of *dawla* did not merely denote the transfer of governance from one sultan to another. Instead, the term also encapsulated the highly dynamic relational formations among partners and mamluks. In this context, the state transcends its historical manifestation as a state and reflects a societal formation built on the relational essence of individual actors within a broader framework (Steenbergen, 2016, 55, 62, 64).
- 3 When written with a capital “M” (Mamluks), it refers to the state. When written with a lowercase “m” (mamluks), it denotes the mamluk soldiers or amirs.

identity as warriors. In particular, Baybars had no choice but to present himself as the protector of the true faith against the Crusaders and the Mongols, which was perceived as a pagan and tyrannical ruling house in Iran. He built his legitimacy on military and religious actions, and this was also reflected in his titles (Aigle, 2003, 58). In this sense, the Mamluk sultanate's emergence as a political entity largely stemmed from resisting Crusader and Mongol invasions, which in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century led to the fall of Islamic states. The political decline of the Seljuks, the collapse of the 'Abbāsid caliphate, and the Ayyubids of Damascus created a significant power vacuum in this region. Amid these chaotic conditions, the mamluks established themselves as a sovereign power by effectively defending against Crusader and Mongol assaults (Amitai-Preiss, 1997, 270; Frenkel, 2001, 157–158; Broadbridge, 2008, 12–13). This is to say, particularly due to the absence of any dynastic power as a result of the Mongol invasion in the Near East, it can be argued that this created an opportunity for the mamluks.

The political collapse of many states in the region as a result of Crusader and Mongol attacks may have facilitated the state-building process of the mamluks. Yet, if the matter is limited to this, legitimacy of the mamluks would largely be reduced to their *jihad* policy. In fact, Linda S. Northrup argues for a more nuanced understanding of Mamluk sovereignty, noting their initial victories were not enough to establish legitimacy. The early Mamluk leaders, particularly Baybars and Qalāwūn, purposed to overcome their image as usurpers by claiming succession from al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb and positioning themselves as his rightful heirs to gain recognition as legitimate rulers (Northrup, 1998a, 256). This indicates that they were trying to establish an indirect connection with their Ayyubid lineage. Indeed, this appears to be a highly reasonable and meaningful perspective. According to Anne F. Broadbridge's analysis, in 664/1265–66, Abaqa Khan sent an envoy to Baybars, suggesting that it would be appropriate to establish peace between them. The emphasized point, however, was that Abaqa Khan was imagined as a *divinely guided ruler* based on Chingizid House, whereas the Ilkhanid enemies were referred to as *slave* groups whose lineage was unknown (Broadbridge, 2008, 33). Actually, considering Abaqa's stance, it becomes self-evident why the early Mamluks sought to trace their legitimacy back to al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb.

Nevertheless, the ascendancy and perpetuation of Mamluk rule cannot be attributed exclusively to their endeavours in *jihad* or their efforts to legitimize their authority by aligning themselves with the Ayyubid dynasty to compensate for their lack of noble lineage. A more nuanced analysis of the intellectual milieu of the period reveals that apocalyptic narratives profoundly permeated societal consciousness, persuading many of the imminent advent of the end times. Specifically, during the period when the Mamluks rose to power, there was a marked escalation in eschatological expectations, reflecting the pervasive influence of apocalyptic thought on contemporary society. This period was marked by extraordinary phenomena, including flames emerging from the earth in the Hejaz, visible as far as Basra, which significantly reinforced prevailing beliefs in an approaching apocalypse. These occurrences were closely associated with a widely recognized *hadith* foretelling a fire originating from

the Hejaz that would illuminate the necks of camels in Basra, thereby intensifying the eschatological anxieties characteristic of the era (al-‘Aynī, 2010a, 122; al-Nisabūrī, 1916, 180). Following the eschatological signs, Baghdad suffered a devastating flood, deeply unsettling the Islamic world. This disaster, alongside the fiery phenomenon, occurred within the same year, casting a dark shadow over the region. Shortly after, the Mongols captured Baghdad, leading to the fall of the ‘Abbāsids and the execution of Caliph al-Musta‘sim, as noted by Abū Shāma (d. 665/1267) (al-‘Aynī, 2010a, 129). Accordingly, this compounded eschatological tension, framing the Mongol invasion and the fall of the ‘Abbāsids as not only political catastrophes but as the culmination of an eschatological trajectory. Such an interplay between disasters and historical events reveals how Mamluks intertwined metaphysical interpretations with real-world crises, shaping collective memory and legitimizing narratives of divine intervention.

The Mongol invasion of Baghdad was widely seen as a sign of the impending apocalypse, a fear that existed before 656/1258. Muḥammad Ahmad Masad, in his dissertation, discusses the predictions of Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Talha (d. 652/1254) who, in *al-Durr al-munazzam*, warned of great disasters before doomsday. Ibn Talha predicted that 656/1258 would bring chaos, crises, and severe downturns, viewing these events as precursors to a period of disorder, violence, and moral decline, eventually leading to the world’s end. This illustrates the deep connection between historical events and eschatological beliefs, reflecting the era’s anxieties and interpretive approaches (Masad, 2008, 72). Analogously, Hend Gilli-Elewy’s analysis posits that the Mongol devastation of Baghdad in 656/1258, alongside the assassination of the caliph, was interpreted as an apocalyptic omen. This catastrophic event deeply entrenched a notion of impending doom within the Muslim psyche. However, the inception of a paradigm shift was observed following the Mamluks’ historic inaugural triumph over the Mongols, which began to dispel the previously entrenched apocalyptic dread. This transformative victory and its subsequent narrative reframing were characterized in contemporary literature through favorable depictions of the Mamluks (Gilli-Elewy, 2011, 355–356; Ötenkaya, 2021, 75–76). These portrayals did more than restore hope; they framed the Mamluk victory as a divine intervention, shifting the narrative from despair to the God’s grace. This change illustrates the intricate relationship between history and belief in Islam, showing how military victories can significantly alter collective eschatological assumptions.

In addition to eschatological assumptions contributing to Mamluk legitimacy, it is also observed that narratives based on divine interventions in the flow of historical events were added to endow the Mamluk rulers with legality. In this context, Willem Flinterman states that in Altaic political culture, after the death of a ruler, all male members of the tribe were considered candidates for the throne and could engage in power struggles. It was believed that the victor in such conflicts demonstrated his physical aptitude, proving his rightful claim, that God supported him, and thus, he was acceptable to everyone. Indeed, Baybars, who emerged from the Bahriyya, defended the rights of his comrades (*khusdāshīya*) and protected their interests when

faced with various challenges. Thus, he demonstrated his physical prowess, and it was asserted that he possessed the divinely bestowed kingship (Flinterman, 2012, 34, 39). Although the extent to which this idea was embraced in Altaic political culture remains a separate debate, the important point here is the emphasis on the narratives constructed by individuals or factions who seized power, particularly by killing the reigning ruler and battling their entourage, to legitimize their rule in the early Mamluk period. It is crucial to examine the types of legitimizing discourses they employed to gain legality and justify their authority.

In this regard, it is understood that the legitimization of the Mamluk power reveals a clearly complex situation. This intricate framework can be understood by considering various themes as legitimizing factors and approaching the matter from a holistic perspective. Therefore, this paper deals with how the Mamluks sought to overcome their politically fragile rule during the early period, how apocalyptic/eschatological narratives and divine grace contributed to the formation of their identity, and finally, how political or religious actors, institutions, and networks influenced the legal foundations of the state. It then assesses the impact of justice (*‘adl*) and *jihad* rhetoric on legitimacy and analyzes biographies of sultans such as Baybars and Qalāwūn to see how they portrayed their leadership and authority. Finally, it discusses the Mamluks’ relations with the *‘ulamā* as a means of legality, providing a detailed view of the various tools used to strengthen authority and legitimacy. Specifically, the role of the *‘ulamā* in approving or rejecting the sultans’ political decisions, the use of *jihad* narratives to position the sultans as saviors of Islam, and the role of justice in gaining public acceptance will be revealed through historical examples.

THE FRAGILITY OF MAMLUK RULE

Following the assassination of Turanshāh ibn al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb (d. 648/1250), the Mamluk regime encountered significant challenges pertaining to political legitimacy. The subsequent rule of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb’s widow, Shajar al-Durr (d. 655/1257), did not serve as an effective resolution to these issues (Tomar, 1996, 64; Ötenkaya, 2023a, 237). Hence, she married Mu‘izz Aybak (648–655/1250–57) and transferred the throne to him. However, when Mu‘izz Aybak’s rulership was proclaimed in Rabi‘ II 648/July 1250, al-Malik al-Mughīth ‘Umar (647–662/1249–63) took Shawbak, and al-Malik al-Said ibn al-Malik al-Aziz ibn al-Malik al-‘Ādil (d. 658/1260) captured Subaybah (Ibn Kathīr, 1997, 142). The decision received by the Egyptian regime was ironically criticized not only by the Ayyubid rulers but also by the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Musta‘īm. The caliph openly expressed his disapproval of Shajar al-Durr’s rulership by stating, “If you no longer have any men left to assume the sultanate, we shall send someone we deem fit” (Qasim, 1998a, 22). Also, according to Maqrīzī, the role of women in rule was deemed unacceptable within the framework of Islamic political thought. Indeed, a *hadith* reported on this issue states that “a society led by women will never prosper” (Maqrīzī, 1997a, 464; al-‘Aynī, 2010a, 34). As a result of both external and internal opposition after the decisions taken, the Egyptian amirs discussed this issue at length.

After all, the Egyptian amirs, who were aware of the fact that things were based on lineage agreed among themselves and said: “Unless we make a member of the Ayyūb family sultan, we will not find stability in governance.” Thereupon, they placed al-Ashraf Mūsā (648–652/1250–54) on the throne (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 13; Ibn Taghrībardī, 1963a, 5; Clifford, 2013, 72). They enthroned al-Ashraf Mūsā, with Mu‘izz Aybak as the *atābak*, to ensure legitimacy and stability, recognizing the importance of Ayyubid lineage for their survival against rivals such as Ayyubids of Damascus.

It can be argued that full consensus was not achieved among the Egyptian amirs. Although a ruler of Ayyubid descent was proclaimed sultan, it is evident that some amirs were dissatisfied with this arrangement. For instance, prominent Egyptian amirs such as Tawashī Shihāb al-Dīn murshid al-kabīr, Rashid al-Saghir, Rukn al-Dīn Ḥās Turk (d. 674/1275), and Jamāl al-Dīn Aqush al-mushrif refused to pledge allegiance to al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsā and Aybak. Instead, on 26 Jamada I 648/August 26, 1250, they declared their allegiance to al-Malik al-Mughīth ‘Umar, the ruler of Karak, and subsequently encouraged him to launch an attack on Egypt. In response to this situation, Mu‘izz Aybak made a strategic move by informing Caliph al-Musta‘sim that they were acting as his deputies (*nā’ibs*) in the land of Egypt (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 14; al-Ṣafadī, 2000a, 264). By doing so, Aybak reinforced his political position against the Ayyubid rulers of Damascus and Karak. Thus, it can be argued that recognizing the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate as the supreme political authority, even temporarily, conferred a degree of legality to the political power.

However, Mu‘izz Aybak asserted his position by declaring himself the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Musta‘sim’s regent in Egypt, bolstering his stance against Damascus and Karak. This led to his and al-Ashraf Mūsā’s reaffirmation as sultans. It also escalated conflicts among Egyptian amirs, with key figures pledging allegiance to Karak. Notwithstanding, the Bahriyya leader, Fāris al-Dīn Aqtay (d. 652/1254) led a force towards Damascus. Upon reaching Gaza, they faced Aleppo’s troops, who, intimidated by the Egyptian army, did not engage in battle. Aqtay then had to retreat from Gaza, due to the complex military and political dynamics of the time (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 14).

Nonetheless, the Egyptians (*ahl Miṣr*) revolted against the Mamluks in 649/1251 with the aim to remove the taxes imposed on them and to abolish Mamluk rule. They claimed that it was their right to rule Egypt and that *they did not recognize the rule of a slave*. Every time Aybak took to the streets, the people said, “We only want someone who is a sultan by birth” (Ibn Taghrībardī, 1963a, 13; Rabbat, 2010, 7; Ötenkaya, 2023b, 837). This unrest underscored the critical legitimacy trouble the Mamluks faced, emphasizing that establishing a stable power required overcoming these perceptions of illegitimacy. It is a well-known fact that the Mamluks faced significant legitimacy issues and were particularly sensitive about their lineage. According to Broadbridge, it is known that Hulegu insulted Qutuz in a letter by belittling his lineage (Broadbridge, 2001, 94). Therefore, in the early period, the Mamluks sought to overcome their fragile position regarding lineage through biographical works.

While the fragility of Mamluk legitimacy continued internally and externally, the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Musta‘sim sent Shaykh Najm al-Dīn al-Badrā’ī (d. 655/1257) in

650/1252 to broker a peace between al-Nāṣir Yūsuf (634–658/1236–60) and Mu‘izz Aybak. al-Nāṣir Yūsuf demanded only one condition: that the *khuṭba* and coinage in Egypt be in his name. The Baḥriyya faction, which acted as a *de facto* power, said: “We have recovered Egypt and Damascus from the hands of the Franks with our swords, and there can be no peace between us until we have the territories from Gaza to Aqaba” (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 22). The animosity between the two sides was not resolved as both sides were far from a moderate policy. However, through the insistence of al-Musta‘ṣim, at least a non-aggression pact was concluded (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 23; Humphreys, 1977, 323). Simultaneously, despite the formalization of a non-aggression treaty between Egypt and Damascus, the underlying contest for dominance persisted unabated. In 654/1256, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf sought to secure a *khil‘at* (robe of honor) from the caliph, symbolizing formal recognition and legitimacy. Concurrently, Aybak dispatched a diplomatic envoy to the caliph with the intent to obstruct any potential award of the *khil‘at* to al-Nāṣir Yūsuf. After all, this request of al-Nāṣir Yūsuf was rejected by the caliph (al-‘Aynī, 2010a, 117; Humphreys, 1977, 328–329). The ‘Abbāsīd caliph’s granting of a *khil‘at* was not a simple matter; if al-Nāṣir Yūsuf had received the caliph’s blessing directly, the fixities of the amirs in Egypt might have changed. Probably, this could have had an adverse impact on Aybak’s standing.

On the other hand, during the reign of al-Mu‘izz Aybak, a peace agreement was concluded with al-Nāṣir Yūsuf. However, this reconciliation was met with significant dissatisfaction by the Baḥriyya faction, as their primary objective remained the conquest of Egypt. Consequently, they communicated with al-Malik al-Mughīth ‘Umar of Karak and ultimately aligned themselves with his cause. Then they encouraged him to conquer Egypt, saying: “This property [rulership] belongs to your father, grandfather and uncle” (Ibn Taghrībārī, 1963a, 45). This demonstrates how even minor disagreements could result in the current sultan being abandoned by the mamluk factions, who held the authority to determine the ruler. Indeed, the Baḥriyya’s decision to align with al-Mughīth ‘Umar underscores the fluidity of loyalty within the Mamluk political system, where personal and factional interests often superseded allegiance to the sultan. Their invocation of al-Mughīth’s ancestral claims to Egypt highlights the intended use of historical and dynastic narratives to justify political ambitions and destabilize existing authority. This further reveals the precarious nature of Mamluk rule, where the sultan’s position was perpetually contingent upon the support of powerful military factions and their willingness to uphold his cause.

However, Aybak aimed to strengthen his position by proposing marriage to the daughters of the leaders of Hama and Mosul. Aybak’s main purpose was to form a political alliance with Hama and Mosul to confine al-Nāṣir Yūsuf’s influence in Syria. As soon as Shajar al-Durr became aware of this, she had him assassinated (al-‘Aynī, 2010a, 118; Humphreys, 1977, 329). Aybak’s assassination, often attributed to Shajar al-Durr’s jealousy, was motivated by concerns over diminishing her influence. To preemptively safeguard her position, she proposed marriage to al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, even offering Egypt in exchange, aiming to maintain her power (al-Ṣafadī, 2000a,

265; Maqrīzī, 1997a, 493; Duwaydār, 2017, 90). It should be remembered that Aybak had been elected sultan by marrying Shajar al-Durr. Aybak's decision to contract a new marriage could have led to the erosion of her power. Therefore, rather than acting out of jealousy, she might have sought to hinder this threat by considering marriage to al-Nāṣir Yūsuf.

Following Mu'izz Aybak's death, his son Nur al-Dīn 'Alī (655–657/1257–59) became sultan. However, Vizier Sharaf al-Dīn al-Fā'izī (d. 655/1257) objected to the decision a few days later, arguing that the realm could not be governed by such a young ruler and that the sultanate should therefore be entrusted to al-Nāṣir Yūsuf (al-'Aynī, 2010a, 143; Humphreys, 1977, 330). This proposal was not accepted by the Mu'izziyya mamluks and ultimately led to his execution (Ötenkaya, 2023b, 840). In fact, the attitude of al-Fā'izī clearly shows that, despite the Mamluks *de facto* making decisions in rule, their authority remained in a fragile condition. After all, Sayf al-Dīn Quṭuz emphasized the need for a strong leader to fend off the Mongol threat, leading to his rise as a ruler. Emphasizing the imminent danger towards Islam, he convinced the amirs of his suitability due to his bravery, military skill, and leadership, securing his position as a ruler. Nonetheless, not all supported Quṭuz; those amirs opposing Nur al-Dīn 'Alī's ouster were arrested upon their return from hunting, highlighting internal dissent within the ruling class (al-Mansūrī, 1998, 46; Surūr, 1938, 47). Quṭuz's rise to rule was driven by the Mongol threat and his prominence in the Mu'izziyya faction. His leadership was seen as vital amid existential threats towards Islam, which helped legitimize his authority. Aware of his status as a usurper, Quṭuz sought to stabilize his rule by promising that the selection of Egypt's sultan would be in the hands of senior amirs once the Mongol danger was addressed (Ibn Taghrībardi, 1963a, 55). This act impressed on Quṭuz's attempt to navigate the complex dynamics of legitimacy and authority within the socio-political context of his time. Above all, it also suggests that, beginning in the later periods of the Ayyubid rule, the authority to determine the ruler resided directly with the senior amirs themselves.

In the aftermath of the Mongol defeat at 'Ayn Jālūt, Quṭuz was assassinated on his return to Egypt and subsequently succeeded by Baybars. Al-Mustanṣir was formally proclaimed caliph in Egypt, and he, in turn, delegated all political authority to Baybars (Tekindağ, 1971, 9; Aktan, 1991a, 197; Broadbridge, 2008, 31, 53; Aigle, 2015, 247; Banister, 2021, 27). The fact that the sultanate of Baybars was registered directly by al-Mustanṣir provided the expected legitimacy (Heidemann, 1994, 99; Northrup, 1998b, 165; Hassan, 2016, 72). Indeed, it is known that Baybars effectively seized the power. However, it appears that his rule lacked a legal foundation (Holt, 1984, 501; Aktan, 1991b, 618). Also, Thorau's observation reveals that after Baybars ascended to power by assassinating Quṭuz, he was unable to appear publicly in Cairo, the enthronement ceremony (*mawḳib*) could not be held, and his claim to the sultanate remained confined to a limited circle (Thorau, 1992, 93; Heidemann, 1994, 99). Indeed, immediately after the allegiance ceremony for al-Mustanṣir was completed, a public ceremony was held outside Qal'at al-Jabal, during which Baybars' sultanate was formally endorsed by Caliph al-Mustanṣir (Lev, 2009, 13; Banister, 2021, 28).

This overtly verifies that Baybars was in need of legal recognition to consolidate his politically fragile power. In fact, the assassination of Qutuz and Baybars' subsequent rise to power highlight the fragile and contested nature of Mamluk political legitimacy, where military prowess alone was insufficient to secure unchallenged authority. Baybars' reliance on Caliph al-Mustansir's formal endorsement underscores the symbolic importance of the 'Abbāsid caliphate in legitimizing Mamluk rule, even as the caliphs themselves held diminished political power. The delayed public recognition of Baybars' sultanate, including the inability to hold an immediate enthronement ceremony, reflects the initial instability and lack of widespread acceptance of his rule. Ultimately, the public ceremony outside Qal'at al-Jabal, where Baybars' sultanate was formally sanctioned by al-Mustansir, illustrates the use of religious and ceremonial mechanisms to consolidate power and legitimacy in the eyes of the broader populace.

In addition to establishing the legitimacy, it was necessary to craft the image of an ideal ruler through biographical narratives. According to Peter M. Holt's analysis of *al-Rawḍ*, Baybars played an active role in the assassination of Turanshāh in 648/1250, effectively bringing an end to the Ayyubid dynasty. Furthermore, he seized power through usurpation by assassinating Qutuz. As a result, it became imperative for partial historians like Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir to praise him in their writings, thereby rendering his rule more acceptable (Holt, 1995, 129). Indeed, al-Nuwayrī, whose narrative aligns with that of Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, refers to the earlier incident of Qutuz assassinating Fāris al-Dīn Aqtay, the leader of the Bahriyya. It is said that by doing this, he actually did something to be proud of by taking revenge on his master (al-Nuwayrī, 2004a, 305). Thus, the rise of Baybars is portrayed in a more moderate way, emphasizing that he was not a usurper but rather came to authority through the lawful selection by senior amirs.

However, al-Mustansir's desire to revive the Baghdad-centered 'Abbāsid caliphate was not favorable for Baybars. In fact, in Sha'ban/July, the sons of Badr al-Dīn al-Lu'lu (d. 657/1259) of Mosul, al-Malik Rukn al-Dīn Isma'il, al-Malik Mujahid Sayf al-Dīn Ishaq and al-Malik Sa'id 'Ala al-Dīn 'Alī came to Cairo. Baybars accepted their sovereignty in their respective regions and presented each of them with a *khil'at* (Maqrīzī, 1997a, 536). Subsequently, Baybars announced that he planned to send al-Mustansir against the Mongols with a cavalry force of 10,000 men. The Lu'lu'id princes advised Baybars never to carry this out. They said that "if the Caliph recaptured Baghdad, he would expel you from Egypt. Hereupon Baybars sent only 300 cavalymen with the caliph" (al-Maqrīzī, 1997a, 537; Aigle, 2015, 244). Indeed, according to Thorau's analysis, Baybars aimed not for a powerful caliph but for a puppet caliph. His primary goal was to legitimize his own authority. When he sent al-Mustansir with 300 cavalymen to face the Mongols, he was essentially sentencing him to death (Thorau, 1992, 116). Therefore, this explanation shows that Baybars' decision to send al-Mustansir with a small force to retake Baghdad, and the subsequent abandonment by the sons of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu, hints at Baybars' desire to distance himself from the caliph. This maneuver seems motivated by fears that a revitalized 'Abbāsid caliphate could undermine Baybars' position.

Nonetheless, while al-Maqrīzī's account is insightful, it is derived from a later period and lacks extensive early Mamluk documentation on al-Mustanşir's mission against the Mongols in Syria. Therefore, while significant for historical discourse, al-Maqrīzī's report necessitates cautious interpretation, treated as speculative yet crucial conjecture within the scholarly analysis of this period. Therefore, the historical narratives must undoubtedly be critically analyzed from several perspectives. Indeed, Reuven Amitai-Preiss, who has conducted examinations and proposed several arguments on this matter, asserts that Baybars could not have sent al-Mustanşir to his death, or that even if he attempted to do so, al-Mustanşir would not have easily agreed to such a fate. He also argues that Baybars, being a newly enthroned ruler, would not have had the capability to assign a large army to al-Mustanşir's command even if he desired. Finally, Amitai-Preiss questions what Baybars would stand to gain by sending the caliph to his death, especially considering that he had already obtained the legitimacy he sought from the caliph (Amitai-Preiss, 1995, 59).

Nevertheless, it is understood that al-Mustanşir was convinced that he would be victorious in his campaign against the Mongols. At least, Baybars had granted him numerous gifts and provided the financial and military resources he would need for the campaign (Heidemann, 1994, 102–103, 150). This suggests that al-Mustanşir did not deliberately march to his death, but was rather persuaded by Baybars to embark on the campaign. More importantly, the question of what kind of personality Baybars possessed is not sufficiently addressed here. To look into this, one must examine his actions during the early years of his reign. For instance, the execution of Bahā' al-Dīn Bughdī, the imprisonment of Aqquş al-Barlī and Sayf al-Dīn Balābān al-Rashidī, and the execution of al-Mughīth 'Umar at the hands of the 'ulamā' collectively point to Baybars as a deeply suspicious ruler (Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, 1976, 169–170; al-Yūnīnī, 1955, 194). Having secured the legitimacy and recognition he sought from al-Mustanşir, Baybars may have perceived the caliph as a potential threat, even if there was no immediate cause for concern. Of course, it may not be entirely appropriate to compare the aforementioned amirs with al-Mustanşir. However, the question of what specific crimes, apart from al-Barlī's, led to the execution of these amirs remains inadequately addressed. Moreover, as previously mentioned, Baybars had provided significant support to al-Mustanşir, assigning military and administrative officials to his retinue. Also, isolating al-Mustanşir, as seen in the case of al-Hākim, could have posed a challenge to Baybars' rule. For this reason, it is not implausible that a sultan like Baybars—known for his suspicion of even the smallest threats—might have sought to eliminate al-Mustanşir. Additionally, the Lu'lu'id princes are known to have fled from al-Jazira under Mongol pressure and sought refuge with Baybars in Cairo (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 81). Despite being fully aware of the Mongols' formidable strength in Iraq, why did Baybars send al-Mustanşir with only a small force? Hence, it is relatively clear that al-Mustanşir, who initially had sufficient support, was later betrayed. Notably, the Lu'lu'id princes, who were charged with supporting al-Mustanşir, withdrew their forces and returned to their own territories. After all, the Lu'lu'id princes continued to be acknowledged by a ruler as cautious

and shrewd as Baybars. Indeed, Mustafa Banister, who focuses particularly on this issue, highlights the uncertainties surrounding Baybars' plans following the Baghdad campaign (Banister, 2021, 33). Moreover, it becomes evident that Baybars' primary aim was not to seize Baghdad, but rather to threaten the Mongols or establish a buffer zone in the region. Additionally, it is obvious that al-Mustanşir was abandoned at the most critical moment of the battle. Not only did he lack the support of Turkmen and Bedouin forces, but even amirs such as Sābiq al-Din Būzbā, whom Baybars had personally sent to organise the battle plan, withdrew (Heidemann, 1994, 150–151, 155–156). Consequently, this situation makes it difficult to entirely dismiss the notion that al-Mustanşir was deliberately left to his fate.

THE LEGITIMIZING EFFECT OF APOCALYPTIC, 'ADL AND JIHAD NARRATIVES

Although the Mamluks had effectively seized power, their rule was highly fragile. Therefore, they needed to first consolidate their authority. Indeed, a careful analysis of studies on this issue reveals that the Mamluks sought to distinguish themselves through the identity of being *the protectors of religion*. In fact, as Donald P. Little mentioned, it is emphasized that Islam was saved from destruction thanks to the wars the Mamluks waged against the Mongols. The Mamluks are depicted as if they were *God's specially chosen representatives* (Little, 1983, 165–166; Frenkel, 2014a, 7–9). Additionally, according to Broadbridge, they sought to overcome these issues by achieving victories against infidel outsiders, proudly positioning themselves as the protectors of religion (Broadbridge, 2008, 12–13, 16, 30).

However, it becomes evident that the Mamluk legitimization was influenced not only by *jihad* but also by numerous narrative constructions rooted in apocalyptic patterns. According to Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir (d. 692/1293), Quṭuz was a mamluk of Ibn 'Adim or Ibn Zā'im. When he struck Quṭuz and he cried, he did not eat or drink anything for a whole day. When his master inquired if this was the reason for his distress, he said: "By God, I am not weeping for this, but for my father and my grandfather are Muslims sons of Muslims. I am Maḥmūd ibn Mamdūd ibn Khwarazm Shah, from the children of rulers" (al-Ṣafadī, 2000d, 189; Holt, 1996, 134). A narrative similar to that of al-Ṣafadī is also conveyed by al-'Aynī. However, a notably distinct narrative can be observed here: "Due to my lineage (my ten ancestors are Muslims, sons of Muslims) as a Muslim and a *mujahid* [holy warrior], it is incumbent upon me to defeat the Mongols and become the sultan of Egypt" (al-'Aynī, 2010a, 255).

Is this narrative truthful? In other words, can we consider every account in the chronicles to be accurate? For instance, how can we be certain that up to ten generations of Quṭuz's ancestors were indeed Muslims? It seems necessary to return to the issue highlighted by Stephan Conermann in his work *On the Art of Writing History in Mamluk Times*: "Most scholars prefer not to know how a chronicle works, how it is structured, which narrative strategies are used, or which genre-specific principles are operative. Rather, they desire to know only

whether the described experiences are true” (Conermann, 2018, 7). In this context, the fictional-apocalyptic narrative allusively points out that Qutuz sought to strengthen his sultanate not only through his Muslim and *mujahid* identity but also by generating the impression that his reign had been predestined by God. When the narrative is meticulously analyzed, it becomes evident that it emphasizes the Muslim identity while portraying the inevitable defeat of infidels. By using the believer-infidel dichotomy, it appears to be an attempt to justify or render acceptable his ambiguous past. Moreover, Holt, who analyzes this anecdote from various perspectives, reveals that the narratives are dated back to the year when Qutuz deposed al-Manşūr ‘Alī, the son of Aybak, from the throne. He claims that these accounts were created out of a concern to legitimize the sultanate he had seized through usurpation (Holt, 1996, 135).

Concordantly, it is observed that Baybars employed a similar policy, albeit implicitly. Based on the understanding provided by Ibn al-Nafis (d. 687/1288), the only way to contend with the infidel Mongols was to adopt a moral disposition akin to theirs. A merciless, stern, and perpetually battle-ready sultan was deemed necessary to protect the religion and its community. Furthermore, such a ruler needed to originate from the same regions where the Mongols themselves were nurtured (Ibn al-Nafis, 1984, 230; Meyerhof & Schacht, 1968, 33, 68). In Ibn al-Nafis’s account, Baybars is not explicitly mentioned; however, the content strongly evokes his persona. The recurring emphasis on the theme of *jiḥād* against infidels may have been intended to highlight Baybars’ military identity, thereby enhancing his acceptability and legitimacy in the Egypt and Syria. For instance, in 657/1259, a meeting was held in Damascus on how to deal with the Mongols. The Qaymariyya, ‘Azīziyya and Baḥriyya also attended the meeting. At this time, Zayn al-Khafizī, one of the leading amirs of al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, said: “Those who say that Hülegü Khan can be resisted with the remaining soldiers have no wisdom. Many countries have fallen into their hands. If you think of the society’s interest, obey him.” Baybars strongly criticized this speech and slapped Zayn al-Khafizī. Then he said: “You are the cause of destruction of the Muslims” (Ibn Duḡmāk, 1985, 841; Ötenkaya, 2023b, 841). Hence, Baybars’ perception of the struggle against the Mongols as the sole means of ensuring the survival of Islam positioned him as an apocalyptic savior figure (Kruk, 1995, 328). In this context, Baybars can be seen as embodying a messianic role within the apocalyptic narratives, portraying the Mongols as a *Gog and Magog-like* force threatening the Muslim world. Thus, his political and military campaigns were imbued with a divine mission, granting them deeper spiritual significance.

However, we see that Baybars, first and foremost, appropriated the events that took root in the geographical space of Syria, tried to establish a relationship with great legendary figures, and thus tried to create *the cultural memory* with the Bilād al-Shām. Indeed, within the biographical work *al-Rawḍ*, Baybars is portrayed as being connected to other eminent Muslim rulers and is depicted

as their legitimate successor. Significantly, these narratives foster a sense of historical identity and continuity, with their primary aim being the revitalization and reclamation of the past (Troader, 2015, 115–117). Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s essential point is that by narrating the heroism of Baybars, he associates him with the Prophet himself, the faithful heroes of the conquest, and bases him on the Prophet, thus legitimizing his current reign (Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, 1976, 53, 56). Similarly, the findings of Stephen Humphreys on this matter are particularly significant. According to him, Mamluk sultans and some senior amirs would periodically assemble their troops in arenas resembling a hippodrome, using various ceremonies to emphasize the military identity of their state and their mission of *jihad* against the enemies of God. In fact, during the weekly *maẓālim* sessions held at the Qal‘at al-Jabal, the ruler’s commitment to justice (*‘adl*) and adherence to religious law (Sharī‘a) was also prominently displayed (Humphreys, 1972, 87). A similar situation is strikingly evident in the case of Qalāwūn. In his advice to his son, he emphasized the critical importance of *maẓālim* cases, asserting that the sultan must personally participate in these trials and side with justice (Fuess, 2009, 131). By doing so, a ruler would be distinguished as just, a key attribute for legitimizing authority. These practices undoubtedly reflect a connection with *an idealized ruler identity* from the past. The construction of the image of the ideal Muslim ruler can be said to have played a critical role in reinforcing the established sovereignty. Indeed, as noted by Yaacov Lev, it is evident that the legitimization of the Mamluks was influenced not only by *jihad* but also by moral values such as justice and charity (*al-amr bi al-ma‘rūf*) (Lev, 2009, 13). In this regard, Clifford emphasizes that Baybars secured his power not through harsh policies, but by acting based on justice and protecting the interests of the senior amirs (Clifford, 2013, 107).

However, it is important to note that justice and adherence to religion were not merely virtues but necessities. As Aigle emphasizes, during the period of the Mongol invasion of Baghdad, the debate over whether *a just-infidel rule was preferable to an oppressive-Muslim rule* was significant. The Mongol invasions highlighted to Muslims the critical importance of just governance as a political concept. Additionally, it was emphasized that a form of rule distant from Sharī‘a would inevitably lead to failure (Aigle, 2015, 211–212). In this context, the Mamluks’ use of religious and justice-based propaganda to present themselves as the protectors of the society could help them overcome their political fragility. Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya expressed a similar view, stating: “God supports a just state, even if it is unbelieving, but does not support an unjust state, even if it is Muslim” (Ibn Taymiyya, 2004, 63). Thus, the principle of justice lay at the center of Ibn Taymiyyah’s political thought. For him, justice meant that everything was in its rightful place and also encompassed the fulfillment of trusts.

In the discourse articulated by Ibn Taymiyya, the prioritization of justice over faith emerges as a particularly significant dimension within Islamic political thought. The emphasis on justice, the safeguarding of the populace, and the

promotion of their welfare appears to be closely associated with the context of Mamluk governance. This focus implicitly suggests that the Muslim community experienced a higher standard of living during this era, thereby offering an indirect form of legitimization to the Mamluk sultans, who were perceived as guarantors of such societal conditions. Indeed, it is evident that Ibn Taymiyya developed his theories in accordance with the conditions of his time. For instance, while he mentions the necessity of the imam or head of state being from the Quraysh, he also dictates certain foundational principles. The primary focus is the preservation of religion and worldly affairs, the establishment of justice and the well-being of the people (Ibn Taymiyya, 1997, 38; Lambton, 2004, 150). It is certainly possible to view the attitudes of scholars like Ibn Taymiyya as efforts to render the Mamluk sultans credible and authoritative in comparison to the caliphs.

Nevertheless, the conquest narratives (*futuhatnāme*) served as a legitimization of power, and on the other, as a way for the powerbroker to connect with the golden age of early Islam. Mamluk historians see Baybars' military campaigns as a resurgence of conquest. Indeed, in Troadec's assessment, Baybars' conquests not only stirred the memory of the Prophet and the Muslim rulers who led expeditions to the Arab-Byzantine border, but also showed the literary examples found in the Turko-Persian world (Troadec, 2015, 122–123; Ötenkaya, 2021, 93). In the narrative constructed by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, the recounting of Baybars' military conquests is strategically used as a means to forge a link with historical precedents, thereby leveraging these achievements for political advantage (Troadec, 2015, 132). The strategy of framing Baybars' achievements within a broader historical narrative was designed to enhance his political standing by associating his victories with esteemed historical moments. This not only emphasized his military capabilities but also integrated his reign into a legacy of historical successes, providing his leadership with continuity, legitimacy, and a sense of divine approval, thus elevating his reputation among peers and for future generations. Amidst the Mongol threat to the Islamic world, with Damascus under siege and other regions overwhelmed, Egypt stood as the final bulwark. At the Battle of 'Ayn Jālūt, Qūṭuz led a decisive charge, and with the support of the Baḥriyya and Egyptian forces, they achieved a significant victory over the Mongols, including the death of Kitbugha, the Mongol commander, marking a turning point in the Mongol expansion into the Islamic lands (al-'Aynī, 2010a, 243). After this triumph, the Muslims, who had given up on the victory against the Mongols, regained hope. Upon Qūṭuz's arrival in Damascus, some poets said: "*Kufr* [infidelity] has been completely cleansed from Damascus. Islam with Qūṭuz has been restored after a period of weakness. Thus, God has made it obligatory for us to be grateful" (al-'Aynī, 2010a, 246). For the Mamluks, victory over the Mongols was not merely about reclaiming lost territory. They also propagated the narrative that their salvation was achieved thanks to Qūṭuz's identity as a *mujahid*.

According to Yehoshua Frenkel, Baybars is praised for reviving Islam's golden age through his campaigns against Crusaders in Syria, seen as Islam's defender and likened to Alexander the Great (Frenkel, 2014b, 70–71). In addition, Baybars established a link between his achievements for the religion and the so-called golden age of Islam and placed himself at the center of this plexus of relations. After the conquest of Arsuf on Rajab 22, 663/May 10, 1265, Baybars is praised as follows: “The best blessing is the one that comes after despair, after a time when rulers are weak, and people neglect everything. The greatest of blessings is to reunite Islam and protect it against the Franks and Tatars” (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 109; Hillenbrand, 2017, 332). Baybars seems to have sought political advantage through his *jihad* policy. It is clear from Ibn al-Dawādārī's (d. after 736/1336) account that Baybars was considered an ideal ruler due to his successful battles against the Crusaders and Mongols. In other words, keeping the rhetoric of the infidel in mind helped to increase personal influence. Baybars also is compared to the Ayyubid sultans without naming them and even emphasized as being greater than them. The rhetoric is such that we infer that he saved Islam from extinction. Again, after these successful conquests, Baybars said: “Those who serve in the army are the best of people. Therefore, they must be listened to” (Maqrīzī, 1997b, 26). Thus, it can be understood that Baybars, by centering the concept of a military-state structure, sought to subtly establish obedience to himself, while simultaneously alluding to the identity of the *Mahdi* (savior).

Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's account of Baybars is functionally like Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād's (d. 632/1234) account of Salāh al-Dīn. However, there is no pious narrative in Baybars' account as in Salāh al-Dīn's. Instead, Baybars' bravery and warriorism dominate the narrative. Thanks to such qualities, he is praised for seizing the throne from his predecessor Quṭuz with the sword and without any help (Holt, 1980, 32). Therefore, while the narratives of belligerence, heroism, and *jihad* served as legitimizing elements, the account of Baybars seizing power by assassinating Quṭuz suggests an attempt to legitimize his reign by framing it around this act of regicide.

However, the narrative that Baybars became sultan by killing a ruler has caused confusion among Mamluk scholars. For instance, Qāsim Abduh Qāsim suggests that Baybars' killing of Quṭuz gives the impression that kingship was a reward granted to the one who assassinated the sultan, supporting the theory of *sovereignty belongs to the victorious* in the early Mamluk context (Qāsim, 1998b, 155). Similarly, Albrecht Fuess states that Turkish law was in effect during the early Mamluk period, mentioning the validity of the understanding that *the one who kills the sultan becomes sultan* (Fuess, 2013, 100). Carl F. Petry also argued that becoming a ruler through regicide in the Mamluk period occurred in accordance with Turkish law (Petry, 2022, 44). However, it is evident that the senior amirs thoroughly deliberated the issue following Quṭuz's assassination. If the notion of ascending to the sultanate through regicide was strictly in line with Turkish law, the sultanate

should have been granted directly to Baybars without any debate among the leading amirs (al-Yūnīnī, 1954, 371). Indeed, according to Baybars al-Mansūrī, it is known that the sultanate was also offered to other amirs (Baybars al-Mansūrī, 1998, 54). Moreover, based on the information provided by Shāfi‘ī b. ‘Alī, it appears that Fāris al-Dīn Aqtay al-Musta‘rib hastily pledged allegiance to Baybars to prevent al-Sayf al-Dīn Balābān al-Rashīdī from ascending to the sultanate (Shāfi‘ī b. ‘Alī, 1989, 67–68). Therefore, it is understood that Aqtay’s main concern was to act with the aim of legitimizing Baybars’ sultanate in some way.

Baybars’ killing of Quṭuz was seen not as betrayal, but as an act of revenge, because Quṭuz had earlier killed Baybars’ master, Fāris al-Dīn Aqtay (Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, 1976, 63; Holt, 1980, 34; Flinterman, 2012, 43). Thanks to this legitimizing narrative, Baybars is not portrayed as someone who killed the ruler and betrayed him, but on the contrary, as an *ideal person* who avenged his master (Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, 1976, 67; Khuwayṭir, 1978, 24). In Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s narrative, it is seen that Baybars, who came to power by slaughtering a ruler consciously, tried to mitigate the act of killing with various arguments.

Robert Irwin, who has studied Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s *al-Rawḍ*, claims that this work was dictated by Baybars himself to present and legitimize him as the ideal sultan. According to him, this work is concerned with the heroization of the Mamluk sultan. However, there is almost no real historical data in this work. Its main purpose is the legitimization and cultization of Baybars. Accordingly, there are mostly imaginary battles, narratives that emphasize his heroic identity and a series of fascinating events. Baybars is an ideal ruler who fights a series of enemies both inside and outside the country. In all these wars, the people of Syria-Egypt helped Baybars and stood by his side during the Crusader and Mongol attacks (Irwin, 1998, 143). As a matter of fact, in the narrative about his companions, Baybars is mentioned as follows:

Baybars always ensured their well-being. It was Baybars who saved them from the tyranny of Turanshāh ibn Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. If it were not for him, no one from Baḥriyya would have survived. It was thanks to him that they were treated with respect in Egypt during the Mu‘izziyya period. This blessing was taken away from them when they headed for Damascus. When they reached Damascus, he again provided them with provisions and gave them various favors. They continued to earn their sustenance thanks to his sword (Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, 1976, 73).

Irwin’s analysis of *al-Rawḍ* presents Baybars as the central figure of the Mamluk state, attributing to him a decisive role in its governance and depicting him as a successor to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, an indispensable actor in the state’s continuity. Such an interpretation seems oriented more toward the legitimization of Baybars’ rule than toward an objective reconstruction of historical events. The fall of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate in 656/1258 and the execution of al-Musta‘sim marked a point where the caliphate no longer represented actual political authority for many Sunni

Muslims, who saw the Mamluks as divinely guided protectors of Islam. This backdrop set the stage for the Mamluks' pivotal role in halting the Mongol advance at the Battle of 'Ayn Jālūt in 658/1260, cementing their leadership in the Muslim world (Steenbergen, 2016, 16–19).

Nonetheless, in the pre-modern period, praise for leaders often highlighted their religious and martial qualities, evolving into the Islamic *jihad* concept, emphasizing both piety and heroism. Indeed, Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) primarily emphasized the religious character of Baybars. He was commended for his moderation, efforts to restore the caliphate, and for appointing impartial chief judges from various sects. He is also recognized as a devout leader who prohibited alcohol and eradicated mischief, blending religious observance with his governance (Ibn Kathīr, 1988, 276). Similarly, according to al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333), Baybars was extremely devoted to religious principles and commandments. This devotion was so strong that he would even give up his favorite amirs for it. As a matter of fact, Baybars had one of his most distinguished amirs, al-Sayf al-Dīn Balābān al-Rashīdī, (d. 661/1263), whom he had treated with great generosity and honors, arrested just because he was fond of entertainment and drinking (al-Nuwayrī, 2004b, 52). This narrative underscores the sentiments, thoughts, and religious/moral assessments of the Islamic community, illustrating how narratives serve to unveil societal values and consensus. It suggests that rulers were idealized by emphasizing traits widely revered within Islamic society, thereby reflecting communal ideals and aspirations. Moreover, when we return to the day Baybars was chosen as sultan, the name of Balābān al-Rashīdī also appeared in the discussions of the sultanate. Therefore, it can be said that Baybars could not fully trust him. Instead of directly eliminating al-Rashīdī, he might have wanted to have him killed under religious/moral pretexts.

Ibn Shaddād in his work *Ta'rikh al-Malik al-Zāhir* tries to show that Baybars was the ideal ruler. He never neglected to pray five times a day in any period of his life, taught the Qur'an to his subjects, became their imam, and led them in prayer; these are among the traits he is praised for. It is mentioned that he forbade drinking alcohol as soon as he became sultan and that he himself never drank alcohol. It is also stated that Baybars devoted himself to *jihad* in the way of God, that he had no other goal but to gain His pleasure, and that he fought for the sake of the word of God (Ibn Shaddād, 1983, 299–301; Marsot, 2007, 33). According to Aigle, Baybars' presentation of himself as an ideal ruler also had a divine aspect. Specifically, the inscription carved into the walls of Karak castle attributes to Baybars the title *the shadow of God on earth* (*ẓill Allāh fī al-ard*), which falls within the framework of the ideal ruler's qualities. In Karak, Baybars was also described as the helper of creation (*mughīth al-khalq*). The term al-Mughīth is one of the names of God, and according to commentators, God alleviates people's distress when they call upon Him. This title implies that just as God is the refuge of believers, a ruler bearing this title serves as a protector for his subjects (Aigle, 2003, 61). While Baybars is indeed a historical figure, the purpose of *sīrat* literature, and inscription

aiming to idealize him, must be acknowledged. Without considering this intent, readers might misconstrue historical facts, influenced by the narrative's elevated depiction. Therefore, it is vital to recognize that historical narratives without clear spatial and temporal references, containing elements intended to glorify a sultan, are fundamentally aimed at idealization.

Nevertheless, considering the early years of Qalāwūn's sultanate, Sunqur al-Ashqar rebelled against him and asked the amirs to accept him as their sultan, while he stated that Qalāwūn had died while drinking alcohol (Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, 1961, 61). Of course, al-Ashqar had fabricated a story for his own sultanate, but as it should be noted, he did not mention the ordinary death of Qalāwūn, but stated that he died because of drinking. Even this fabricated report clearly shows that drinking was a condemned habit. Therefore, it can be argued that characterizing a person as an alcoholic to offend him, to expose his injustice, and to criticize him for being un-Islamic and illegitimate can become an element of political gain for the accuser. Moreover, this accusation could undermine the public image of a ruler, portraying him as morally corrupt and unfit for leadership. Thus, fabricated narratives about drinking were not merely personal insults but political tools used in political rivalries to delegitimize opponents.

In *al-Faḍl al-ma'sūr* by Shāfi'ī b. 'Alī, Qalāwūn, like Baybars, is praised, his unique position in terms of state government is mentioned, and his importance for Muslims is emphasized from a supra-historical perspective. In the first part of the work, there is information that Qalāwūn entered the service of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb and made him one of his special men. After his death, he was included in the service of Fāris al-Dīn Aqtay al-Jamādār during the reign of al-Shajar al-Durr. Afterwards, he became an amir under Quṭuz, who was constantly consulted and was present in the councils. After his assassination, Qalāwūn's power did not disappear. Finally, during the reign of Baybars, the property was completely in his hands. The stability of Baybars was due to his skill and he made Qalāwūn his most distinguished amir. He held a position that no other amir or sultan could easily trust (al-Asqalānī, 1998, 25). However, there are many problems with Shāfi'ī ibn 'Alī's account as well. The most important of these is the lack of accurate evaluation of historical data. Namely, Qalāwūn is evaluated as if he was one of the distinguished amirs who were present in the privy council during the reign of Quṭuz. However, Qalāwūn was captured in the war against Egypt (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 38; al-Nuwayrī, 2004a, 280; al-Šafadī 2000b, 208). Therefore, there is no information that he was treated other than as a prisoner during this period. However, despite the lack of reliable data, an effort seems to have been made to construct a reputable prototype of Qalāwūn by portraying him as a consistently positive figure across all periods. This suggests a deliberate narrative aimed at solidifying his legitimacy and elevating his historical stature, potentially overlooking or downplaying any contradictory accounts or criticisms of his rule.

Northrup's observations about the structures commissioned by Qalāwūn offer a fascinating insight into his political and ideological strategies. According to her, the hospital built directly across from the tomb of his former master, al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb,

symbolized Qalāwūn's allegiance to the Ayyubid ruler. By doing so, Qalāwūn sought to portray himself as the legitimate heir of his master. Notably, during his inaugural visit to the hospital, Qalāwūn first paid respects at al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb's tomb. Furthermore, his choice to build a hospital instead of a *madrassa* reflects a deliberate effort to connect himself with figures like Nur al-Dīn and Salah al-Dīn. Both leaders were renowned not only for their *jihad* but also for their contributions to public welfare through institutions such as hospitals, thereby securing widespread public support (Northrup, 1998b, 119–120). Thereby, Qalāwūn's decision to align his legacy with public welfare institutions highlights a nuanced understanding of power, where legitimacy is drawn not solely from military might but from public perception. By intertwining his identity with that of his predecessors through symbolic architecture, he redefined political inheritance as both ideological and social.

DIVINE GRACE

The literature on Mamluk history contains an abundant number of narratives centered on divine favour, eschatology, and apocalyptic themes. These narratives are sometimes employed to explain political events, while at other times, they are subtly crafted to serve certain agendas. Undoubtedly, one of the purposes of such narratives was to legitimize or idealize ruler in question and, in a sense, to attribute *divine endorsement* to their authority. Indeed, in the early period of the Mamluks, especially during the reigns of Quṭuz, Baybars, Qalāwūn, al-Ashraf Khalīl, and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, there are accounts of receiving divine blessings from God. When al-Mu'izz Aybak became sultan, Quṭuz, together with his companions, addressed al-Maghribī al-munajjim and asked him *who would become sultan after his master and who would defeat the Mongols*. Thereupon al-Maghribī said: “O ḥawand, I see five letters without a dot for this person”. Quṭuz asked him *whether this name could be Maḥmūd b. Mamdūd*⁴ and he said, “I see nothing else but this name”. Quṭuz then said, “that he was the one and that he would defeat the Mongols and avenge his ancestor Khwarazmshahs” (al-Šafadī, 2000d, 189; al-Yūnīnī, 1954, 369). Although the veracity of the anecdote is uncertain, it suggests that Quṭuz fictionalized an apocalyptic narrative to bolster his reign, aiming for legitimacy through divine grace. He claimed that descent from the Khwarazmshahs, positioning himself within a noble lineage, and sought prominence by intending to defeat the Mongols threatening the Islamic community.

Similarly, Baybars used a divine narrative, recounting his journey across the desert with three men after a defeat, during which God miraculously provided rain and sustenance for his horse. This narrative continued after his ascent to the throne, claiming divine protection and sovereignty were bestowed upon him, pre-

4 According to the narrative, the name seen by al-Maghribī is given as Maḥmūd b. Mamdūd (مودم نب دوم جم). In other words, Quṭuz is clearly claiming that it was divinely preordained for him to ascend the throne after his master Aybak.

venting any harm from reaching him (Holt, 1975, 245). Confirming this, Thorau states that Baybars was endowed with sovereignty and rulership by God (Thorau, 1992, 114). Also, the monument Baybars built to commemorate the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt is an indication that he wanted to engrave this victory in people’s minds. The area where the battle took place was sanctified and turned into a location mentioned by God in the parable of Talūt and Jālūt (Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, 1976, 91). He considered this victory bestowed by God as a blessing to him. At the same time, Baybars attributes a divine blessing by identifying himself with Talūt in an imaginary way.

It is evident that eschatological expectations and apocalyptic narratives played a significant role in shaping historiography. Aigle’s meticulous analysis of Ibn al-Nafis’s implicit accounts is of great importance. The discussion revolves around the idea that the sins committed by the people and the corruption of religion in Syria-Palestine led to their downfall at the hands of infidels. Without explicitly naming Baybars, Ibn al-Nafis portrays him as a figure akin to the Alexander of his time, emphasizing his role in delivering salvation to the people (Aigle, 2015, 236–237; Meyerhof & Schacht, 1968, 66–67). That is to say, the narrative emphasizes that Muslims fell into religious degeneration, strayed from the commands and limits (*hudūd*) set by God, and as a consequence, were subjected to the invasions of the infidel Mongols. Ultimately, Baybars is portrayed as reviving the faith and putting an end to these invasions, thereby delivering the Islamic community to salvation.

Al-Yūnīnī (d. 701/1302) quotes Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Izz ad-Dīn al-Hasan al-Qaymarī as follows: “I saw white birds striking the faces of the Mongols [in this battle], which is clearly nothing but the favour of God upon the Muslims” (al-Yūnīnī, 1954, 435). The assessment that the victory was solely due to God’s grace, without mentioning the details of the battle, suggests that the Muslims were directly protected by God and is the result of a desire to establish their righteousness or legitimacy.

Baybars’ victories against the Crusaders and the Mongols were considered by historians as the grace of God upon him, emphasizing that Baybars was in the way of God, that he served Him throughout his life, and that he was an ideal sultan. Likewise, the Mongols were regarded as blasphemers and the Crusaders as infidels. One of these narratives is about the events of 675/1276:

Baybars acted as soon as he received the news that the Mongols would attack Damascus. He advanced until the vicinity of Elbistan. He appointed Shams al-Dīn Sunqur al-Ashqar as the commander of the army. He encountered the Mongol commander Giray and defeated the army of one thousand to three thousand men under his command. Baybars then continued his advance and fought a second battle with the Mongols, this time a fierce one. With the help of God, the Muslims were victorious in this battle too. God helped the Muslims against the polytheists and gave them victory (al-‘Aynī, 2010b, 157).

Al-‘Aynī (d. 855/1451) attributes the Mongol defeat to divine intervention, linking victories of Baybars and legitimacy to God’s favour and using this narrative against the Ilkhanids for political gain. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir presents Baybars as Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī’s successor, even suggesting Baybars surpassed him, a sentiment echoed by Holt who regards Baybars as a superior military leader. Furthermore, according to Carole Hillenbrand, the biographies by Shāfi‘ī b. ‘Alī and ‘Izz ad-Dīn Ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285) hail Baybars as the pivotal figure in reclaiming lands from the Crusaders (Hillenbrand, 2017, 340).

Nevertheless, just like Baybars, Qalāwūn also sought to establish a direct connection with God, positioning divine authority as the ultimate source of his actions. Qalāwūn emphasized his identity as a warrior of *jihad* through the title *Sayf al-Dīn* (sword of the faith), employing it for political purposes. This invocation underscores the Mamluks’ reliance on moral justification as a cornerstone of their rule and authority. The reference to the sword metaphorically highlights the supremacy of military power, reflecting its central role in consolidating and projecting political dominance within the realm. Indeed, by emphasizing that Qalāwūn was divinely chosen, the connection with the caliphate was deliberately severed, asserting that Qalāwūn’s presence alone sufficed for governance (Northrup, 1998b, 168, 173). This narrative alludes that Qalāwūn did not require the caliphate as a legitimizing factor. Instead, his legitimacy was derived directly from divine authority and the rhetoric of *jihad*, underscoring his independence from traditional sources of political validation. Indeed, this suggests that the caliphate was not always essential for the sultan’s authority. For instance, during Qalāwūn’s reign, it is evident that the sultanate was deliberately emphasized and even elevated to a primary position. This renewal highlights an intentional restructuring of political legitimacy, placing the sultan at the center of authority.

However, Qalāwūn successfully captured Marqab in 678/1279, which previous rulers including Baybars, failed to achieve despite multiple attempts. According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, their efforts never brought them close to capturing it, with each attempt thwarted by various issues. This victory was attributed to divine intervention, suggesting that God reserved Marqab’s conquest for Qalāwūn, ultimately granting Muslims victory through heavenly support (Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, 1961, 77–79). Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir narration seems to be an attempt to demonstrate the uniqueness of Qalāwūn by comparing him with other rulers. By explaining that he conquered Marqab thanks to the support of God, a fortified fortress, which was considered impossible to be captured, was taken by means of Qalāwūn.

Qalāwūn fought the Battle of Ḥimş with the Mongols in 680/1281. In this war, various exaggerations were made to aggrandize the victory, and it was announced that God’s help was only with the Muslims as follows:

On Rajab 14, 680 [October 29, 1281], we struck a blow against the enemy in front of Ḥimş. The enemy troops numbered a hundred thousand or more cavalry. The battle began at dawn and continued until evening. In the end, God helped us with

His conquest and His blessings. Praise be to God, who humiliated the enemy and gave victory to the Muslims (Ibn Habib, 1976, 64).

In this narrative, Qalāwūn is depicted as engaging in direct connection with God, articulating the belief that divine intervention secured their victory over the Mongols. Simultaneously, this discourse functions as a mechanism to affirm Qalāwūn's righteousness and legitimacy, particularly within the framework of his *jihad* policy, by establishing a profound connection with the supreme being.

Qalāwūn passed away in Shawwal 689/October 1290. Subsequently, Al-Ashraf Khalīl ascended to power and sought the endorsement of his succession from Fath al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir. Nevertheless, Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir declined this request, citing that Qalāwūn had not sanctioned it (*bi-ghayri 'alāmati al-Malik al-Manşūr*). al-Ashraf Khalīl then repeated his request. In response, Fath al-Dīn quoted Qalāwūn as saying: "O Fath al-Dīn, I did not appoint Khalīl as the heir apparent for the Muslims," and handed over the certificate to al-Ashraf Khalīl without seal. He then said: "O Fath al-Dīn, this certificate was granted to me by God, not the Sultan" (Ibn al-Furāt, 1939, 99). It is clear that al-Ashraf Khalīl's insistence on Qādī Fath al-Dīn was obviously motivated by a desire to ensure his legitimacy. As a matter of fact, when he finally receives the sultanate's certificate, albeit unapproved, he states that this is an event that was not performed by his father but by God, indicating that he has been authorized from a higher authority.

After al-Ashraf Khalīl captured Acre in 690/1290, Shaykh Badr al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad b. 'Umar, one of the merchants of Cairo, praised him in an ode he wrote as follows:

You have left neither a refuge for the disbelievers nor a hope for religion. You gave up hunting, did not look back and chased only his dream. He obeyed when you commanded him and followed your command after his ancestors. This victory has been realized in eternity at your hands, while others still seek to profit from it (Ibn Habib, 1976, 141).

In this ode, al-Ashraf Khalīl is extolled as the conqueror of Acre, with his achievement being intricately tied to divine favor. It emphasizes that the conquest was pre-ordained in eternity to be accomplished solely by al-Ashraf Khalīl. Furthermore, the implication that others continue to seek benefit from this conquest suggests a subtle critique directed at Baybars and Qalāwūn. This is particularly significant given the historical context, as both rulers had previously attempted to capture Acre but were unsuccessful. Thus, the ode not only celebrates al-Ashraf Khalīl's triumph but also implicitly underscores his unique and divinely sanctioned position.

Conversely, similar legitimizing acts can be seen in the interesting events surrounding the birth of al-Nāşir Muḥammad. Ibn al-Dawādārī mentions a star in the east during his birth. In the year of al-Nāşir's birth, three comets were seen in Mosul, one after the other. This signified that al-Nāşir Muḥammad would live three times

30 years (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 272–273). Another similar account can be seen in the dream interpretation of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. In a dream, a blessed person saw ‘Alī ibn Abū Tālib traveling from Hejaz to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. This was said to signify that he would recapture Baghdad (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 1960, 274). Holt, who analyzes these predictions historically, argues that these anecdotes actually date back much earlier, with very similar narratives being told during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, and that they were reimagined and expanded after 710/1310 during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Moreover, just like the prophecies made during the era of Quṭuz, he has determined that the narratives produced during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad also originated from Syria (Holt, 1996, 138). This suggests that such narratives were not merely coincidental or spiritual but were deliberately constructed to serve political purposes, embedding the ruler’s legitimacy within a framework of religious and cosmic significance. This practice reflects a broader trend in which rulers reinforced religious and celestial symbolism to consolidate power and inspire loyalty among their subjects.

However, in the late seventh/thirteenth century, Ghāzān Khan’s Anatolian governor, Sülemish, initiated a rebellion against the Ilkhanids and sought an alliance with the Mamluks. Through an envoy sent to Cairo, he proclaimed that the Sultan Lājīn was divinely chosen to govern the earth and emphasized that obedience to God and His Prophet was best demonstrated through allegiance to Lājīn (Broadbridge, 2008, 70–71). It is evident from Broadbridge’s observations that Lājīn was described as being directly sent by God as a result of His divine grace. This narrative aligns with Mamluk ideology and reinforces their legitimacy, portraying their existence as the shadow of God on earth. The depiction of Lājīn as a ruler chosen by divine grace underscores the intertwining of religious authority with political legitimacy in Mamluk ideology. As well, this narrative not only solidified their authority but also elevated their governance as a sacred mission endorsed by God.

THE LEGITIMIZING ROLE OF THE ‘ULAMĀ’

Emphasizing the Islamic identity plays a crucial role in the legitimization of the ruler. Historically, the ‘ulamā’ have been instrumental in defining legitimate boundaries in numerous aspects of the political life. The rulers relied on the ‘ulamā’s legitimizing authority to ensure the effective governance of their territories (Ashūr, 1992, 173–175). Openly acting in contradiction to Sharī‘a or pursuing policies contrary to the decisions of the ‘ulamā’ was illegitimate for a ruler. While it might have been possible to govern the state by force, acting in a manner that was not approved by the ‘ulamā’ could render the ruler’s actions illegitimate, potentially making them a usurper (Nielsen, 1984, 167). Moreover, it is well-documented that within the state, stakeholders as influential as the sultan were actively engaged and occasionally rebelled to restrain the ruler’s authority. Therefore, at least within the Mamluk framework, it is challenging to speak of an absolute autocrat or a sovereign whose power was entirely self-derived (Elbendary, 2017, 12). Indeed, Salāh al-Dīn Ayyūbī

said the following about Qāḍī al-Fāḍl al-Asqalānī: “Do not think that I conquered all these countries with your swords. I conquered these cities with the pen of Qāḍī al-Fāḍl” (Yilmaz, 2017, 266–267). This example shows how much the ‘ulamā’ could contribute to the expansion of political power. Another example of this can be seen in Quṭuz’s ascension to power. As said, Quṭuz dethroned al-Malik al-Mansūr ‘Alī due to the prospect of war with the Mongols. In this matter, he ensured the explicit support of Kamal al-Dīn Ibn ‘Adim, legitimizing the idea through the scholars that “in such troublesome times, a strong ruler capable of ensuring obedience and waging war (*jihad*) against the Mongols is essential” (Ibn Taghrībardī, 1963a, 73). This demonstrates that the support of the ‘ulamā’ was indispensable for the sultan and that they legitimized their authority through such means. Additionally, Quṭuz’s attempt to raise funds from the public for his campaign against the Mongols faced opposition from Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, (d. 660/1262) who argued that amirs should utilize their wealth before levying burden on the populace, showcasing the importance of the ‘ulamā’s endorsement in governance (Sheibani, 2018, 171–172). It is seen that Quṭuz had to act in accordance with Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām’s opinion, even though he was the only one who objected to him in the council. Of course, this also demonstrates that efforts were made to avoid conflict with the ‘ulamā’ prior to serious conflict against the Mongols.

However, the ‘ulamā’s absence from the sultan’s side or their relative neutrality could lead to weakening of the authority of the sultan. When Baybars ascended to the throne, he was met with caution by the ‘ulamā’. It is suggested that Baybars aimed to gain greater acceptance among the ‘ulamā’ by securing the transfer of all powers from the ‘Abbāsīd caliph to himself (Banister, 2021, 28). Also, al-Zāhir Baybars attended the funeral of Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām with his distinguished amirs after his death and said: “Today my power on the throne has stabilized. Because if Shaikh [Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām] had incited the people against me and encouraged them to rebel, he would have destroyed the property [state]. They would have taken it away from me” (al-Subkī, 1964, 215; Ötenkaya, 2021, 273). Baybars’ apprehension in this matter is entirely understandable. Upon ascending to the throne, Baybars faced initial refusal from Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām to acknowledge his sultanate. It was not until there were testimonies affirming that Baybars had been appropriately liberated that Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām recognized his authority (al-Şafadī, 2000c, 319; Hassan, 2016, 67; Sheibani, 2018, 172).

As important as it was for the ‘ulamā’ to align with the amir or the sultan, their opposition to the sultan could have been that dangerous. Indeed, the ‘ulamā’s dissent to the political rule could lead to its loss of power. It is observed that the amirs or sultans were meticulous about the affairs that the ‘ulamā’ rejected and tried to resolve the problems peacefully. For example, Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* of Damascus, played a significant role in the dismissal of ‘Ala al-Dīn Taybars al-Wazīrī (d. 689/1290), the regent of Damascus, after he spread the rumor that the Mongols would attack Damascus and caused prices to rise (Keleş, 2020, 520). Another similar example is Baybars’s amirs unjustly seizing the gardens in Damascus. Regarding this matter, Shams al-Dīn ‘Abd Allah, the *qāḍī* of Damascus, said: “It is unlawful for

anyone to seize people's property. Those who deem something forbidden by God as permissible are indeed disbelievers." Baybars was very angry at this statement and reacted by saying "Am I an infidel?" As a result, the meeting dispersed without result. In the evening, Baybars summoned the qāḍī. He repeated that he had not targeted the sultan himself. Baybars then chose not to make a big deal out of the incident. (Ibn Ṭūlūn, 1956, 188) It is seen that Baybars was extremely angry here, but despite this, he did not harm the qāḍī (Ibn Kathīr, 1988, 268). This attitude of Baybars may have been influenced by the fact that the 'ulamā' were respected in the society.

Nevertheless, Baybars arrested al-Mughīth 'Umar, in 661/1263 for his dealings with the Mongols, leading to a trial and execution overseen by Ibn Khallikān (al-'Aynī, 2010b, 355; 'Abbādī, 2014, 171; Keleş, 2020, 520). Although Baybars had the authority to imprison or execute al-Mughīth 'Umar directly, he chose a judicial process through the qāḍīs, seeking the 'ulamā's legitimization of the action. This approach, likely due to al-Mughīth 'Umar's Ayyubid lineage posing a potential threat to Baybars' rule, demonstrates his use of legal and religious agents to legitimize politically sensitive decisions, emphasizing the role of the 'ulamā' in lending credibility to such actions.

In the meantime, the Mamluk amirs or sultans relied on forming alliances and securing the 'ulamā' support to gain power and public approval. In this respect, al-'Aynī highlights that favouring the *ahl-i 'ilm* (the people of wisdom) was crucial for seizing the sultanate, underlining the importance of maintaining relations with the 'ulamā'. Absolutely, to solidify their reign, the sultans would align with prominent scholars to criticize predecessors or enhance their own legitimacy, showcasing the 'ulamā's distinct societal status. Unlike others, the 'ulamā' did not exhibit subservience, such as kissing the hand, when in the presence of sultans, reflecting their esteemed position and influence in the Mamluk society. For example, al-Mansūr Lāchīn (696–698/1296–99) stood up and kissed the hand of Qāḍī Taqī al-Dīn ibn Dakīk when he came to his presence. Again, Qāḍī Ibn al-Balqa al-Subkī, (d. 771/1370) who came to Sultan Sha'ban's (764–777/1363–77) presence, left him without greeting. According to Ashūr, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad said to those present, "I fear no one as much as I frighten Shams al-Dīn al-Harirī, the qāḍī al-quḍāt of the Hanafīs" (Ashūr, 1992, 36–38).

However, when al-Muzaffar Baybars al-Chāshnigīr realized that he was to be deposed, he asked Caliph al-Mustakfī (d. 740/1340) to deliver a speech stating that the *mulk* (ruling) had ceased to exist, and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had no right to reign (Bauden, 2009, 55). al-Mustakfī was obliged to accept this offer and delivered a speech as follows:

O you who believe! Obey God, His Messenger and to those in authority from among you. Know that mulk is futile; it does not pass by right of succession from the predecessor to the successor. I asked God to guide me, and then I appointed al-Muzaffar Baybars, and whoever obeys him obeys me, and whoever rebels against him rebels against me. And by rebelling against me, you rebel against the Messenger of God (Ibn Taghrībardī, 1963b, 263).

Nonetheless, this sermon (*khuṭba*) did not secure Baybars al-Chāshnigīr's sultanate. Conversely, upon al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third accession to the throne, he sought support from Ibn Taymiyya requesting him to use derogatory discourse against Baybars. Yet, Ibn Taymiyya refrained from engaging in such political maneuvering (Little, 1973, 325). Indeed, this clearly illustrates how politically influential the 'ulamā' could be.

Stefan Heidemann's observations regarding the relationship between caliphs and sultans highlight a pivotal shift in the nature of legitimacy during the Mamluk period. According to Qalāwūn's view, caliphs were perceived as having appointed sultans, thereby positioning themselves as the ultimate source of legitimate authority. However, this acknowledgment of caliphal authority seemingly devolved into a symbolic function over time. Legitimate rule increasingly depended on succession through appointment by a predecessor or consensus among the amirs of Cairo, rather than the caliph's explicit endorsement. This is evidenced by the diminishing role of the caliph's appointment decree, which, while occasionally sought to reinforce claims to power, played a secondary role. The removal of the caliph's name from Syrian minting protocols during al-Sa'id Baraka Khan's reign further underscores the waning practical influence of the caliphate. Despite this, titles like *Qāsim Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (Partner of the Commander of the Faithful) persisted on coins, reflecting the Mamluks' ideological alignment with the 'Abbāsīd legacy. This practice served not only to assert their claim as heirs to the 'Abbāsīd political heritage but also to counter the Mongols' ideological assertions of global dominion (Heidemann, 1994, 182–183).

This situation clearly demonstrates that the sultans were able to exercise authority without the need for the caliph, highlighting a shift in the political dynamics where the sultans' rule became more independent and self-sustaining. Certainly, in terms of legal legitimacy, the role of the caliphs was increasingly replaced by scholars who became the key figures in legitimizing political authority. Indeed, the limiting role of scholars in practice is strikingly evident. In this regard, the influence and decisive power of the 'ulamā' were not limited to the sultans alone. Notably, toward the end of the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, they also exerted significant influence over the caliphs. The 'ulamā' clearly opposed the caliphate of al-Wāthiq, declaring his accession illegitimate. Consequently, they endorsed the caliphate of al-Ḥākim II, bringing him forward as the rightful caliph (Banister, 2021, 74–75). Thus, it becomes evident that the scholars in the Mamluk period played a clear legitimizing role in political matters. They institutionally assumed active roles in ensuring obedience to the sultan, deposing rulers, or validating the caliphate.

CONCLUSION

After the death of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, political authority effectively fell into the hands of the amirs of Egypt. Despite their significant influence, it is evident that they were in a somewhat precarious position in certain respects. Initially, they assassinated Turanshāh due to his restrictive policies and replaced him with Shajar al-Durr. However, in response to criticism of her reign and to pacify

the opposition from rival Ayyubid rulers, they declared the child-ruler al-Ashraf Mūsā, from the Ayyubid lineage, as the new ruler. This indicates that, in its early stages, the mamluks did not yet dare to frankly oppose the Ayyubid dynasty. Indeed, the subsequent policies of al-Mu‘izz Aybak highlight this point, particularly his declaration of being a representative of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate, a move that holds significant symbolic importance. At the same time, they frequently emphasized their claim to being the heirs of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb. Moreover, the assassination of Turanshāh in 648/1250 marked a pivotal moment, exposing the mamluks’ precarious grasp on power and their quest for legitimacy. Shajar al-Durr’s marriage to Aybak and the transfer of the sultanate to him were temporary measures amidst the ensuing governance challenges, highlighting the importance of preserving the Ayyubid lineage for stability. The Mamluks’ claim to be the regents of the ‘Abbāsid caliph in Egypt was part of a broader strategy to solidify alliances and assert dominance over rivals like Damascus and Karak, thereby aiming to bolster their legitimacy. Yet, these tactics also intensified internal conflicts and rivalries. Besides, the Bedouin revolt highlighted the Mamluks’ legitimacy troubles, as the governance by individuals of mamluk origin faced public rebellion, complicating their acceptance as rulers. These internal challenges not only strained social cohesion but also impacted the Mamluks’ ability to address external threats, prompting a reassessment of their political and military strategies. In the face of these threats, the Mamluks had to prove the significant role they played within the Islamic society. In other words, in order to establish their acceptability, they were compelled to clearly demonstrate their function. Indeed, it is necessary to examine their struggles with the Mongols within this context. It was ultimately the existential threat posed by the Mongols that provided the Mamluks with an opportunity to assert their leadership. Especially, Qutuz’s ascent and victory at the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt not only repelled a significant external threat but also underscored the military competence of the Mamluk state, providing a critical foundation for its internal legitimacy. Baybars’ subsequent formalization of ‘Abbāsid representation in Cairo reflects a sophisticated use of religious authority to cement Mamluk rule. This period, therefore, represents not merely a phase of consolidation but a transformation in which the Mamluks redefined the sources of political authority, blending military prowess with symbolic religious endorsement to navigate the challenges of rulership in a post-Ayyubid context.

The Mamluk sultanate’s rise to power in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century was marked by a complex interplay of military prowess, religious rhetoric, and narrative construction aimed at legitimizing their rule. This study has demonstrated that the Mamluks’ legitimacy was not solely derived from their military victories, particularly against the Mongols and Crusaders, but was also deeply rooted in their ability to craft and propagate narratives that positioned them as divinely chosen protectors of Islam. These narratives, often apocalyptic in tone, emphasized their role as saviors of the Muslim world, while simultane-

ously drawing on themes of justice (*‘adl*), *jihad*, and continuity with the golden age of Islam. Through a careful analysis of chronicles and biographical works, it becomes evident that the Mamluk sultans, particularly figures like Qutuz, Baybars, and Qalāwūn, strategically employed religious, moral, and historical narratives to consolidate their authority and present themselves as indispensable to the survival of Islam. These narratives were not merely reflections of historical events but were carefully constructed tools of political legitimization, designed to resonate with the religious and cultural values of their subjects. The Mamluks’ use of apocalyptic narratives, justice, and *jihad* played a pivotal role in legitimizing their rule, consolidating their political power, and shaping their image as the protectors of Islam. Through the construction of narratives linking their military victories, particularly against the Mongols, to divine providence and apocalyptic themes, they crafted a political identity rooted in religious duty and moral righteousness. This allowed the Mamluks to establish legitimacy not only by portraying themselves as defenders of Islam but also by adhering to moral and legal principles, such as justice and adherence to Sharī‘a, which were seen as essential for the survival of the Muslim community. The emphasis on these values, coupled with the framing of their military achievements within the broader historical context, allowed the Mamluks to secure their position as rightful rulers and protectors of the Islamic world, solidifying their legacy as key figures in the history of the medieval Islamic polity.

During the early Mamluk period, under rulers like Qutuz, Baybars, Qalāwūn, al-Ashraf Khalīl, and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, divine providence, eschatological expectations, and apocalyptic themes were skilfully employed to reinforce political legitimacy and link rulership to divine support. For instance, Qutuz deliberately aligned himself with prophecies foretelling victory against the Mongols and legitimized his reign by tracing his lineage to the Khwarazmshahs. These associations not only bolstered his claims to authority but also cast him as a divinely favored leader destined to protect the Islamic realm. Such narratives were instrumental in rallying popular and elite support, particularly during periods of existential threats like the Mongol invasions. Similarly, Sultan Baybars utilized religious symbolism and miraculous occurrences to underscore his divine sanction. His reign was marked by stories of divine intervention, portraying him as a chosen savior who fulfilled apocalyptic prophecies. This apocalyptic rhetoric, combined with his military successes, elevated Baybars’ status as a quasi-messianic figure. By intertwining political authority with eschatological themes, the Mamluks effectively presented their leaders as both temporal rulers and divinely endorsed protectors of the Muslim world, ensuring their legitimacy in an era of profound uncertainty.

Nevertheless, the *‘ulamā’* occupied a central position within both the political and societal arenas, exerting a profound impact on the legitimization of sultans and the fortification of their dominion. Their influence extended across various domains, from the promotion of Islamic identity to the vali-

dation of rulers' policies. In pursuit of bolstering their legitimizing authority, sultans actively sought the endorsement of the 'ulamā', a fundamental dynamic pivotal to the comprehension of the political milieu. The sanction of the 'ulamā' was indispensable for securing a sultan's acceptance amongst the populace and for contextualizing their governance within the framework of Islamic precepts. The 'ulamā's decisions to either support or oppose the sultans' edicts markedly influenced their reign. This highlights the reciprocal relationship between the religious intelligentsia and political authority. For instance, rulers have relied on the legitimizing authority of the 'ulamā' to effectively govern their lands. Acting against the Sharī'a or pursuing policies that contradict the rulings of the 'ulamā' could be deemed as illegitimate. While a state could be governed through force, a regime not approved by the 'ulamā' would be seen as illegitimate, potentially labeling the ruler as a usurper. This was evident in examples like the Mamluks of Egypt, where the 'ulamā' played a pivotal role in the governance system.

LEGITIMACIJA MAMELUŠKEGA SULTANATA: VOJAŠKA SPOSOBNOST, VERSKA RETORIKA IN APOKALIPTIČNA NARACIJA V KONSTRUKCIJI POLITIČNE AVTORITETE

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POVZETEK

Pojav Mameluške države kot legitimne politične entitete je bil obsežno obdelan v znanstveni literaturi. Čeprav je vzpon Mamelukov pogosto pripisan njihovem džihadu proti križarskim in mongolskim vpadom, ta razlaga – čeprav je pomembna – zahteva nadaljnjo dodelavo. Ustanovitev mameluškega režima ni bila omejena le na politične in vojaške dosežke, temveč je vključevala tudi različna prizadevanja za zagotovitev njegove legitimnosti. Mameluški sultani, kot sta al-Malik al-Zahir Bajbars in al-Mansur Kalavun, so svoje zahteve po legitimnosti okrepili z vprašanjem dediščine al-Saliha Ajuba. Poleg tega so naravne nesreče in apokaliptična pričakovanja v Hedžasu v tem obdobju spodbudila občutek družbenega propadanja in tesnobe v islamskem svetu. Ta pesimistična pričakovanja so se ublažila, ko so Mameluki dosegli svojo prvo zmago nad Mongoli. Ta članek, ob priznavanju političnih in vojaških dosežkov Mameluške države, proučuje legitimnost novega režima skozi prizmo krhkosti mameluške moči, retorike njenih verskih zagovornikov, pojma Božje milosti ter legitimizacijske vloge ulemov in abasidskega kalifa. Študija temelji tako na sočasnih kot tudi na sorazmerno poznejših kronikah, pa tudi na kritični obravnavi mameluške literature, ki se posebej ukvarja z legitimacijo države. Ti viri so ključnega pomena za razumevanje dogodkov okoli ustanovitve Mameluške države in političnih ciljev njenih voditeljev.

Ključne besede: srednjeveška zgodovina, Mameluki, politika, legitimnost, džihad

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IMPLEMENTING THE RUSSIAN INITIATIVE: MONTENEGRIN DIPLOMATIC ACTION AMONG BALKAN NATIONS IN 1896

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ABSTRACT

In response to the instability in the Ottoman Empire, which became particularly evident in the mid-1890s, Austria-Hungary adopted a plan in late January 1896 to occupy part of the territory in the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, provided it received consent from the Porte. On the other hand, Russia launched an initiative in February of the same year aimed at bringing the Balkan nations closer together, entrusting Montenegro with its implementation, precisely to prevent the Vienna government from exploiting the newly emerged situation in the neighboring empire to fulfill the Dual Monarchy's territorial ambitions. To this end, Montenegrin Foreign Minister Gavro Vuković visited Belgrade, Sofia, and Constantinople, with the tangible results of his actions culminating in a secret agreement known as the Ugodba.

Keywords: Montenegro, Balkan states, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire, Gavro Vuković, Ugodba

ATTUAZIONE DELL'INIZIATIVA RUSSA: L'AZIONE DIPLOMATICA DEL MONTENEGRO TRA LE NAZIONI BALCANICHE NEL 1896

SINTESI

In risposta all'instabilità dell'Impero Ottomano, emersa soprattutto a metà degli anni Novanta del XIX secolo, l'Austria-Ungheria, alla fine di gennaio del 1896, adottò un piano per occupare una parte del territorio del Sangiaccato

di Novi Pazar, a condizione che la Porta desse il suo consenso. D'altro canto, nel febbraio dello stesso anno, la Russia lanciò un'iniziativa per unire i popoli balcanici, affidando la sua attuazione al Montenegro, proprio per evitare che il governo viennese sfruttasse la situazione creatasi nel vicino impero per realizzare le aspirazioni di espansione territoriale della Duplice Monarchia. A tal fine, il Ministro degli Esteri montenegrino, Gavro Vuković, visitò Belgrado, Sofia e Costantinopoli e gli effetti concreti delle sue azioni si espressero in un accordo segreto, noto come Ugodba.

Parole chiave: Montenegro, Stati balcanici, Russia, Austria-Ungheria, Impero ottomano, Gavro Vuković, Ugodba

INTRODUCTION

Montenegro's diplomatic efforts to bring the Balkan states closer together in 1896 took place in light of differing strategies by Russia and Austria-Hungary regarding the Eastern question, specifically the future of the waning Ottoman Empire in Europe.

Unlike Austria-Hungary, which aimed to occupy Ottoman possessions on the Balkan Peninsula when the time came, Russia wished for the Balkan peoples, after liberation from Ottoman rule, to re-establish their independent states, through which it could assert dominance in that part of Europe. Russia's primary goal was to secure unrestricted passage for its ships from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and to control the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, which would not be possible if any of the great powers occupied the Ottoman European territories (Skoko, 1968, 46–47; Gotlib, 1960, 56; Mijušković, 1997, 115–116; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, 2006, 555, 557).

The situation in which both Russia and Austria-Hungary intended to secure themselves from the possibility that the other side would gain a decisive advantage in the Balkans, which would enable it to solve the Eastern question in its favor, led these two countries to mutual understanding. Thus, on July 8, 1876, after the flare-up of the Great Eastern Crisis, as a result of the war that Serbia and Montenegro waged against the Ottoman Empire at the end of June of the same year, Russia and Austria-Hungary signed the corresponding agreement in the Reichstag. The following year, on January 15, a convention was signed between Saint Petersburg and Vienna in Budapest, according to which Russia ensured the neutrality of Austria-Hungary with regard to its intention to declare war on the Ottoman Empire, whereby the Dual Monarchy was in turn authorized to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina at an opportune moment (Jelavich, 1974, 179–180).

The military successes and territorial gains of Russia and the Balkan states, formalized in the San Stefano Peace Treaty signed on March 3, 1878, enabled Saint Petersburg to achieve its foreign policy goals and control the further fate of the Ottoman Empire. However, Austria-Hungary and the other great powers did not want to allow the establishment of a state of Russian domination. Therefore, they made sure that at the Berlin Congress (June 13–July 13, 1878), at which the Great Eastern Crisis finally had its epilogue, the achievements of Russian victories on the battlefield were reduced to an acceptable measure for them (Jelavich, 1991, 175–178).

The fear that the order established at the Berlin Congress could be called into question came to the fore in the mid-1890s, due to the increased state of instability in the Ottoman Empire, which was a consequence of the national-revolutionary movements of the Armenians and Greeks in Crete, as well as the actions of the Macedonian committee based in Thessaloniki.¹ The possibility that the entire situation could spiral out of control, leading to a larger conflict over the inheritance of the European territories of the Ottoman Empire, depended on the willingness of Austria-Hungary and Russia to act in that direction, that is, to use the emerging crisis to achieve their own interests. However, the steps that Vienna and Saint Petersburg took in response to the turbulent events in the Ottoman Empire were very deliberate and cautious. Thus, at the end of January 1896, Austria-Hungary adopted a plan to advance its army into the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, along the line Lever-Tara-Bijelo Polje-Nova Varoš to Berane, which was to be implemented only if an agreement could be reached with the Porte for the withdrawal of Ottoman forces from that territory (Kapidžić, 1970–1971, 418–419, 421, 424–429). Conversely, in February of the same year, Russia launched an initiative through Montenegro to bring the Balkan peoples closer together, precisely to prevent the Vienna government from exploiting the crisis in the Ottoman Empire to further its ambitions of expanding the Dual Monarchy toward Thessaloniki.

1 In response to the liberation aspirations of the Armenians, the Turks carried out several massacres against them in the summer of 1894, in the fall of 1895 and in the summer of 1896. Wanting to free themselves from Ottoman rule, the Christians of Crete raised several rebellions on their island. Raising an uprising in 1897, they declared the unification of Crete with Greece, which was the prelude to the thirty-day Greco-Turkish War. Regardless of the fact that the armed conflicts ended with the defeat of Greece, which was saved from complete ruin by the Great Powers, its territorial losses were reduced to only one village. The Great Powers, with the leading role of Great Britain, resolved the Cretan issue by giving Crete full autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, and the island became an integral part of Greece in 1913. The Macedonian Committee, which acted under the direct influence of the Bulgarian court and government, was founded in March 1895, and had the task of fighting for the autonomy of Macedonia under the auspices of the Great Powers. The committee organized companies, which, after being transferred to Macedonian territory, carried out a series of armed actions. As the Great Powers were against provoking a crisis in Macedonia, the Bulgarian government carried out the disarmament of these companies; their last actions were carried out in the first half of July 1895 (Guč, 1933, 195–213; Greene, 1895; Kurt, 2018; Dinçer, 2013; Melson, 1982; Eldarov, 2015; Vojvodić, 1999, 94–95, 99–100; Radojičić, 1898; Klog, 2000, 85).

INSTRUCTIONS FROM CONSTANTINOPLE

The Russian plans in the event of potential changes in the Ottoman Empire were shared with the Montenegrin envoy in Constantinople, Mitar Bakić, by his Russian colleague Nelidov. In a dispatch that Bakić sent to Cetinje on February 12, 1896, regarding this matter, he wrote:

After so many years of broken diplomatic relations with Bulgaria, Russia reconciled with it. It recognized Ferdinand as the heir of the Bulgarian prince, and thus a regular state of affairs was established between the two countries.² Russia is equally suspicious of Bulgaria's duplicity, and Russia will not interfere in the internal affairs of any Balkan state, but it cannot tolerate the interference of other states not only in their internal affairs, but also in their foreign affairs. Russia would like to maintain the integrity of Turkey; but since this is rotten, the possibility of surprise is not excluded. Therefore, Russia wants the Balkan nations to come together and mutually agree on the details of the aspirations of each individual nation and accordingly agree on the division of territories under Turkish rule. That agreement and that division would serve as a basis for solving the Eastern question. In this way, the Eastern question could be resolved without war and without the intervention of [other] powers. Russia, by not interfering in the settlement of the Eastern question, would eliminate the interference of other powers, only that it would strive for the execution of a fait accompli. Therefore, it is necessary to quickly work on an agreement with the other Balkan states, so as not to be late to its own detriment, and to the benefit of those who would have agreed earlier, or a third party (Vuković, 1996, 625–626).

In connection with the received dispatch, in Cetinje, it was decided to ask for an explanation from Nelidov, above all when it came to the urgency of action on the rapprochement between the Balkan states. In addition, they wanted to check whether the Russian diplomat was acting according to the instructions of his government or whether these were his personal recommendations (Vuković, 1996, 626).

Soon a reply arrived from Constantinople, the content of which, apart from the part that referred to the urgency of the action, did not fundamentally differ from the one presented in the previous address to Cetinje. The message said:

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- 2 Alexander Battenberg, who was elected Prince of Bulgaria on the recommendation of Saint Petersburg in 1879, accepted the revolutionary unification of the principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in September 1885 (Plovdiv coup). As Russia opposed it, Battenberg was forced to abdicate on August 21, 1886. However, on July 7, 1887, the Austro-Hungarian exponent Ferdinand Coburg was elected Prince of Bulgaria, whom Saint Petersburg did not recognize until the beginning of 1896. The recognition came after Bulgaria's foreign policy orientation turned towards Russia and after the Bulgarian heir to the throne, Boris, was converted to the Orthodox faith (Popov, 2010, 254–256; Šulek, 1938, 65, 69, 92, 118–119; Vojvodić, 1999, 97).

Russia wants to maintain European peace and the current situation in Europe as long as it can, because the circumstances, specific and general, in Europe are not favorable for raising the Eastern question. Russia advises the Balkan states to avoid raising the Macedonian and Albanian issues and any other issues. But as the situation in Turkey is never certain and various complications can arise at any time, Russia wants the Balkan states to come closer to each other and come to an agreement in time, so that they are not surprised by events, but that they themselves, without foreign intervention, resolve the Eastern question. In order to achieve a solution to the Balkan problem, Russia proposes that states do not interfere in anything but limit themselves to preventing foreign intervention. In order to reach an agreement among the Balkan states, it is not necessary to rush it, but to work with great caution and in deep secrecy (Vuković, 1996, 627–628).

THE MISSION OF GAVRO VUKOVIĆ

Implementing the instructions of Saint Petersburg, Prince Nikola appointed the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Duke Gavro Vuković,³ to visit Serbia and Bulgaria in order to start work on bringing the Balkan countries closer together. However, apart from Sofia and Belgrade, Vuković was also supposed to go to Constantinople.

Namely, before Bakić conveyed the Russian instructions to Cetinje, the Sultan, through the Ottoman diplomatic representative in Montenegro, invited the then ailing Prince Nikola to come to Constantinople, to be treated by his personal physician, from where he would go to Brusa, where the “miraculous

- 3 Duke Gavro Vuković was born in 1852. He completed elementary school in Cetinje and high school in Belgrade in 1869, where he also studied law. He graduated in 1873 and became the first law graduate from Montenegro. He began his distinguished career on May 5, 1874, when he was appointed Secretary of the Senate. He became a member of the Supreme Court in 1879. He served as Montenegro's diplomatic representative to the Ottoman Empire twice: from the end of 1879 to July 23, 1880, and from March to the end of December 1884. He was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs on June 29, 1890, and held this position until December 19, 1905. He was the President of the State Council from December 20, 1905, to May 16, 1907, when he retired. He served two terms as a member of the Montenegrin National Assembly, following the parliamentary elections held in 1906 and 1914. After the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918, he was, for a time, its plenipotentiary minister in Constantinople. Duke Gavro Vuković passed away in Berane in 1928 and was buried near the Đurđevi Stupovi Monastery. His memoirs are a work of exceptional significance for shedding light on the course of Montenegrin history in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Montenegro, after recognition at the Berlin Congress, sought to establish itself as a modern state and find its place on the international political stage. As an active participant in Montenegro's foreign policy activities for a long period, Vuković, recalling his political and diplomatic career, provided a wealth of valuable information about Montenegro and its relations with other countries, particularly the great powers. His memoirs also recorded many interesting moments from the life of Prince, later King, Nikola, and his family (Bakić, 2011, 51–53, 123–124; Vuković, 1996).

waters” were located. In order to persuade the prince to be treated in his country instead of in Vienna, the sultan told the Montenegrin ruler that he would send him a special steamship with which he would set out on his journey, as well as that he would give him the best castle in Brusa at his disposal (Vuković, 1996, 624, 629, 632).

Gavro Vuković considered that it would be beneficial for Montenegro for the Montenegrin sovereign to accept the Sultan’s invitation and visit the Ottoman capital. Explaining his position, he pointed out in the conversation with Prince Nikola that Russia, compared to all other great powers, currently had the greatest influence with the sultan, and that therefore one should use the existing opportunities, since everything is unpredictable in Constantinople, so Russian influence could suddenly decline.⁴ The Montenegrin Minister of Foreign Affairs also highlighted Constantinople’s fear of a Bulgarian invasion of Macedonia and Austria-Hungary’s agitation in Albania.⁵ This state of affairs, according to Vuković, gave Montenegro the opportunity to, during the negotiations, possibly highlight the request that, under the guise of rectification of the border, territories in which it was interested be allocated to Montenegro.⁶

The prince replied to Vuković that he had taken note of his proposal and that he would act in accordance with it, as soon as a suitable opportunity arose (Vuković, 1996, 625).⁷

The Montenegrin ruler agreed to travel to Constantinople, after the Sultan sent him a handwritten letter inviting him to visit the Ottoman capital.⁸ However,

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- 4 The strong influence of Saint Petersburg on the Ottoman ruler, which Vuković spoke about, stemmed from the fact that Russia, unlike England, did not take into consideration the application of more radical measures against Constantinople, due to the crisis caused by the massacre of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire (Guč, 1933, 195–205).
 - 5 The Ottoman envoy to the Montenegrin court, on behalf of the Sultan, confidentially asked Prince Nikola whether he would invade Herzegovina, if Prince Ferdinand invaded Macedonia. The Montenegrin sovereign replied that Montenegro should not engage in such an action alone, but rather that arrangements should first be made for Muslims and Orthodox Christians to move against Vienna, since both are dissatisfied with its rule. The prince pointed out that only in the event that this assumption was fulfilled, in Cetinje it would be possible to think about what could be done further in the whole matter (Vuković, 1996, 624–625).
 - 6 The process of negotiations regarding the specification of the Montenegrin-Ottoman border after the Berlin Congress resulted in the signing of the corresponding agreements in 1881, 1883, and 1884. However, these documents did not cover a small part of the border line, which remained unregulated until the beginning of the First Balkan War, when this issue became irrelevant (Ražnatović, 1994; 1995; 1979, 294).
 - 7 The official gratitude of Prince Nikola and Princess Milena to the Sultan, for the attention he gave them during the illness of the Montenegrin ruler, was delivered through the Montenegrin diplomatic representative in the Ottoman Empire, Mitar Bakić. On January 20/February 1, 1896, he informed Cetinje that he had delivered the princely couple’s dispatch to the court the previous day (DACG-MID, 56, 64).
 - 8 The Ottoman sovereign handed this letter to Prince Nikola through his personal physician, whom he sent to Montenegro to treat the Montenegrin ruler. However, his main task was to persuade the prince to go “to Brusa via Constantinople to the miraculous waters” (Vuković, 1996, 628).

unforeseen circumstances prevented Prince Nikola from leaving Cetinje, leading him to send Gavro Vuković to Constantinople in his stead.⁹

Vuković began his mission, during which he was to visit the capitals of Serbia, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, with a visit to Constantinople in September 1896 (Vuković, 1996, 631; Vojvodić, 1969, 70). There, he discussed with the Sultan the establishment of Montenegrin-Turkish cooperation to prevent a possible change in the status of Albania, on which an agreement in principle was reached. In the Ottoman capital, there was no mention of the territories, which were the subject of Montenegro's interest, but this was certainly kept in mind. Vuković wrote in his memoirs that, on behalf of Montenegro, he proposed to the Ottoman Empire that the two countries jointly defend Albania from any external appropriation, with the final idea that the Empire, in the form of a reward, cede Đurđevi Stupovi and Berane to the Montenegrin state (Vuković, 1996, 602, 630, 635–636).

After Constantinople, Duke Vuković visited Sofia, where he met Prince Ferdinand. Then he traveled to Belgrade to introduce his mission to King Alexander. Prince Ferdinand and King Alexander agreed in principle with the need to bring the Balkan states together and reach an agreement on the division of the territories of European Turkey.¹⁰ Of course, an agreement would be reached on the sensitive issues of the territorial claims of each of the states in subsequent negotiations (Vuković, 1996, 603, 606–607, 609).

9 Accepting the invitation, the Montenegrin ruler replied to the sultan that he would visit him upon his return from Moscow, where he was going for the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II. However, since Prince Mirko fell ill during the coronation festivities, the prince had to postpone the announced visit, and later the marriage of Princess Jelena finally prevented him from traveling to the Ottoman capital (Vuković, 1996, 628–629; Özcan, 2012a, 171–172). However, Prince Nikola visited the Sultan again in the summer of 1899. The prince and his entourage set sail from Bar on August 14/26, on the Ottoman ship *Ismir*. This ship was accompanied by the yacht *Timza* (called *Zmaj* in Montenegro), which the sultan presented to the Montenegrin ruler at the beginning of the same year. In 1904, the Ottoman sovereign gave Prince Nikola another yacht, named *Zaza*. In January 1908, the prince gave this yacht a new name – *Rumija* (Petrović-Njegoš, 2007, 385; Jović, 2010, 170; Özcan, 2012b, 120–121; Glas Crnogorca, 6. 3. 1899, 1; 13. 3. 1899, 1; 14. 8. 1899, 1; the publication dates of this newspaper are according to the Julian calendar, which in the nineteenth century was twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar).

10 That diplomatic activities are often in conflict with ethical principles was also confirmed by the mission that Gavro Vuković had to perform in Constantinople, Sofia and Belgrade. While in Constantinople, he discussed the common defense of Albania with the Sultan, while in Sofia and Belgrade plans were presented for the division of the Ottoman territories in the Balkans. Vuković writes: “Let the reader of these lines judge what a difficult and delicate diplomatic role I played. In a secret mission, I offer Montenegrin help to the Sultan, so that together with them we can defend Arbania [sic] from joining any other state. I also offer that we do not allow Arbania to gain autonomy, and that unconditionally, without our benefit. On the other hand, at the same time, I am going to create a Balkan agreement on the division of European Turkey among the states. What kind of morality is there that is absent in diplomacy? Its old motto is: the end justifies the means” (Vuković, 1996, 632).

TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN MONTENEGRO AND RUSSIA

Why did Russia entrust the implementation of its initiative to Montenegro? Explaining to the rulers of Bulgaria and Serbia why Russia entrusted Montenegro with launching the mission of rapprochement of the Balkan states, Vuković said that Saint Petersburg acted in this way keeping in mind the character of the regime in Montenegro. Namely, Montenegro, unlike their countries, lacked both a constitution and a parliament, and therefore its government was stable, while in Serbia and Bulgaria the governments often changed, which was not conducive to such a mission, since its implementation required a long time period (Vuković, 1996, 605–606, 608).

However, Cetinje's unwavering foreign policy orientation towards Russia, unlike Sofia and Belgrade, was of great importance. From his ascension to power in 1860, Prince Nikola was entirely loyal to the Russian court, a quality that was highly valued in Saint Petersburg. This sentiment was best expressed by Russian Tsar Alexander III in a toast on May 30, 1889, during a formal dinner honoring the engagement of Princess Milica, daughter of Prince Nikola, to Grand Duke Peter Nikolayevich Romanov: "I drink to the health of my only, faithful, and sincere friend, the Prince of Montenegro"¹¹ (Glas Crnogorca, 4. 6. 1889, 1–2; 21. 5. 1889, 1–2; Nikiforov 2011, 7; Petrović-Njegoš 2007, 363; Škerović, 1964, 30).

The marriage between Peter and Milica (the wedding took place on August 7, 1889) broke the tradition of Romanovs marrying German princesses, which also represents a striking expression of deep respect for Montenegro and its ruler by Saint Petersburg. Additionally, it is worth noting that the groom was not a distant relative of the Tsar but rather his first cousin. This significantly raised the prestige of the Montenegrin dynasty in the eyes of European royal families, with some later establishing close ties¹² with the Petrović-Njegoš family (Strunina, 2011, 189; Škerović, 1964, 29, 35).

11 In addition to this statement, which resonated strongly throughout the Slavic world and Europe in general, Tsar Alexander extended a great honor to the Montenegrin ruler during his stay in Russia by appointing him honorary commander of the 15th Rifle Guard Regiment, which was subsequently named "The Regiment of His Highness Prince Nikola" (Glas Crnogorca, 21. 5. 1889, 3; Škerović, 1964, 30, 36).

12 Princess Jelena married the Italian heir to the throne, later King Victor Emmanuel III, in 1896. Princess Ana married Franz Joseph of Battenberg, brother of Bulgarian Prince Alexander I of Battenberg, in 1897. Crown Prince Danilo wed Princess Jutta of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, daughter of Grand Duke Adolf Friedrich V of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, in 1899; upon converting to Orthodoxy, she took the name Milica. Prince Mirko married Natalija Konstantinović, a distant relative of Serbian King Alexander Obrenović, in 1902. Prince Nikola's eldest daughter, Zorka, had married Prince Peter Karađorđević in 1883, who became King of Serbia in 1903, thirteen years after her passing (Strunina, 2011, 176–178; Glas Crnogorca, 6. 10. 1896, 1–2; 3. 5. 1897, 1; 14. 7. 1899, 1–2; 28. 6. 1902, 1).

The sister of Grand Duchess Milica, Princess Anastasia (Stana), was married to a member of the Romanov family as well, Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich, with their marriage formalized in 1907.¹³

By forging familial ties with the imperial family, Prince Nikola further solidified Montenegro's position in Saint Petersburg, and his daughters were well-placed to advocate for Montenegrin interests in the Russian capital, a mission they and their husbands undertook with dedication (Vitte, 1924, 217–218).

Around the time the initiative to foster closer Balkan alliances was underway, Russia reaffirmed its favor toward Montenegro. During his coronation in May 1896, which Prince Nikola attended, Tsar Nicholas II echoed sentiments similar to those of his father seven years prior, declaring Montenegro as Russia's most faithful ally (Lakić, 2012, 297).

The friendship between Montenegro and Russia was deeply rooted. The first ties between the two countries were established during the reign of Peter the Great (1682–1725), who in 1711, during the Russo-Turkish War of 1710–11 called upon Montenegrins and other Balkan Christians to rise against the Turks—a call answered only by Bishop Danilo (1697–1735) with his Montenegrin followers.¹⁴ In 1715, Danilo visited Russia, where he received aid from Peter the Great for Montenegro, which had suffered severe retribution from the Turks for its defiance (Stanojević, 1955, 61–116; Petrović, 1997, 29, 51–60).

Successive Montenegrin leaders fortified and further developed their ties with Russia. In pursuit of this goal, Bishop Sava resided in Russia from 1743 to 1744, while Bishop Vasilije made three visits (1752–54, 1757–59, 1765–66) and passed away there in March 1766. He was buried at state expense with a grand church and military ceremony in the Saint Petersburg Annunciation Church of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra, resting alongside notable Russian figures, including the celebrated general Suvorov (Petrović 1997, 104–107; Stanojević, 1978, 69–70, 101–105, 149–158, 180–183).

The deeply rooted Montenegrin reverence for Russia allowed the self-styled Šćepan Mali, who claimed to be the assassinated Russian Tsar Peter III—believed by the Russian people to be alive—to be accepted as their ruler. Šćepan even succeeded in instilling order among the independently-minded Montenegrins during his rule (1767–73). The Montenegrins so fervently wanted to believe in the story of the Russian tsar that they paid little attention to the words of Empress Catherine II's emissary Dolgorukov, who clarified that Šćepan was not who he claimed. Recognizing the "tsar's" authority among the people and his loyalty to Russia, Dolgorukov handed him the aid he had brought from Saint Petersburg (Jovanović, 2001, 107–110, 113–119).

13 Anastasija married Nikolay Nikolayevich (brother of Milica's husband, Peter Nikolayevich) after divorcing Russian Prince Georgy Maximilianovich Romanovsky, whom she had married in 1889, shortly after her sister Milica's wedding (Strunina, 2011, 204–208, 211; 2013, 36–38; Glas Crnogorica, 3. 9. 1889, 1–2).

14 Together with the Montenegrin tribes, the Grbalj people, Paštrovići, Brđani, and Herzegovinian tribes around Grahovo and Nikšić rose against the Turks (Jovanović, 2001, 79).

During the reign of Bishop Petar I Petrović Njegoš (1784–1830), Montenegrin and Russian flags flew side by side. In 1806 and 1807, Montenegrin and Russian forces fought together against Napoleon's troops in Boka and against the combined Turkish-French army in Herzegovina (Pavićević, 2007, 339–387; Popović, 1951, 69–74). Bishop Petar I's dedication to Russia was most clearly demonstrated in his final words to his successor, Petar II, seeing him burdened by the immense responsibility of governing: "I cannot help you now, but let these be my last words: pray to God and hold on to Russia" (Petrović-Njegoš, 1995, 791).

Bishop Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1830–51) truly honored his uncle's counsel. During his reign, Montenegrin-Russian relations flourished even further, with Russian assistance aiding the organization and strengthening of Montenegro's governmental institutions. Tsar Nicholas I, in whose presence in Saint Petersburg the Montenegrin leader was ordained as a metropolitan in 1833, promised to staunchly advocate for Montenegrin interests as if it were one of Russia's provinces. In his charter, the Tsar urged Montenegrins to be obedient to their bishop, whom he referred to as his friend and brother, and provided Montenegro with substantial financial support (Popović, 1951, 144–145; Jovanović 2001, 164–165, 167, 169; Milić, 2016, 494).

Relations between Montenegro and Russia cooled during Prince Danilo's reign (1851–60) as he misunderstood Russia's weakened post-Crimean War position and resented its lack of support for Montenegro's international recognition at the 1856 Paris Congress, leading him to pivot toward France. However, by late 1857, relations between the two countries improved, and in 1858 they normalized. After the rise to power of Nikola I Petrović Njegoš (1860–1918), Russia and Montenegro reached a level of exceptional mutual friendship and cordiality (Jovanović, 2001, 209–218, 256–308, 315, 343–348, 366–370).

THE DRAFT AGREEMENT BETWEEN MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA AND THE OPENING OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS OF THE BALKAN STATES IN CETINJE

Since the Sanjak of Novi Pazar was outside Bulgaria's sphere of interest, Montenegro and Serbia had to agree on it. In this regard, Vuković said in the meeting with King Alexander that it was self-evident that it was necessary to divide the Sanjak, fraternally between two states, which would jointly defend it in the event of an attack, since they should not forget the German doctrine of *Drang nach Osten* (Vuković, 1996, 609).

As for the other areas that were the subject of mutual interest between Montenegro and Serbia, Vuković proposed to King Alexander that Skopje should belong to Serbia, and Prizren, Gjakova/Đakovica and Peja/Peć to Montenegro, while Cetinje and Belgrade would work together to achieve greater territorial gains in Macedonia. To this, King Alexander replied that Prizren had always belonged to Serbia's sphere of interest, which supports the seminary, the Serbian Metropolitanate, schools and other institutions there, and that therefore it is not easy

for Belgrade to give up this city. However, when the two sides would negotiate on this issue, each of them would present their arguments, after which a final agreement would be reached (Vuković, 1996, 609).

How the division of the Ottoman territories between Montenegro and Serbia should look like was also discussed during the return visit of King Alexander to Prince Nikola, in the beginning of May 1897.¹⁵ Then, in Cetinje, Prime Minister of Serbia Đorđe Simić and Montenegrin Minister of Foreign Affairs Gavro Vuković, considering the possibility of reaching an agreement on an alliance between the two countries, signed the appropriate draft agreement. According to Article 4 of this project, which essentially represented the elaboration of the aforementioned proposal submitted by Vuković to King Alexander, it was foreseen that in the event of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the border between Serbia and Montenegro would be drawn in the middle of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar in such a way that Nova Varoš, Sjenica and Novi Pazar belonged to Serbia, and Pljevlja and Peja to Montenegro. A straight line would be drawn from the border of Sanjak to the south, so that Serbia would get Skopje, Tetovo and Ohrid, and Montenegro would get Gjakova, Prizren and Debar. To the south of Lake Ohrid, the border of Serbia would go eastward, encompassing Bitola, Voden and Yenidze-Vardar, after which it would descend to the Aegean Sea below Thessaloniki, so that this city would belong to Serbia. The Montenegrin border line would lead from Lake Ohrid west to the Adriatic Sea in the direction of Valona.

However, this agreement between Belgrade and Cetinje did not come to fruition, since King Alexander remained of the opinion that Prizren could not be seen as a sphere of interest of Montenegro, but that this city, in the final division of the Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire, should be part of Serbia (Vojvodić, 1970, 138; Ražnatović, 1968, 221).

The insistence of the Montenegrin prince on Prizren stemmed from the fact that Montenegro at the time saw itself as the successor to the former Serbian Empire, given that it was the first territory of the medieval Serbian Empire to liberate itself from Ottoman rule. Since the late seventeenth century, specifically since the founder of the Petrović dynasty, Bishop Danilo, came to power, Montenegro had existed as an independent state. Over the ensuing centuries, through continuous conflict with the Ottomans, it not only preserved its freedom but also achieved substantial territorial expansion. Due to its marked bravery, patriotism, and defiance, a cult of Montenegro as the “Serbian Sparta”¹⁶ took root among the Serbian people. It is therefore unsurprising that the prince believed he and the Petrović dynasty should

15 Prince Nikola visited King Alexander at the end of June 1896 (Ražnatović, 1968, 197–224; Vuković, 1996, 543–591).

16 This cult was primarily created by Serbian intellectuals from Austro-Hungary, led by Svetozar Miletić. Around the same time as the concept of the “Serbian Sparta” emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, the term “Serbian Athens” also appeared, referring to Novi Sad as the cultural center of the Serbian people (Vasin, 2023).

play a leading role in the unification of the Serbian people.¹⁷ The prince expressed this viewpoint, and his desire to rule the imperial capital Prizren, in the verses of his patriotic song *Onamo 'namo! (There, Over There!—“There, over there... to see Prizren! That is mine—I'll come home! My beloved heritage calls me there; I must one day go there armed”)* (Petrović-Njegoš, 1990, 40)

In order to implement the initiatives of the Russian government as easily as possible, i.e. to coordinate future joint actions of the Balkan states as simply as possible, Montenegro insisted that they have their own diplomatic representations in Cetinje (Vuković, 1996, 606, 608, 628; Vujović, 1971, 299–300). Thus, in January 1897, Bulgaria opened its representative office in the Montenegrin capital, and Serbia did the same in April of the same year (Glas Crnogorca, 11. 1. 1897, 1; 11. 4. 1897, 1). A year earlier, also at the insistence of Cetinje, Greece renewed the operation of its diplomatic mission in Montenegro,¹⁸ as it was planned for Athens to join the negotiations after Montenegro, Serbia, and Bulgaria reached an agreement on their spheres of interest and the division of the Ottoman Empire's European territories (Vuković, 1996, 605).

THE *UGODBA*

The concrete effects of the cooperation of the Balkan states were reflected in the secret agreement known as the *Ugodba* (Treaty). This agreement, which provided for the consensual action of Serbia and Bulgaria in Macedonia, was signed by the representatives of the two countries on March 3, 1897.¹⁹

17 Prince Nikola's intention to ascend to the Serbian throne was bolstered by the intense hostility between the Serbian Karađorđević and Obrenović dynasties, which were constantly struggling for power. Additionally, his aspirations were especially favored by the fact that the last Obrenović rulers of Serbia, Kings Milan and Alexander, were discredited among Serbs due to various court scandals, their pro-Austrian orientation, and unstable conditions within the country. To pursue his ambitions, in 1902, Prince Nikola arranged the marriage of Prince Mirko to Natalija Konstantinović, a relative of the Obrenović family, establishing familial ties between the two dynasties and positioning his son as a potential heir to the Serbian crown. In this context, it was particularly significant that King Alexander had no descendants. However, with the election of Petar Karađorđević as King of Serbia following the bloody May Coup of 1903, which overthrew the Obrenović dynasty, it became clear to the Montenegrin ruler that his plans would be difficult to realize (Rakočević, 1981, 21; Ilinčić, 2012, 17; Tredvej, 2005, 19; Popović, 1995, 388; Vuković, 1996, 765, 767–768; Ražnatović, 1979, 682, 689; Antić, 2018, 41; Glas Crnogorca, 6. 7. 1896, 1; 28. 6. 1902, 1; 6. 7. 1902, 1–2).

18 Greece established relations with Montenegro at the beginning of January 1881, appointing Alexander Logotetis as its representative at the Montenegrin court. He left Montenegro in 1883, only to return to Cetinje three years later (Raspopović, 1996, 366–367).

19 Turbulences in the Ottoman Empire caused by the Greek uprising in Crete from February 1897, led Bulgaria to believe that the right time had come to raise the Macedonian issue in addition to the Cretan one. Thus, Sofia asked Belgrade to start a joint action to implement the idea of creating an autonomous Macedonia. When Serbia did not accept this, the Bulgarians proposed that the two countries at least raise the issue of implementing reforms in Macedonia. Belgrade replied that before that, it is necessary for Serbia and Bulgaria to agree on the distribution of spheres of interest in the territory. However, the Bulgarian side believed that it was not yet time to determine spheres of influence. Thus, since the two countries could not agree on specific solutions, they agreed that they will make decisions on the basis of mutual consent regarding all issues related to their interests in Macedonia (Jovanović, 1990, 336–338; Ćorović, 2009, 204–206; Guć, 1933, 206).

King Alexander sent the text of the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement, along with his handwritten letter, to Prince Nikola through his special envoy. After becoming acquainted with the contents of the agreement, the Montenegrin ruler decided to support the actions of Serbia and Bulgaria in Macedonia and to join the treaty (Vojvodić, 1970, 135–136).

Austria-Hungary saw any possibility of joint action by the Balkan states as a threat to the realization of its projections in relation to the Ottoman Empire. That is why Vienna did not want to allow the Cretan crisis, which culminated in the outbreak of the Greco-Turkish War on April 17, 1897, to be a pretext for the other Balkan countries to initiate military actions against the Ottomans. The Dual Monarchy's fear for its status in the Balkans was reinforced by the fact that at that time, in addition to Montenegro, Serbia and Bulgaria were also pro-Russian, which provided Saint Petersburg with political superiority in European Turkey (Vojvodić, 1999, 109).

In contrast to Austria-Hungary, whose foreign policy focused on the Balkans, Russia oriented itself towards the Far East from the beginning of the 1890s. In order to successfully carry out the Far Eastern expansion, it was also in Saint Petersburg's interest that the Balkan states did not launch offensive actions against the Ottoman Empire (Vojvodić, 1999, 109–110; Hitrova, 1993, 154). As noted, Russia made such a request to the Balkan countries in 1896, asking them to act in a coordinated manner, so that at the right time they would be able to inherit the positions of the Ottoman Empire on the Balkan Peninsula, and thus stop the Dual Monarchy in its march to Thessaloniki.

The strategy of Russian action in the Balkans was clearly contained in the instructions, which on March 20, 1897, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Muravyov, prepared for the newly appointed diplomatic representative of Russia in Bulgaria, Behmatyev.

The Russian diplomat was made aware that any consideration of Balkan issues should be based on the basic principle of Russian Balkan policy, which was aimed at preventing any complications in that part of Europe, which certainly implied the preservation of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Maintaining the authority of the Sultan, the instructions said, was "the best means of achieving the much-desired peace in the East" (AODMC-PR, XLV). Otherwise, if one carelessly embarked on the path of dismembering the Ottoman Empire, at a time when turmoil was evident in all its parts, it would only give impetus to the various pretensions of the Balkan states and peoples living within the Ottoman state, which would provoke and strengthen their mutual rivalry (AODMC-PR, XLV).

Wanting to inform Behmatyev as best as possible about the state of affairs in the Balkans, Muravyov thought it appropriate to present to the Russian envoy in Sofia the views of Saint Petersburg on the recently signed treaty between Bulgaria and Serbia. Interpreting this agreement, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the two sides agreed that the riots in northern Macedonia should serve as a basis for their intervention, but that any measures in this regard could only be taken with the prior agreement of Belgrade and Sofia. The agreement also envisaged respect for the

immutability of the territorial status of the Ottoman Empire, emphasizing that it must be protected from possible encroachments by Austria-Hungary. Likewise, Muravjov said that the annexation of Crete to Greece, in accordance with the *Ugodba*, cannot be the basis for making any demands to Constantinople by the signatory states, while the conflict between Greece and the Ottoman Empire cannot be a reason for the military intervention of Bulgaria and Serbia (AODMC-PR, XLV).

After introducing Behmatyev to the basic provisions of the *Ugodba*, Muravyov pointed out that this document protected the “inviolability of the sultan’s possessions” and implied that Balkan states should abstain from any adventurous policy, and that as such, in general, it is in complete agreement with the basic aspirations of Saint Petersburg in the Balkans (AODMC-PR, XLV).

However, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed out that a closer reading of the *Ugodba* shed a different light on that document, which primarily referred to the part of the agreement that concerned Austria-Hungary. He noted the tendency of the contracting parties to take on a role that could hardly correspond to their position, since they were not called upon to protect the Ottoman Empire from anyone’s pretensions, but rather that this should be the responsibility of Europe. All this leads one to think, said Muravyov, that the basis of this agreement was not a sincere desire to preserve the integrity of the Empire, but an effort to arrive at the division of Macedonia through compromise and mutual assistance.²⁰

Commenting on the treaty, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs also said that the adoption of this agreement did not mean the end of the rivalry between Bulgaria and Serbia, but that its implementation could contribute to calming the local situation, because both countries had agreed to recognize each other’s freedom of religious and cultural propaganda in Macedonia (AODMC-PR, XLV).

Nevertheless, Muravyov continued that it was impossible not to notice in the agreement the aspirations of Bulgaria and Serbia to neutralize each other, “bearing in mind the alarming state of affairs in the East”, which represented a suitable ground for political adventurism, i.e. for the realization of the hidden

20 By looking at the content of the *Ugodba*, it can be noticed that Austria-Hungary is not mentioned in any of its articles, and therefore neither is the protection of the Ottoman Empire from its actions, which Muravyov talked about. However, it is quite possible that he had knowledge that the contracting parties had reached an agreement on that issue during the negotiations themselves, but that, probably out of consideration for Vienna, that part was not included in the text of the agreement. Other provisions of the *Ugodba* were also more freely interpreted by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and we will therefore state them in their original form: “1. All questions concerning the interests of the Serbian and Bulgarian people in the Ottoman Empire, both governments—Serbian and Bulgarian—will be discussed by agreement. 2. None of the mentioned governments will undertake unilaterally and without prior agreement with the other anything that could disrupt the current status quo in the East, therefore no political or military action. 3. Until the spheres of Serbian and Bulgarian interests in the countries of the Ottoman Empire are determined by mutual agreement, both governments undertake not only not to hinder each other, but to mutually support each other in national, church and school matters in those countries. 4. This agreement will be communicated to His Highness the Prince of Montenegro, and he will be invited to accede to it.” (Stojković, 1998, 216–217; Perazić & Raspopović, 1992, 317–318)

plans of these countries (AODMC-PR, XLV). In this respect, the actions of Bulgaria caused concern, said Muravyov, instructing Behmatyev to carefully take care that the relations between Sofia and Belgrade were always “within the limits of a peaceful and moderate policy”, which only corresponded to Russia’s interests (AODMC-PR, XLV).

This mistrust of Saint Petersburg towards Bulgaria’s intentions, which Nelidov once pointed out, is confirmed by Muravyov in his instructions. On that occasion, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, among other things, emphasized Bulgaria’s aspirations to actualize the issue of Macedonia’s autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, and therefore instructed Behmatyev to let Sofia know “that the current time is unfavorable to raising such issues” (AODMC-PR, XLV). As the most impressive proof of the insincerity of the Bulgarian government, Muravyov cited its “recent” proposal to the Sultan, which included the creation of a defense alliance between the two countries, but on the condition that Constantinople recognized the independence of the Principality of Bulgaria. In this regard, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs underlined that Sofia had to give up any thought of using the complex state of affairs in the East in order to realize its ambitious plans. Otherwise, it could not count on any support from Russia (AODMC-PR, XLV).

At the end of his instructions, Muravyov pointed out that Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro were in much greater danger from Vienna, which dreamt of expanding the Austro-Hungarian state in the Balkans, than from the Ottoman Empire, which had no intention of entering into conflicts with them. Therefore, these states had the obligation to protect themselves from Austria-Hungary in every way, avoiding giving it any reason to interfere in Balkan affairs, so as not to complicate the general course of the Eastern Question, and the possibility of it obtaining a favorable outcome for the Slavic countries would depend exclusively on the “powerful participation of Russia” (AODMC-PR, XLV).

AGREEMENT BETWEEN RUSSIA AND AUSTRIA-HUNGARY FROM 1897

Suspicious of each other and not wanting the ongoing fluctuations in the Ottoman Empire to lead to greater complications in the Balkans, the Dual Monarchy and Russia were convinced of the need to reach an appropriate agreement. This was discussed at the end of April 1897, when the Austro-Hungarian ruler Franz Joseph, together with his Minister of Foreign Affairs Golukhovski, paid a return visit to the Russian Emperor Nicholas II Romanov.²¹

In the talks held at the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg, the two sides immediately reached an agreement that the Balkan states must not disturb the peace and status

21 The Russian emperor visited Vienna at the end of August 1896. During his stay in the Austro-Hungarian capital, the Ottoman Empire and how to preserve the existing situation in the East were also discussed, which established the basis for conducting future negotiations on this matter (Vojvodić, 1999, 111).

quo in the Balkans. As a result of their identical positions on this issue, the Austro-Hungarian and Russian foreign ministers Golukhovski and Muravyov congratulated the Serbian, Bulgarian and Montenegrin governments for their correct behavior during the Greco-Turkish War. It was, in fact, a form of warning to the Balkan states that they were expected to continue to adhere to a peaceful political course.

When it came to reaching an agreement on Balkan policies of the two powers, the Russian government proposed that the Austro-Hungarian side present its position in writing. However, as the official visit of Emperor Francis Joseph to the Russian ruler was coming to an end, the proposal of the Russian government was to be implemented upon the return of the Dual Monarchy's delegation to their country. Thus, the agreement between Saint Petersburg and Vienna was to be reached in the form of an exchange of notes.

The Austro-Hungarian government expressed its position in a note sent by Golukhovski to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Saint Petersburg, Liechtenstein, on May 8. It stated, among other things, that the two countries would renounce any territorial claims on the Balkan Peninsula, while also demanding that other powers respect this principle. In the event that the status quo in the Balkans could not be maintained, Austria-Hungary would annex Bosnia and Herzegovina and part of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar. The rest of Ottoman European territories would be divided between the Balkan states, but in such a way as not to upset the balance between them. In doing so, an independent Albanian state would be formed between Janjina and Lake Skadar (Vojvodić, 1999, 112).

In the Russian government's response, contained in the note that Muravyov sent to Vienna on May 17, an agreement was expressed with the points of Golukhovski's note, which related to respect for peace and the status quo in the Balkans. As for the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, Russia pointed out that this would imply a change of the Berlin Treaty, which was not only a matter of the two great powers, but of Europe in general. Regarding the provisions related to the creation of Albania and the division of the Ottoman European possessions, the Russian government's position was that it was a question for the future and that it should not be resolved prematurely.

Thus, in the end, Austria-Hungary and Russia reached an agreement only on the need to preserve the existing situation in the Ottoman Empire (Vojvodić, 1999, 112–113).

Therefore, turbulent events in the Ottoman Empire in the mid-1890s did not lead to border changes on the Balkan Peninsula. The small Balkan states, which were constantly waiting for favorable circumstances to continue the struggle for liberation from their age-old enemy, were not yet ready for such an action. Vienna also did not consider that the moment had come to act in order to realize its expansionist aspirations, and Russia, engaged in the Far East, firmly stood by its calls to preserve the status quo in the Balkans.

However, such a situation did not last long. In 1908, the Dual Monarchy annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, so its strategy of penetration towards Thessaloniki began to be implemented in practice. In response to the Austro-Hungarian act of annexation, Russia, wanting to prevent further expansion of the Dual Monarchy, began to work intensively on creating an alliance between the Balkan states. This process was concluded in October 1912, right before the beginning of the First Balkan War, in which the members of the alliance (Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece) in a euphoric rush forced the Ottoman Empire to withdraw from the Balkan Peninsula after so many centuries. Its European territories, with the exception of East Thrace and Albania, which became an independent state by the will of the Great Powers, were divided between the Balkan states, so that Austria-Hungary did not succeed in inheriting the positions of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, as was Russia's goal when it started the rapprochement action of the Balkan states in 1896.

IMPLEMENTACIJA RUSKE POBUDE: ČRNOGORSKA DIPLOMATSKA PRIZADEVANJA V BALKANSKIH DRŽAVAH LETA 1896

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POVZETEK

Namen tega članka je osvetliti vlogo Črne gore v implementaciji ruske pobude za spravo med balkanskimi državami, ki jo je leta 1896 za Sankt Peterburg sprožil ruski odposlanec Nelidov, preko Mitra Bakića, črnogorskega zastopnika v Osmanskem imperiju. Izsledki raziskave kažejo, da je poslanstvo Gavra Vukovića, ki ga je črnogorska vlada zadolžila za realizacijo ruske iniciative, dejansko stimulirala dinamiko procesa sprave med balkanskimi narodi. S tem namenom sta bili na Cetinju kmalu vzpostavljeni diplomatski misiji Srbije in Bolgarije. Podobno bi veljalo podpis tajnega sporazuma, Ugodbe, med Srbijo, Bolgarijo in Črno goro videti v luči črnogorske predanosti ruski pobudi, ki je bila v celoti uresničena tik pred začetkom prve balkanske vojne. To pobudo je vsekakor treba razumeti v kontekstu nasprotujočih si interesov Sankt Peterburga in Dunaja glede prihodnosti evropskega dela Turčije, konflikta, ki se je prav tako manifestiral med okrepljeno nestabilnostjo v Osmanskem imperiju sredi 90. let 19. stoletja. Pričakovanja, da bi turbulentni dogodki v Imperiju zaradi revolucionarnih teženj Armencev in Grkov na Kreti, kot tudi zaradi dejanj Makedonskega odbora, lahko vodili v podobna gibanja med drugimi neturškimi ljudstvi, je dvojno monarhijo leta 1896 spodbudilo, da pripravi načrt za napotitev avstro-ogrskih sil v Novopazarski sandžak. Da bi Avstro-Ogrski preprečila morebitno eskalacijo krize v sosednjem imperiju izkoristiti za njeno ozemeljsko širitev, je Rusija istega leta spodbudila začetek sprave med balkanskimi državami, da bi s koordinacijo njihovega delovanja Dunaju prekržala načrte.

Ključne besede: Črna gora, balkanske države, Rusija, Avstro-Ogrska, Osmanski imperij, Gavro Vuković, Ugodba

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REINTERPRETACIJA LIKA DUKLJANSKE KRALJICE JAKVINTE VOJISLAVLJEVIĆ: IZMEĐU POVIJESTI I FIKCIJE

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APSTRAKT

U ovom radu bavićemo se likom dukljanske vladarke Jakvinte Vojislavljević (XI. stoljeće), u najstarijem tekstu crnogorske kulture "Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina" (XII. stoljeće), koristeći pri tom instrumente različitih znanstvenih disciplina: studija roda, znanosti o književnosti, sociologije i antropologije. Reinterpretacija se odnosi na ponovno iščitavanje i revalorizaciju starih tekstova, koji Jakvintu negativno oblikuju, a naše istraživanje ukazuje na dinstinkciju između povijesnih događaja i literarnih konstrukcija. Članak sagledava povijesne, kulturne i rodne aspekte, koji su oblikovali percepciju ove značajne ličnosti. Kroz kritičku analizu izvora i reinterpretirano tumačenje Jakvinte razdvajamo povijesne činjenice od legendarnog narativa, što doprinosi ne samo razumijevanju lika kraljice Jakvinte, nego i šireg konteksta Duklje za doba njezinog života.

Ključne riječi: Jakvinta, reinterpretacija književnosti, historija, mitologija, Duklja

REINTERPRETAZIONE DEL PERSONAGGIO DELLA REGINA DI DOCLEA JAKVINTA VOJISLAVLJEVIĆ: TRA STORIA E FINZIONE

SINTESI

In questo lavoro ci occuperemo della figura della sovrana di Doclea Jakvinta Vojislavljević (XI secolo) attraverso il testo più antico della cultura montenegrina, la "Cronaca del Prete di Doclea" (XII secolo), utilizzando strumenti forniti da diverse discipline scientifiche: studi di genere, letteratura, sociologia e antropologia. La reinterpretazione parte da una rilettura e rivalutazione di studi precedenti, che ritraevano Jakvinta in modo negativo, mentre la nostra ricerca si basa sulla distinzione tra eventi storici e costruzioni letterarie. L'articolo esamina gli aspetti storici, culturali e di genere che hanno plasmato la percezione di questa figura importante. Attraverso un'analisi critica delle fonti e una reinterpretazione, separiamo i fatti storici dal racconto leggendario, contribuendo così non solo alla comprensione del personaggio della regina Jakvinta, ma anche del contesto più ampio di Doclea durante la sua epoca.

Parole chiave: Jakvinta, reinterpretazione della letteratura, storia, mitologia, Doclea

UVOD¹

*Ljetopis popa Dukljanina*² (XII. stoljeće) najstariji je tekst koji se nalazi na prološkoj granici crnogorskog kanona. *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* prvi objavljuje Mavro Orbini (XVI. stoljeće). U ovoj varijanti primjetan je izostanak kritičkog odnosa prema starim izvorima (Kurelac, 2011, 269). Ovaj, ujedno najstariji sačuvani povijesni, ali i književni izvor crnogorske kulture, predstavlja bitnu riznicu iz koje se kasnije iščitavaju i propisuju određene norme i uspostavlja aksiološki sistem koji će znatno utjecati na crnogorsku kulturu. Pod tim normama podrazumijevaju se fenomeni čojstva i junaštva, na kojima počivaju gotovo svi tekstovi crnogorskog kanona, od Petra I. Petrovića Njegoša, Petra II. Petrovića Njegoša, Marka Miljanova, Stefana Mitrova Ljubiše, Mihaila Lalića itd.³

Tijekom srednjeg vijeka prisutne su različite književne vrste: liturgijski i biblijski tekstovi, apokrifni spisi (legende, evanđelja, viđenja, djela apostolska), mirakuli, legende, vizije, crkvena i svjetovna didaktično-moralizatorska proza, polemika, svjetovna pripovijest i roman, diplomatika i pravni tekstovi, prenja (kontrasti), epigrafika i grafiti, epistolarni tekstovi, drame – prikazanja, dijaloško pjesništvo i mnogi drugi (Hercigonja, 1975, 44). Predmet našeg istraživanja je ljetopis, koji prema *Rječniku književnih termina* (1986, 406) predstavlja “istoriografski žanr u staroj ruskoj i

- 1 Ovaj članak nastao je kao rezultat istraživanja u okviru bilateralnog projekta BI-ME/21-22-026 “Sličnosti i razlike između srednjovjekovnih primorskih i kontinentalnih gradova u današnjoj Sloveniji i Crnoj Gori”. Projekat je financiran od strane Slovenačke agencije za istraživanje i inovacije (ARIS).
- 2 Smatra se da je *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* nastao u drugoj polovici XII. stoljeća, a da je prvi put objavljen 1601. godine na italijanskom jeziku kao dio knjige *Il Regno de gli Slavi* dubrovačkog benediktinca Mavra Orbina. Autorstvo teksta se uglavnom pripisuje svećeniku dukljanske crkve Grguru. *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* poznat je i pod naslovom *Barski rodoslov*, ali i *Sclavorum regnum*, odnosno *Kraljevstvo Slavena* (Orbini, 1999). Ljetopis je doživio nekoliko izdanja, a među njima izdvajamo Mijušković (1988); Kunčer (2009); Živković (2009).
- 3 Već u “Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina” se uvode principi *čojstva i junaštva*, koji se kasnije razvijaju tokom dijahronijske ravni i kanona. Pomenute osobine su hiperbolizirane kod mnogih likova, koji su glorifikovani (primjerice Vladimir), a kod onih kod kojih nijesu prepoznate potencira se da ne postoje (Jakvinta). Ova ideja razvija se kod svih važnijih, kanonskih autora crnogorske kulture, koji u svojim poetikama razvijaju moralne osobine, uspostavljene u *Ljetopisu*. Takođe, insistiraju na poštovanju jasno definiranog hijerarhijskog sistema. Upravo će poštovanje hijerarhije i pozicija koje pojedinci treba da zauzimaju u društvenim odnosima biti odlika crnogorsko patrijarhalno-plemensko uređenje, o čemu piše Gerhard Gezeman, u knjizi *Crnogorski čovjek* (2003). Ono što je osobito važno za nas, jesu modeli na kojima se konstruiraju ženski likovi u crnogorskoj kulturi, a koji se mogu svrstati na relaciji od Kosare do Jakvinte. S jedne strane su izuzetno pozitivne, pokorne i moralno uzvišene junakinje, kakvim obiluju tekstovi crnogorske književnosti; od Njegoševog *Gorskog vijenca*, *Primjera čojstva i junaštva*, gotovo svih Lalićevih romana, *Pripovijesti crnogorskih i primorskih* Stefana Mitrova Ljubiše, romana Čamila Sijarića, pripovjetki Nikole Lopičića... Neke od najupečtljivijih junakinja koje možemo posmatrati kao Kosarine sljedbenice, spremne žrtvovati lično zarad opšteg su: sestra Batrićeva, Vidra, Neda, Umka, Ruža. S druge strane su one junakinje prema kojima crnogorska kultura zauzima izuzetno negativan stav, zbog odstupanja od osobina predviđenih ženi u Crnoj Gori na osnovu kojih bi trebala biti poštovana. Takve junakinje se pojavljuju u djelima kanonskih pisaca; poput jedne babe (*Gorski vijenac*, Njegoš), Nedine svekrve (*Zlo proljeće*, Mihailo Lalić), Marike (*Heroj na magarcu*, Miodrag Bulatović). One su modelovane uz aktiviranje istih osobina koje ima Jakvinta, prevrtljive su, lakog morala i nepouzdate.

srpskoj književnosti, u osnovi srodnog vizantijskim kronikama. U svojoj prvobitnoj redakciji je na granici hagiografije (“žitije i žiteljstvo”), na osnovu čega se grupa tzv. starijih letopisa u novijim istraživanjima i posmatra kao “rodoslovno-žitijska”, a ne letopisna u užem smislu reči. U ljetopisima je povijesno kazivanje sažeto, te je obogaćeno biblijskim reminiscencijama i osvježeno stilskim figurama, što opravdava unošenje ljetopisa u fond književnosti srednjeg stoljeća. Stoga, za *Ljetopisom popa Dukljanina*, kog Papović (2024, 434) opisuje kao kontroverzni tekst za povijest Crne Gore, koji favorizuje kneza Radoslava i njegove pretke, ali za koji ne postoje pouzdani dokazi da je on naručilac ovog djela, posežu i povjesničari, ali i oni koji se bave naukom o književnosti.

Kada govorimo o povijesnim elementima ovog teksta, nesumnjivo je da se u kronici, odnosno u *Rodoslovu slovenskih vladara* pojavljuju stvarne ličnosti, te opisuju neki od događaja koje prate i drugi zapisi iz tog doba. Doduše, ono što je upitno s aspekta povijesne znanosti svakako jeste kronologija, odnosno nedosljednost u datumima, što se kosi s povijesnom znanošću. Osim toga *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* cijele događaje opisuje kroz legende, ističući ih kao relevantan izvor.

Legitimitet da se *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* nedvosmisleno tumači i kao literarni tekst, dalo je, između ostalog i veliko prisustvo legendi. Među najistaknutijim legendama izdvajaju se, recimo ona o nastanku grada Dubrovnika ili pak legenda o Vladimiru i Kosari (*Žitije svetog Vladimira*). U duhu fantastične motivacije prilikom konstrukcije prezentiranog svijeta nerijetke su scene koje svjedoče o literarnom karakteru pomenutog teksta. Osim toga, neumitno je da se prilikom prikazivanja velikog broja ličnosti posegnulo za mehanizmima modelovanja svojstvenim književnom tekstu (poput psihologizacije, frazeologizacije, hiperbolizacije pojedinih njihovih osobina, ponekad istaknutih kroz odnose s drugim likovima) čime su ove ličnosti postale književni likovi. Likovi su nerijetko risani crno-bijelom tehnikom, s izraženim upečatljivim osobenostima, pa je velik broj oponiranih parova.

Ljetopis popa Dukljanina treba čitati kao tekst koji u sebi sadrži i povijesne, ali i fiktivne elemente, vodeći računa pri tom da ga tumačimo znanstveno, odnosno da se oni djelovi koji potpadaju pod polje fikcije i literarnosti ne sagledavaju kao povijesna istina, što se nerijetko radi, a neminovno vodi u polje manipulacije i zloupotrebe.

U srednjem vijeku književnost je bila najčešći izvor duhovne snage i obrazovanosti, a ponekad i jedino *oružje* kojim su branili svoju opstojnost i poziciju sustavnoga dijela kulturnog prostora zapadnoga kršćanstva (Jelčić, 2004, 17). Srednje stoljeće stvara sliku žene pokajnice, koja odiše i svojom tjelesnošću na taj način, odjevena u crno, pokrivene glave, te koja živi u kajanju kako bi iskupila svoju krivicu, oličenu kroz zavedenost Sotoninom obmanom, kršenjem božje zabrane i, posljedično, osudom cijeloga ljudskoga roda na grijeh i propast. Pod snažnim biblijskim utjecajem u srednjem stoljeću oblikuje se dvostruki pristup ženama: strah od opasnosti u koju muškarca dovodi ženska zavodnička moć i veličanje ženskoga djevičanstva kao antiteze grješnoj tjelesnosti (Delbianco, 2006, 137). Tijekom ovog razdoblja ključni tekst na koji se ugleda i s kojim komuniciraju ostali tekstovi bila je biblijska starozavjetna *Knjiga postanka*, koja opisuje stvaranje

prvoga muškarca (Adama) od gline i prve žene (Eve) od Adamova rebra, odnosno od dijela njegova fizičkoga ustrojstva, što je protumačeno kao argument ženske podređenosti muškarcu. U svjetlu takvih tekstova, mnoga su filozofska i književna djela upozoravala na nedostatke žena, od lascivnosti i zavodljivosti do općenite nesposobnosti, prevrtljivosti i pasivnosti (Janeković-Römer, 2008, 887). U skladu s načelima srednjovjekovne književnosti, kojoj pripada *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina*, kao i crnogorskom kulturom, u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* ženskim likovima i povišnim ličnostima žena dato je znatno malo prostora i pozornosti. Žene se uglavnom samo pobrojavaju, uvijek kroz kontekst čije su supruge ili majke bile, a jedina dva ženska lika koja su detaljnije modelovana jesu Jakvinta i Kosara.⁴ Međutim, ono što je zanimljivo jeste činjenica da se upravo pomenuti likovi najdetaljnije razvijaju u pogledu psihologizacije. Ukoliko pratimo cjelinu teksta (zanemarujući tumačenja da je *Žitije svetog Vladimira* naknadno unijeto u tekst) primijetićemo da su ove junakinje modelirane crno-bijelom tehnikom, odnosno na principu binarnih opone-nata⁵ (Bahtin, 1989). Srednjovjekovno viđenje žene počivalo je na dvama izvorima: Bibliji (s posebnim naglaskom na Stari zavjet) i autoritetu crkvenih otaca, teologa i ostalih mislilaca. Gotovo svi intelektualni autoriteti srednjega stoljeća, od svetoga Jeronima, Avicenne i Alberta Velikoga sve do Tome Akvinskoga, nadovezuju se na antički pogled žene kojemu je začetnik bio Aristotel, a koji se sastoji u uvjerenju da su žene moralno i intelektualno inferiorne muškarcu. Ključni element koji je dao doprinos formiranju takvoga uvjerenja bila je tjelesna snaga i nadmoć muškarca, ali i dualna percepcija muškoga i ženskoga principa prema kojem je obilježje muškosti racionalnost i intelektualna premoć, a obilježje ženskosti iracionalnost i senzualnost (Hercigonja, 1975). U duhu srednjovjekovne književnosti kojoj pripada u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* prikazuju se žene vladarke, odnosno one koje pripadaju visokim društvenim slojevima. Pri tom ova dva ženska lika poslužiće kao modeli za kasnije tipove ženskih junakinja u crnogorskoj kulturi; s jedne strane je Kosara

- 4 Kosara Vojislavljević, najmlađa kći slovenskoga cara supruga kneza Vladimira Dukljanskog. O tome više vidjeti: Antoljak (1985); Pirivatrić (1997). Modelovanje njezinog lika u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* veoma je detaljno, prilikom čega Kosara poprima funkcije dejstvovaoca, odnosno lika koji djeluje, na način što krši uspostavljene zabrane, u vidu postavljanja uslova udaje za Vladimira, ali i izlaska iz sigurnog semantičkog polja i prelaska u antipolje, što će kulminirati njezinim odlaskom umjesto kneza Vladimira na pregovore kod njezinog brata, prilikom čega će na sebe preuzeti rizik kako bi sačuvala Vladimirov život. Tijekom cijelog *Žitija kneza Vladimira*, koje je inkorporirano u *Ljetopis* Kosara se modeluje kao nosilac izuzetno pozitivnih i visoko moralnih osobina, s veoma jakim osjećajem za požrtvovanost i posvećenost mužu i široj zajednici, pa će njezin lik u kasnijoj crnogorskoj kulturi poslužiti kao model na kome će biti razvijan lik pokorne, posvećene žene.
- 5 Crno-bijela tehnika u književnosti odnosi se na stil ili pristup naraciji u kojem su likovi, situacije ili moralne dileme prikazani na izrazito pojednostavljen način, često s jasnom dihotomijom između dobra i zla, ispravnog i pogrešnog, crnog i bijelog. U ovoj tehnici, nema mnogo nijansi sive ili složenih karakterizacija; likovi su obično prikazani kao potpuno dobri ili potpuno loši, a sukobi su predstavljeni bez moralne složenosti. Ova tehnika se često koristi u žanrovima kao što su bajke, mitovi, moralne pripovijetke, te u nekim oblicima propagande, gdje je cilj prenijeti jasnu i nedvosmislenu poruku. Kritičari često koriste izraz “crno-bijela tehnika” kako bi opisali naraciju koja pojednostavljuje složene stvarnosti, zanemarujući dubinu i ambivalenciju koje obično karakteriziraju ljudsko iskustvo.



Slika 1: Vladimir i Kosara u reljefu, djelo makedonskog vajara Tome Adžijevskog (Istorija i Balkan).

– poŕrtvovana, pokorna i poslušna, a s druge Jakvinta, spletkasica, za koju Subotić (2022, 315) navodi da je “u Dukljaninovom izlaganju postala inicijator dubljeg unutrašnjeg sukoba dinastije”.

U određenom broju tekstova i studija koje su posvećene *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* spominje se i Jakvinta. Bavljenje njezinim likom u povijesnoj i književnoj znanosti bilo je usputno i nedovoljno razvijeno. Čak i novija istraživanja o *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* (Živković, 1998; Vlajić, 1999; Radoman, 2015; Komatina, 2016) Jakvintinom liku prilaze fragmentarno. O važnosti našeg istraživanja najslikovitije govori stav Jovana Subotića (2022), koji smatra da je “epoha Bodina i Jakvinte i Nemanje neosporno najvažnija i najsilnija u našoj narodnoj istoriji”. Istraživanja o *Ljetopisu*, gotovo dosljedno potenciraju destruktivnost njezinog lika, a nerijetko joj se pripisuje i uzrok loših odluka njenog supruga, kralja Bodina Vojislavljevića (XI. stoljeće). O ženama u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* Kunčer (2023) je objavila rad *The World Without Women: Gender Issues in the Gesta Regum Sclavorum*, u kom skreće pažnju na nevidljivost žena u ovom tekstu, ali ne nudi mogućnosti novih tumačenja Jakvintinog lika.

Osim analize ovog povijesnog vrela rad ima za cilj da kontekstualizuje i razumije negativnu konstrukciju Jakvinte, kao i da kroz njezin lik i načine na koje se tumači objasni kulturogene i društvene faktore koji su doprinijeli stvaranju negativne percepcije dukljanske kraljice. Također, cilj je i razdvojiti povijesne činjenice od fikcije kroz rabljenje kritičke analize dostupnih dokaza, što doprinosi promociji kritičkog

pristupa povijesti, te izbjegavanju romantiziranja prošlosti. Koristeći interdisciplinarnе metode, koje uključuju povijesnu, antropološku, te književno teorijsku analizu ukazaćemo na ulogu i značaj ženskih ličnosti u srednjovjekovnom razdoblju na primjeru dukljanske kraljice Jakvinte.

Slijedeći instrumente koje nudi ginokritika, kao jedna od disciplina studija roda, a kako to, između ostalih propisuje Kolodny (1980) u *Mapi ponovnih čitanja*, analizujemo usmjeriti na ženu, okrećući se u prošlost, što je dalje moguće, do prvih pisanih izvora jedne kulture, kako bi osvijetlili mehanizme koji su korišteni za uspostavljanje negativne percepcije Jakvintinog lika. Za razumijevanje tekstova na kojima počiva neka kultura neophodno je imati u “vidu da nema apsolutno važeće prošlosti jer se okvir njenog osmišljavanja uvijek mijenja” (Kuljić, 2006, 310), te da je konstrukcija uvijek društveno uslovljena.

POVIJESNI I DRUŠTVENI KONTEKST

Bodin Vojislavljević (1082.–1101.) vladao je Dukljom tijekom posljednjih desetljeća XI. stoljeća. Još za života Bodinovog oca, Mihaila (oko 1046.–1082.) Duklja je 1077. godine postala kraljevina. To saznajemo iz jednog pisma pape Grgura VII., u siječnju 1078. godine, upućenog Mihailu Vojislavljeviću u kome ga oslovljava kao *rex Sclavorum*. Bodin se za vrijeme vladavine svog oca nametnuo kao važan akter dinastije Vojislavljevića. Bodin je predvodio ustaničku vojsku u Podunavlju



Slika 2: Prostor Duklje za doba Bodinove vladavine (Šekularac, 2007, 56).

i osvojio Vidin, ali ipak doživljava poraz od bizantijske vojske u Skoplju, te biva i zarobljen. Nakon nekoliko godina provedenih u zarobljeništvu uspio je da pobjegne u Duklju 1078. godine. Poslije smrti oca Mihaila, ulazi u sukob sa stricem Radoslavom, koga pobjeđuje i preuzima prijesto. Iako je prostor Duklje za doba Bodinove vladavine proširen, ovaj period obilježice česti unutarnji sukobi, koje će voditi sa svojim rođacima. U dinastiji Vojislavljevića obiteljske situacije bile su nalik onima u drugim dalmatinskim mjestima srednjeg stoljeća, pa se za razliku od srednjovjekovnih europskih elitnih obitelji težilo da se svi članovi obitelji vjenčaju i dobiju djecu (Nikolić-Jakus, 2008, 73). Velik broj potencijalnih pretendena na prijesto i članova obitelji neminovno je podrazumijevao i neslaganja. Za česte sukobe koji su se dešavali tijekom Bodinove vladavine krivica će nerijetko biti tražena u Jakvinti, dukljanskoj kraljici kojom se Bodin ženi 1080. Brak između Jakvinte i Bodina bio je produkt dukljanske političke orijentacije koja je gravitirala ka Normanima, kao tada važnom faktoru i suparniku Bizantskog carstva (Šekularac, 2007, 79).

KRALJICA JAKVINTA VOJISLAVLJEVIĆ

Jakvinta kao povijesna ličnost

U izgrađivanju srednjovjekovne kulture učestvovala su i žene, koje su bile obrazovane i sposobne, po pravilu pripadnice viših slojeva (Tomin, 2011). O dukljanskoj kraljici Jakvinti Vojislavljević (XI. stoljeće) saznajemo na osnovu kronika njezinih savremenika, kao i kasnijih historiografa. U povijesnim izvorima o Jakvinti Vojislavljević, glavna referenca dolazi iz *Ljetopisa popa Dukljanina*, ali u pismima i poveljama iz perioda njezinog života postoje indirektna pominjanja njenih aktivnosti. Jakvinta se pominje i u *Pismu pape Grgura VII.* (1078. godina): U pismu papa Grgur VII. oslovljava Mihaila Vojislavljevića, Jakvintinog svekra, kao kralja Slovena (*rex Sclavorum*), što potvrđuje status njezinog muža i porodice. Iako se Jakvinta ne spominje direktno, ovo je važan dokument u kontekstu njenog političkog statusa kao supruge kralja Bodina, koji je bio Mihailov nasljednik. Hronika bizantskog istoričara Jovana Skilice (XI. stoljeće) bilježi sukobe između dukljanske dinastije i Bizantije, a Jakvinta se pominje kao ključna figura koja podržava antibizantsku frakciju. Takođe se pominje njezin utjecaj na Bodina i kasniji sukob sa bizantskim snagama, Jakvinta se indirektno pominje u poveljama vezanim za osnivanje Barske nadbiskupije (druga polovica XI. stoljeća), jer je tijekom Bodinove vladavine Barska biskupija uzdignuta u nadbiskupiju. Ona je, kao kraljica, imala utjecaj na ove odluke (Šekularac, 2023).

Prema Skiličinoj kronici, dukljanski kralj Mihailo imao je dvor u Kotoru, a kraljica Jakvinta je mogla živjeti u Kotoru, vjerovatno u istom dvoru (Šekularac, 2023, 22).

Ime Jakvinta/Jaquinta bilo je veoma poznato u okolini Barija. Riječ je o kćerci vlastelina Argirica iz Barija koja se udala za dukljanskog kralja Bodina u vrijeme propasti bizantijske vlasti 1080. godine kada je vođa normanske strane posjetio dukljanskog kralja Mihaila i pri tom mu dao kćer za sina (Šekularac, 2023, 24). Tijekom cjelokupnog razdoblja Bodinove vladavine Jakvinta je imala značajnog udjela, a

svoj utjecaj zadržala je i nakon Bodinove smrti. Prema povijesnim izvorima Jakvinta je sve do 1114. godine bila na dukljanskom prijestolu, nalazeći način da izađe na kraj s Branislavljevim sljedbenicima. Tijekom srednjeg stoljeća nije bilo neobično da nakon smrti vladara vlast prelazi na njegovu ženu, što se osobito ustalilo od XIV. stoljeća (Tomin, 2011, 3). U pomenute sukobe uplitali su se i grčki i raški namjesnici, s kojima je Jakvinta imala otvoreno neslaganje.

Po Bodinovoj smrti u Duklji je nastavljen negativan politički kurs prema Bizantu. Uz pomoć kraljice Jakvinte njezin sin Đorđe dva puta je došao na vlast: 1114.–1118. i 1125.–1131. godine. Pored pitanja koja su se ticala obitelji i dinastije srednjovjekovne vladarke imale su važnu ulogu u međudržavnim pregovorima (Tomin, 2011, 5). Prvi put Đorđe na prijesto dolazi 1114. godine nakon što kralj Vladimir bude otrovan (prema nekim zapisima, između ostalog i *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* Jakvinta je glavni krivac za taj zločin). Period nakon Bodinove smrti prati slabljenje dukljanske moći, pa se prvi odvaja bosanski ban (Milobar, 1997, 696). Nepovoljne okolnosti po Jakvintu i njezinog sina Đorđa počinju i s prevagom bizantske moći u Duklji, što će biti i uzrok za prvi prekid Đorđeve vladavine, pri čemu će biti prinuđen da se skloni u utvrdu Oblik, a Bizantinci će zaposjesti Skadar. Nakon što je za kralja postavljen Grubeša Đorđe je morao čak da pobjegne u Rašku (Šekularac, 2023, 36). Pošto je Grubešina vojska bila poražena u bici pod zidinama grada Bara Đorđe je drugi put došao na prijesto 1125. godine. Nakon teških poraza Đorđe svoj život završava u sužanjstvu, u Carigradu.

Da tijekom razdoblja srednjeg vijeka “žene nisu bile samo pasivni promatrači krupnih političkih događaja i odluka, već su mogle biti u njih aktivno uključene, kao i njihovi muški srodnici” (Premović, 2023, 7) svjedoči i djelovanje kraljice Jakvinte, koja je kao povijesna ličnost imala nesumnjivo veliki utjecaj na povijesne okolnosti tadašnje Duklje, uspijevajući da pomogne svom sinu da osvoji, a potom i obnovi vlast. Također, kraljica je uspjela da ima utjecaj i na vanjske odnose Duklje, diktirajući pravac njezinog djelovanja.



Slika 3: Pečat Đorđa Vojislavljevića, sina kralja Bodina i kraljice Jakvinte (Šekularac, 2007, 60).

Svoj život Jakvinta Vojislavljević završila je tako što je bila uhićena od strane Grubeše u Kotoru, u koji se, nakon brojnih dinastičkih sukoba sklonila. Nakon toga, kraljica Jakvinta je poslata u sužanjstvo u Carigrad gdje je i umrla (Bešić et al., 1967, 400).

Konstrukcija Jakvintinog lika u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina*

Književnost čitavoga europskog srednjovjekovlja obilježava snažno prožimanje vrsta i podvrsta, što se tumači kao manifestacija kršćanskoga svjetonazora koji vrijednost sviju stvari podređuju vrhovnome božanskom entitetu, pa je i književnome stvaralaštvu svrha izraziti podređenost Bogu i služenje kršćanskome idealu (Hercigonja, 1975, 43). Likovi koji prave odklon od ovog puta tijekom srednjeg stoljeća nijesu mogli biti pozitivno konotirani. U tom razdoblju često se događalo da se od određenih ženskih ličnosti, kroz transformaciju njihovih života i djela u legende, priče i simbole koji su nadilazili povijesne činjenice dovede do njihove izuzetno negativne percepcije. Žena se u srednjem vijeku oblikovala kroz religijske, kulturne i književne okvire tog doba, što je imalo dubok utjecaj na njezinu percepciju i ulogu u društvu. Nerijetko se slika žene manifestirala kroz kršćansku teologiju, vitešku književnost i folklorne priče. Žene su oblikovane kroz nekoliko ključnih arhetipskih uloga, uključujući svetice, vještice, kraljice. U srednjovjekovnom razdoblju profilisali su se primjeri pretvaranje života i djela nekih vladarki u priče koje ih prikazuju kao prijetnje, vještice ili utjelovljenja zla. Na taj način se, u nemogućnosti da se protiv njih djeluje u stvarnosti, stvarala slika koja je u većini takvih konstrukcija opstala do suvremenog doba. Neki od takvih primjera jesu vezani za: Isabellu Francusku (XIV. stoljeće), poznatu kao “Vučica iz Francuske”, suprugu engleskog kralja Edwarda II. Njeno ime povezano je s izdajom i nasiljem, jer je zajedno sa ljubavnikom Rogerom Mortimerom organizirala svrgavanje i ubojstvo svog muža. U povijesti je često prikazana kao manipulativna i nemilosrdna figura, žena koja je iz osobne koristi izazvala političku nestabilnost. Ovu negativnu sliku o njoj zasjenjuje složenost njezine situacije i političke okolnosti koje su je dovele do tih djela. Jedna od najomraženijih ženskih figura, primjerice u XVI. stoljeću jeste Mary Tudor, engleska kraljica koja je pokušala obnoviti katolicizam u Engleskoj nakon vladavine svog oca, Henrika VIII., i polubrata, Edvarda VI. Zbog svoje brutalne represije protiv protestanata, tijekom koje su mnogi spaljeni na lomači, dobila je nadimak “Krvava Marija”. Njena vladavina postala je sinonim za vjerski fanatizam i nasilje, iako su mnogi njeni postupci bili rezultat političkih i vjerskih pritisaka tog vremena (Delorme, 2007).

U srednjem vijeku ženska tjelesnost je tumačena kao vrijedna prezira, a žene koje bi koristile čari zavođenja bile su pod osudom šire populacije. Lucrezia Borgia (1480.–1519.), kćerka pape Aleksandra VI. (1492.–1502.), postala je simbol dekadencije, intrige i nemoralnosti. Mitovi o njoj često uključuju priče o trovanju, incestu i manipulaciji, predstavljajući je kao smrtonosnu zavodnicu koja je koristila šarm za političke ciljeve svoje obitelji. Iako postoje dokazi da je bila žrtva političkih okolnosti i obiteljskih ambicija, njen imidž u popularnoj kulturi ostao je pretežno negativan, često zasnovan na pretjeranim i neosnovanim pričama (Bradford, 2004).

Žene koje su pravile otklon od nametnute norme i obrazaca ponašanja tijekom srednjeg vijeka bile su uglavnom negativno konotirane. Jedna od takvih vladarki jeste i dukljanska kraljica Jakvinta. Lik kraljice Jakvinte u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* se pojavljuje u 42. poglavlju, nekoliko poglavlja nakon što biva uveden njezin muž – Bodin, koji se u kontekstu njezinog lika može tumačiti kao pokretački motiv i to kroz sljedeću rečenicu “kralju Bodinu, pak, rodi četiri sina Jakvinta, kćer Arkirica iz grada Barija, čija su imena ova: Mihala, Đorđe, Arkiric i Toma” (Mijušković, 1988, 139).

Kao antipod Kosari koja se u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* javlja onda kad je ugrožen život muškarca i koja postaje njegova zaštitnica (Tomin, 2015), Jakvintin lik je do suvremenog doba upamćen kao negativan, a konstruisan je upravo na ovom tekstu, prilikom čega se neoprezno prepliću stvarno i izmaštano (izmišljeno); prošlo i sadašnje. Kako to konstatuje Premović (2021, 331) književna djela imaju izraženu potrebu za stvaranje nacionalnih mitova s akcentom na oblikovanje heroja. S druge strane metafore i druga načela književnog teksta mogu poslužiti za stvaranje anti-heroja, odnosno negativno markiranih likova. Kolektivno pamćenje podrazumijeva samoidentifikaciju, ali treba pomenuti i opasnost od manipulacije, o čemu Hannah Arendt govori u *Izvorima totalitarizma*, konstatujući da je kolektiv u stalnom traženju krivca, jer ako su svi krivi onda niko nije kriv (Arendt, 1998, 118). Pri tom se predanje javlja kao vjeran izraz zakona života onih vremena u kojima leži temelj povijesnog razvitka, dok cijela naša povijest propagira submisivan model žene, što je umnogome naslonjeno na kulturološku pozadinu koja podrazumijeva njezinu objektivizaciju, prilikom čega bilo koje pomjeranje od propisanih obrazaca predstavlja incident (Garonja, 2023). Naslanjajući se na Barthesovo tumačenje i pristup suvremenim, odnosno narativima vezanim za XX. stoljeće Svetlana Slapšak upozorava na postojanje ideološki negativnih obrazaca ka ženama još od starih, antičkih mitova. Pri tom ideološka pozadina uslovljava našu percepciju (Slapšak, 2013).

Od sedam propisanih tipova likova u *Morfologiji bajke* jedan se uvijek odnosi na negativca kojega zavist, ljubomora ili drugi negativni predznak tjera da remeti ravnotežu među skladnom obiteljskom atmosferom, da spletkari i da bude uzrok obiteljske nesreće (Prop, 2012). U *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* tijekom karakteriziranja Jakvinte već u trećem pominjanju njezinog imena bit će naglašene i predimenzionirane loše osobine, poput pohlepe za vlast, bratolomstva i sklonosti ka spletkarenju, a analogija s ovim Proppovim tipom junaka je očigledna: “Bojala se, naime da Branislav ili njegovi sinovi po smrti njenog muža ne preuzmu kraljevstvo. Stoga su joj stalno smetali i tražila je zgodnu priliku da ih uništi oca i sinove” (Mijušković, 1988, 140).

Imajući u vidu da stvaranje svakog negativnog narativa ima određenu motivaciju (Bart, 2013, 198), konstatujemo da je u tekstu *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* jasno naglašeno prisustvo patrijarhalnih odnosa u smislu uvođenja obiteljskih relacija. Obiteljska genealogija aktivira se nerijetko u crnogorskom epskom pogledu na svijet, u kom se prepliću istorija i poezija. Međutim, pri tumačenjima Jakvintinog lika ovaj dio često je prenapregnut, pa će u prvi plan biti isticali negativni postupci bez analize njihovog povoda, a obiteljska genealogija njenog lika ostaće nerazvijena. Tako je, uz izuzetak prikazivanja Jakvintinog lika u publikaciji UNDP-ija *Žene Crne Gore* o njoj uglavnom govoreno kao o personifikaciji zla i uzoka Bodinove, pa i dinastičke

nesreće (Žene Crne Gore). Ovakav način modeliranja Jakvintinog lika u skladu je sa onim što Ljiljana Pešikan-Ljuštanović (2007) definira kao *epsku mizoginiju*, a što podrazumijeva stvaranje negativnih i idelološki obojenih narativa o ženama koje se označavaju kao izvor zla, zbog koga stradaju i propadaju vladari i dinastije. Takve žene poprimaju odlike demonskih bića, te im se nerijetko pripisuju nadljudske moći. Na sličan način *demonске boginje* opisuje i Robert Graves koji ističe da su one osobito opasne po muškarce koji su ih voljeli, prilikom čega se razgrađuje *lažnost* društvenih odnosa u kojima žena ima pasivnu ulogu, a tome se suprotstavlja totalna sloboda ljubavi (Grevs, 1995). Dodatni razlog za ovakvo, destruktivno i destabilizujuće Jakvintino djelovanje može se tražiti u onome što prethodi, odnosno u Bodinovom odnosu s braćom, koji je nestabilan tijekom cijelog teksta *Ljetopisa*. Modeliranje i konstruisanje negativnog narativa oko Jakvinte kao uzročnice zla i problema usklađeno je s tezom koju navodi *Rječnik slovenske mitologije*, a kojom se konstatuje da u svim slovenskim kulturama postoji lice iz demonologije koje u sebi sadrži i neke crte demonškog bića. Ova demonka bliska je kategoriji znajućih ljudi, a karakteriše je niz demonskih svojstava (Gajić, 2009). Takvim likovima pripisuju se izuzetno manipulativne moći, kakva je situacija i s dukljanskom kraljicom.

Zanimljivo je da je kao i prilikom modeliranja Kosarinog lika posegnuto za ucjenom, a važno je napomenuti da su ovo ujedno i jedina dva lika koja će ucjenjivati: Kosara oca, a Jakvinta muža. Kako bi društvo razumjelo cjelovitost neophodno je da razumije i posebnost ženske psihologije (Nojman, 2015a). Radi usporedbe navodimo da se tijekom srednjestoljećnog razdoblja ucjena često vezuje za ženske likove, pa primjerice u Andreacijevoj povelji (809. godina) njegova kćer Teodora ucjenjuje oca u pogledu odabira muža. Naime, Jakvinta muža uslovljava prilikom boravka njegove braće i bratanića, što je artikulirano u pasusu:

U jedno vrijeme kad je Branislav, sa njegovim bratom Gradislavom i sinom Berihom naivno došao u grad Skadar, Jakvinta, vidjeći da su došli sami, obrađuje se pa prišavši kralju počne bestidno navaljivati i govoriti mu da ih uhvati i stavi u tamnicu, inače nikakav život ne može imati sa njim, ako to ne učini (Mijušković, 1988, 140).

Ipak, važno je naglasiti da za razliku od Kosarinog lika u kom ucjena biva aktivirana zarad empatije koju će osjetiti ka Vladimiru i želje da se pomogne Jakvintina ucjena ima sasvim drugačiju motivaciju, ona je pokrenuta opsesivnim promišljanjem o Bodinovoj braći i prijestolu, što će na koncu dovesti do bratoubistva, koje je čest motiv u književnosti, osobito ukoliko je pozadina svega borba za prevlast. U tom smislu, Jakvintin lik je znatno složeniji i višedimenzionalniji, jer negativni likovi generalno mnogo su rjeđe monolitni, za razliku od pozitivnih koji prema Bettelheimu (1962) mnogo lakše izazivaju poistovjećivanje i identifikaciju s dobrim i kreposnim, te je nerijetko riječ o monolitnim likovima. Ovakve junakinje podaknute su instiktivno da drugim likovima pružaju pomoć. S druge strane, psihološka motivacija negativnih likova znatno je kompleksnija, a zbog mizoginije koja se ukorijenila prisutna je sklonost ka stereotipu, odnosno tendenciji da negativni likovi budu ženski (Eko, 2015).

Veoma zanimljivim i donekle naivnim se sagledava Bodinovo djelovanje, prilikom čega autor *Ljetopisa* tijekom cijelog teksta sugerira da su njegovi pogrešni postupci produkt poslušnosti ženi, koja se pokatkad gradi na arhetipskim obrascima, pa će Jakvinta do svojih ciljeva dolaziti uz pomoć suza i ekspresivnog djelovanja. Na ovaj način djelimično se abolira Bodinovo djelovanje, jer se naglašava da je pao pod utjecaj žene, čime se prototipsko (biblijsko) žensko načelo zla i krivica ističu. Važnu ulogu u modeliranju Jakvintinog lika dobijaju paralingvistički znaci, odnosno usklici i uzvici koji se pojavljuju u svakoj njenoj govornoj partiji, jer je sve elemente diskursa neophodno promatrati u kontekstu kulture, kroz znakovne sisteme i kodove (Katnić-Bakaršić, 2019): “**Jao, jao, jao**, da li zbilja ne vidiš, o kralju, kako ubijaju tvoje?! Zar još ne vidiš što učini Kočapar? Zašto da pustiš da žive njihova braća koju držiš u okovima?” (Mijušković, 1988, 140; Kunčer, 2009, 167).

U istaknutom govornom nizu, uzvik *jao* ponavlja se čak tri puta, čime se usložnjavaju njegova semantička značenja. Upotreba uzvika prema Katnić Baršić (1999, 6) koji uvijek ima ekspresivnu (emotivnu) funkciju, jeste način da se izrazi govornikova emocija, uz poruku koja se šalje.⁶ Slično konstatuje i Jakobson (1966, 290) koji za emotivnu (ekspresivnu) funkciju jezika konstatuje da se najviše ističe kroz uzvike (koji su “čisto emotivni sloj jezika”). Tako iskazi artikulisani kroz uzvike služe za “izražavanje duševnoga stanja” (Gligorić, 2017, 343).

Umanjivanje krivice onom koji djeluje (Bodinu), a uvećavanje Jakvinti postiže se i scenom Bodinovog kajanja, te dostojnog sahranjivanja braće. Zanimljivo je da se nakon toga više ne pominje Jakvintin i Bodinov odnos, već se jedino konstatira da Bodin umire nakon 26 godina vladanja. S druge strane Jakvintina (ne)djela nakon Bodinove smrti doživljavaju kulminaciju, pa zarad vlasti ona izvršava i ubojstvo Bodinovih rođaka kako bi vlast preuzeo njezin sin Đorđe. U odnosu na sina Jakvinta će biti modelovana na principu majke kao “arhetipa koji je zanimljiv i kao takav privlači pažnju najrazličitijih pisaca, koji se vraćaju na uobičajene motive i pišu o njima pod različitim *maskama*” (Meletinski, 1983, 8). Na taj način Jakvintin lik će na sebe preuzeti ulogu ključnog zla *Ljetopisa popa Dukljanina*, no ono što je posebno zanimljivo primijetiti da njezin lik, iako modeliran kao nosilac negativnih osobina ne podliježe kažnjavanju, ostavljajući pri tom otvoren horizont njezinog kraja.

Weininger u knjizi *Pol i karakter* o ženskim likovima o kojima se stvaraju negativni narativi ističe da hiperbolizaciji tih negativiteta ništa nije stajalo na putu (Vajniger, 1998). Jedna od takvih negativnih junakinja bez sumnje jeste kraljica Jakvinta koja se, nadalje tijekom samog teksta modelira kao žena koja uslovljava i spletkari, navodeći pri tom svog muža, kralja Bodina na najveće zločine, a jedan od takvih primjera iz teksta je prikazan u sljedećoj rečenici: “Jakvinta vidjevši da su došli sami obrađuje se pa priđe kralju i počne bestidno navaljivati da ih uhvati i stavi u tamnicu inače nikakav život sa njim ne može imati ako to ne učini” (Mijušković, 1988, 140; Kunčer, 2009, 165).

6 Ova je funkcija dominantna u porukama u 1. licu jednine, u izrazima s emotivno-ekspresivnim sredstvima na različitim jezičkim nivoima. Uzvici (između ostalog) odražavaju i ugledanje na latinske gramatike koje su mu poslužili kao predložak (Kašić, 2002, 357).

Nakon kratkog Jakvintinog obraćanja funkciju naratora preuzima sveznajući pripovjedač, čime se apostrofira objektivnost kao odlika naratora koji nije dio fiktivne zbilje (Štancel, 1987), te konstatira: “Bodina je pobijedila žena kao Iroda Irodijada.” (Mijušković, 1988, 140). Na ovaj način uvodi se jasna i direktna komunikacija s mitovima, uz izraženu tendenciju da je iskonsko zlo u ženskom biću (Beauvoir, 1982). Potrebno je naglasiti da se komunikacijom s Biblijom pokušava pojačati vjerodostojnost i uvjerljivost, a *taj dubinski tekst, koji se sam nikad ne realizuje, ali koji je sposoban da proizvodi mnoštvo istovrsnih tekstova*, neki moderni teoretičari (Gerard Genette, Julia Kristeva i dr.) nazivaju *arhitekst*. Njime oni označavaju dubinsku strukturu u kojoj je tekst povezan. Arhitekst se ne realizuje u nekom konkretnom tekstu, koji bi bio njegovo potpuno ispunjenje, već se rekonstruiše na osnovu invarijantnih odlika raznih tekstova. On je, s jedne strane, produktivna moć teksta, tj. sposobnost teksta da se konstruira po određenim principima, kao što se govor formuliše po određenom jezičkom kodu, a s druge strane je model na koji se treba ugledati (Kristeva, 2011). Uvođenjem antipoda božanskog i demonskog koji leže u srži ženskog bića jasno se naglašava njezina dehumanizacija, čime se ženi pripisuju ili ekstremno pozitivne, gotovo metafizičke osobenosti (u patrijarhalnoj kulturi kakva je crnogorska, te uloge se dominantno pripisuju ulozima majke) ili ekstremno negativne odlike, kakav je slučaj i sa Jakvintom. O ambivalentnoj prirodi fiktivno obojenih priča Cassirer konstatira da se zarazna nečistoća proteže na sve sfere života. Dodir božanstva upravo je jednako poguban koliko i dodir nečega fizički nečistog; sveto i mrsko na istoj su razini pri čemu “zaraza svetošću izaziva iste posljedice kao i zagađenje nečistoćom” (Kasirer, 1978, 139).

Jakvintin lik modelira se na jasnom principu gradacije, a na koncu tog niza stoji ubojstvo koje će sama Jakvinta počinuti, čime će se zlo koje se arhetipski vezuje za ženu dovesti do vrhunca: “Jakvinta, kako su je savjetovali neki vrlo rđavi ljudi, koji bijahu neprijatelji župana Vukana, dade im smrtonosni napitak koji je načinila u Kotoru, đe je boravila” (Mijušković, 1988, 140; Kunčer, 2009, 171).

Govoreći o antičkoj *Medeji* Gurdon (2011, 105) ističe da iako je riječ o jednoj od najupečatljivijih pobunjenica, ipak “čvrsto ukorijenjena dominantna patrijarhalna podloga na kojoj je Euripid stvarao svoj narativ prokazuje Medeju (i lik i istoimeno djelo) kao proizvod patrijarhalne (narativne) matrice, koja se uvijek i iznova narativno ostvarivala i potvrđivala” te dodaje da je uprkos svom odupiranju, Medeja ostala zarobljena u spomenutoj matrici. U ovom smislu veoma lako je podvući analogiju s Jakvintinim likom koja svoju egzistenciju tijekom cijelog teksta ostvaruje u sredini organizovanoj po pravilima muškaraca.

Rekonstrukcija narativa o Jakvinti

Prva neophodna etapa u istraživanjima s rodnom problematikom jeste rekonstrukcija književne prošlosti žena, kao i sama pozicija žena u književnosti. U tom smislu Koch ističe da je veoma važno vratiti se na stare tekstove, koje treba čitati iz nove perspektive i pri tom preispitati poziciju žene u njima (Koh, 2012, 15). Kao integralni djelovi svake civilizacije i kulture, mitovi i drugi narativi bazirani na fikciji često služe

za objašnjenje stvarnosti pružajući joj smisaoni sadržaj, ali i kao uzor-modeli ponašanja i opšteg odnosa pojedinca prema svijetu u kojem živi. **Patrijarhalni mit** je skup predodžbi i vjerovanja unutar društvenih skupina koje označavaju žene i muškarce. U ovom slučaju riječ je o težnji za isticanjem, očuvanjem i prevlasti muškog principa (Durić, 2003, 260). Konstrukciji ovakvih narativa sklona su patrijarhalno-plemenska društva poput crnogorskog, društva s jakim usmenim nasleđem i kolektivnim pamćenjem, u kojima se predanje i fikcija nerijetko transformišu u istinu. Laza Kostić prepoznaje postojanje *ženskog načela*⁷ ili *ženskog aspekta* koje je moguće pratiti u razvoju ženskih likova slovenskih kultura. Pri tom, način na koji se Jakvinta modelira u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina* navodi na konstataciju da bi ju bilo moguće svrstati u nekoliko Kostićevih tipova, od kojih su većina nositeljke negativnih konotacija: žena koja je nosilac radnje, zla žena, s elementima čak i nevjerne ljube (o čemu će kasnije biti riječi). Međutim, dosadašnja istraživanja su uglavnom prećutkivala Jakvintinu majčinsku ulogu, od koje u pogledu reinterpretacije njezinog lika smatramo da treba krenuti. Tome u prilog ide prva rečenica u kojoj se Jakvinta pominje: “**Rodi** četiri sina Jakvinta, kćer Arkivca iz Barija.” (Mijušković, 1988, 139; Kunčer, 2009, 163). U svojoj *Velikoj majci* Neumann ženski princip materinstva izdvaja kao dokaz sveživota i ženske nadmoći koja uokviruje krug: rođenje, život i smrt. Kao prirodnu žensku ulogu ističe potrebu da se stara o svojoj djeci, pri čemu se prisjeća da je žena prva krotiteljka životinja, te da je zapravo cijeli proces vaspitanja i odgajanja djece jedna vrsta pripitomljavanja (Nojman, 2015b). Uz to, treba imati u vidu razdoblje i kontekst u kom nastaje *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina*, u kojem se kao jedan od najvažnijih narativa profilise onaj o Majci božijoj. Mihovil Kombol (1961, 31) navodi da “ni jedan lik nije pobožna legenda srednjega vijeka obavila toliko toplom simpatijom, koliko lik Bogorodičin”. Marijanski kult koji tijekom srednjega vijeka, posebno u XI. i XII. stoljeću cvjetao zapadnim svijetom, te izrazito štovanje Marije kao jedno od najistaknutijih obilježja zapadnoga kršćanstva, snažno je utjecao ne samo na književnost (gdje ostavlja traga u mnogobrojnim srednjovjekovnim legendama, kao svojevrsni uzor za stvaranje vizije kako žena treba da izgleda), već i na sveukupni položaj žene u onodobnome društvu. Poticanje marijanskoga kulta među elitom i pukom dovelo je do poboljšanoga položaja žena, barem na razini teorije (Novak, 2009, 325). Stoga smo mišljenja da se prilikom promišljanja o Jakvinti mora imati u vidu srednjovjekovni kontekst i prije svega njena majčinska uloga. Prve odlike koje se vezuju za Jakvintin lik i pomoću kojih se uvodi u tekst jesu majke i kćeri, čime se ističu njezine dominantne društvene uloge, a koje su usklađene s tumačenjem da “se svako

7 Kroz pojam ženskog načela objašnjava proces tipologizacije ženskih junakinja slovenskih kultura, konstatujući da usmeno nasleđe na ovim prostorima ukazuje na matrijarhalni poredak koji je prethodio zvaničnoj istoriji, a koji potvrđuju kultovi u kojima dominira žena. Tipovi su, prema njegovoj konstataciji određeni determinisanim ulogama žene, a najvažniji koje izdvaja su: 1. žena koja je nosilac radnje i koja ulazi u “muški prostor”; 2. nevjerna ljuba, kod koje je djelovanje podaknuto erotskim zovom i nadjačava čak i majčinski instinkt; 3. zla žena, kod koje je motivacija uspostavljena preplitanjem negativnog načela ženske prirode i crnih aveti, tj. demonskih sila; 4. vjerna ljuba; 5. unesrećena vjerenica; 6. majka; 7. tip pomagača. O tome više vidjeti u Kostić (1900).

razmišljanje o našim prostorima mora smjestiti u osnovni preovladavajući i svim kulturama koje su ovuda prošle zajednički okvir, s neprekidnim kontinuitetom, od antike do danas – okvir patrijarhata” (Slapšak, 2010, 25). Pažljivim čitanjem *Ljetopisa* možemo zaključiti da se Jakvinta ponaša dominantno kao majka, koja u prvom redu brani interese svoje djece, promišljajući o njihovoj budućnosti nakon smrti muža. Lewis (1996) prostor Balkana tumači kao prostor ljubavi, osobito materinske. Upravo majčinsku ljubav tumačimo kao ključnu za modeliranje Jakvintinog lika, pa čak i onda kada svojim postupcima prelazi norme dozvoljenog. Materinsku ljubav i brigu za svoju djecu smatramo glavnim pokretačem Jakvintinih djelovanja, što se može vidjeti i u *Ljetopisu*, međutim uz konstantnu sugestivnost pripovjedača, koji tijekom cijelog teksta sugerira Jakvintina nedjela. Unatoč tome ova uloga njezinog lika ostaje marginalizirana, a mi ju smatramo najvažnijom i glavnim motivom njenih (ne)djela. Mišljenja smo da je sugestivnost pripovjedača dovela do aboliranja Bodinove krivice, a do marginaliziranja Jakvintine materinske uloge.

Prilikom modeliranja ženskih likova slovenskih kultura izdvajaju se tri najvažnija prelaska: rođenje-svadba-smrt (Garonja, 2023). Osobito, u starim tekstovima sva tri prelaska imaju važne uloge u konstrukciji likova, a ukidanjem jednog od njih remeti se cjelovitost lika. Redukcijom svadbenog prelaska, koji, kako Garonja ističe predstavlja prelazak iz poznatog u nepoznati svijet doprinosi se redukciji Jakvintinog lika u pogledu ustaljenih klasifikacionih normi i funkcija koje žena srednjeg stoljeća treba da realizuje, imajući u vidu da kultura sjećanja treba da ispuni zahtjeve koji više pojedinačnih prošlosti integrišu u jedno (Kuljić, 2006). Na ovaj način remeti se cjelovitost Jakvintine ženstvenosti, što se može posmatrati kao još jedan element kojim se doprinijelo hiperbolizaciji negativnosti u Jakvintinom liku. Ipak, smatramo da je ovo pomoglo i odmicanju od submisivnog položaja koji se ostvaruje i svođenjem ženskog identiteta na drugost (Blagojević, 2010).

Istakli smo da su se dosadašnja proučavanja *Ljetopisa popa Dukljanina* nerijetko bazirala na isticanju i povijesnih i književnih elemenata, što neminovno podrazumjeva mogućnost tumačenja povijesnih ličnosti, ali i književnih likova. Lotman (2004) smatra da bez doze izmišljenosti nema književnog djela. Likovi u književnom tekstu u odnosu na norme koje određena kultura propisuje mogu biti konstruirani dvojako: da od njih odstupaju ili da ih podržavaju. U pogledu tvorenja sižejnosti teksta, znatno su informativniji oni likovi koji prave otklon od norme, jer naposljetku njihovim djelovanjem se i uspostavlja siže koji se tvori upravo nizom ovakvih “prestupa”. “Svaki takav prelazak je postupak, a niz postupaka čini siže” (Lotman, 2004, 227). U tom smislu Jakvintin lik je veoma kompleksan, jer će tijekom cjelokupnog djelovanja kroz *Ljetopis* Jakvinta praviti ogrješenja o propisane norme i samim tim na sebe preuzeti funkcije jednog od najvažnijih elemenata za uspostavljanje sižea. Jakvintin lik simbolizuje pobunu koja prema Derridi mijenja predstavu o ženi (Derida, 2016), jer je pobuna nesvojstvena ženskoj junakinji srednjovjekovnog teksta. U *Ljetopisu* se Jakvintina pobuna realizuje na dva nivoa: patrijarhalnom, jer se ona ni u jednom momentu ne pokorava bilo kom muškarcu u djelu, te hijerarhijskom, što je prikazano u sprečavanju potencijalne autokratske samovolje Bodina kao kralja, jer bi kralj po

stereotipnom obrascu očekivano mogao da ima autokratske osobine (prim. Tamm, 2013). Da fiktivni narativi imaju duboku vezu s kolektivom te da je “u pitanju spoj dvaju elemenata – teorije i umjetničkog stvaralaštva” (Kasirer, 1978, 104) potvrđuje i da se do sada “pobunjenička” uloga Jakvintinog lika koja je bez dvojbe i emancipatorska nije pominjala. Svijet fiktivnog narativa je podijeljen na niz dinstinktivnih opozicija sa vrijednosnim implikacijama: dobro-zlo, život-smrt, gore-dolje, lijevo-desno, naprijed-nazad, itd. (Bal, 1992, 313).

Imajući u vidu period nastanka *Ljetopisa popa Dukljanina*, kao i tezu da je “odbrana smisla u svakom društvu posvećena posebnoj vrsti tekstova koji polažu pravo na to da društvu predoče suštinske perspektive odnosa i njihovih korena” (Jerkov, 1992, 69), ne iznenađuje da se u dosadašnjim istraživanjima pozornost nije posvećivala emociji koja je primjetna komponenta u modeliranju Jakvintinog lika. Upravo ta sfera Jakvintinog lika ističe se u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina*, a na to do sada nije obraćana pažnja. U smislu pokretačke uloge koju Jakvinta zauzima ovaj dio ima važan značaj, te se iz teksta saznaje da: “Jednog dana kada Kočaper bacivši koplje iz ruku probode nekog Kosara kojeg je kraljica mnogo **voljela**. Vidjevši to, kraljica odmah rasplete kose pa se stade udarati i govoriti svom mužu – **jao, jao, jao**, da li zbilja ne vidiš kralju kako ubijaju tvoje” (Mijušković, 1988, 140; Kunčer, 2009, 168). Osim ponovnog davanja glasa Jakvinti u navedenom pasusu jasno se navodi da je Jakvinta mnogo voljela nekog vojnika, a upotrebom paralingvističkih znaka u obliku uzvika *jao* dodatno se ističe egzaltiranost njene emocije, što se tumači kao višeznačno konotirano (Derrida, 2016). Upotreba paralingvističkih znaka također je u tijesnoj vezi sa stereopima vezanim za žene, pa se ovi znaci znatno češće koriste u karakterizaciji ženskih likova (Savić, 2020). Prema teoriji socijalnog konstruktivizma pokazivanje emocija, način njihova doživljavanja, izražavanja i interpretiranja – oblikuje se pod utjecajem normi i vrijednosti društva u koja su ugrađena (Blackwell, 1986). Za razliku od kasnog srednjeg stoljeća (XV. stoljeće) kada se u izrazima naglašava osjećajnost i prisnost (Pešorda-Vardić, 2012) tijekom razdoblja u kojem živi dukljanska kraljica to nije bio slučaj, te se Jakvintino djelovanje može posmatrati kao oneobičeno. Ovakvo modeliranje Jakvintinog lika u skladu je s poimanjem Erich Neumann koji *Veliko žensko* stavlja ispred *Velike majke*, a koji kao suštinu ističe princip ljubavi kao najvažniji za ženu, što doprinosi humanijem uređenju kolektiva, bez psihičke napetosti, jer tvoračka moć ženskog prelazi granice i porodice i klana, što je usklađeno s njenim prvenstvenim svojstvom: da voli (Nojman, 2015). Epštejn (1998) dekonstrukciju ženskih likova i njihovih očekivanih obrazaca tumači kao remećenje vlastitog, ženskog identiteta, prilikom čega dekonstrukcija prestaje da bude metafizička igra odbijanja i postaje mogućnost novih tumačenja. Epštejn nastavlja da žene moraju postati predmet zasebnih istraživanja upravo kako bi se ustaljeni obrasci dekonstruirali, a osvijetlili neiskazani elementi koji su važni u modeliranju ženskih likova.

Naime, Jakvintin lik se ne može tumačiti jednobrazno, već iz perspektive svih funkcija koje ima u tekstu, a koje podrazumijevaju majčinsku, vladarsku, progresivnu i emancipatorsku notu.

Mogućnosti (de)konstrukcije i rekonstrukcije Jakvintinog lika u suvremenoj kulturi

Gesemann prvi uvodi konstrukciju *crnogorska filosofija heroizma* (Gezeman, 2003), koju tumači kao pretvaranje sirovih, animalnih, borbenih nagona u junaštvo, što predstavlja skup moralnih pravila kojima se ponašanje pojedinaca kontroliše i reguliše. Na taj način, ratništvo postaje izraz određenih etičkih vrijednosti, oplemenjeno humanitetom, da bi naposljetku postalo heroizam. Slično tumačenje će ponuditi Bečanović (2013) koja konstatuje da crnogorska kultura jasno prepoznaje modele ponašanja koji su prihvatljivi i poželjni, a da se kao glavno pravilo preživljavanja u slabo plodnom tlu, koje je stalno izloženo opasnosti od pokoravanja moćnijih sila nametnuo princip: jači-tlači. U plemenskim sistemima dekonstrukcija ustaljenih tumačenja i prihvaćenih obrazaca odvija se znatno sporije, a “komunicirajući s mitovima iz prošlosti autori posežu ili preispitivanju starih ili pronalaženju novih interpretacija” (Vojvodić, 2018, 9). Jedan od načina dekonstrukcije jeste prepoznavanje ideoloških obrazaca kojima autor želi prenijeti određenu poruku, dok je ta poruka vezana za poziciju žene (Koh, 2012). Ličnost kraljice Jakvinte Vojislavljević još od XIX. stoljeća nalazi svoje odjeke u književnosti, pa će recimo veoma zanimljivu konstrukciju njezinog lika ponuditi Jovan Subotić (1868, 263), koji u drami *Prehvala*, na početku uvodi njezin lik u potpunoj suprotnosti od Jakvinte iz *Ljetopisa popa Dukljanina*, te će ona biti prikazana kao smjerna, poštovana i krajnje pozitivna junakinja. Međutim, tijekom razvoja drame Jakvintin lik doživljava preobražaj, te ona postaje zla spletkasica, čime se autor ipak vraća na model Jakvinte iz *Ljetopisa*. Jakvinti će Subotić posvetiti i posebnu dramu *Kraljica Jakvinta* (Subotić, 1871) u kojoj će ona od početka biti prikazana kao izvor zla. O kraljici Jakvinti će pisati i Vojislav Ilić (1882) u drami *Rodoslov*, u kojoj će dukljanska kraljica biti prikazana kao fatalno lijepa koketa.

Kraljica Jakvinta Vojislavljević poslužila je kao inspiracija stvaraocima suvremenog doba, koji su se prema njezinom liku odnosili uglavnom na tragu konstrukcije koja je realizirana u *Ljetopisu popa Dukljanina*. Događaji iz prošlosti oduvijek su privlačili ljudsku pažnju, a priča o njima najpopularnije je štivo (Lešić, 1990, 100). U tom smislu za Jakvintinim likom posegnuli su neki od najznačajnijih crnogorskih pisaca, koji su svoje poetike usmjerili ka revitalizaciji dukljanskog fenomena. Ipak, kako Vukićević-Janković (2017, 432) upozorava današnja čitanja i tumačenja starih tekstova moraju imati neprekidnu svijest o vremenu u kom je tekst nastajao, odnosno da se ono što se u njima prikazivalo smatralo vjerojatnim i mogućim, koliko god savremeni čitaoci bili svjesni fantastičnih i nerealnih motivacija. Ovakvi, hiperbolišući elementi u kontekstu Jakvintinog lika održali su se do suvremenog doba, a tijekom druge polovice, posebno zadnjih decenija XX. stoljeća javlja se ponovno interesovanje za dukljansku državu. Lik dukljanske kraljice Jakvinte u suvremenom crnogorskom društvu doživio je (re-)interpretaciju kroz poeziju Mladena Lompara koji njezin lik revitalizuje u tekstu *Opat Dolci i vrijeme stida* (Lompar, 1995). Joseph Campbell u djelu *Moć mita (razgovor s Bill Moyersom)* (Kembel, 2001, 54–55) kaže da pojedinac mora naći svoj pristup mitu, pa je takva situacija i s ovim Lomparovim tekstom, u kom će narativ o Jakvinti poslužiti samo kao pokretač šireg prikaza dukljanskog tragizma.

Polazeći od ideje da “tijelo predstavlja onaj prostor u koji je polnost locirana, ono je simbolički teritorij ženskoga i ženskosti” (Lugarić-Vukas, 2019, 196), a da je u crnogorskoj kulturi tjelesno uglavnom svedeno na margine, u kontekstu dekonstrukcije negativnog poimanja Jakvinte neophodno je pomenuti zbirku erotске poezije Jevrema Brkovića (2001) *Jakvintine uzorite kéeri*. Cilj autorske reinterpretacije njezinog lika jeste zapravo preispitivanje onih pitanja koja postavljaju staro tumačenje i mogući odgovori koje na njih nudi suvremenost, ali je pri tom, kako tvrdi Javornik (2018, 112), važno imati na umu da se: “uslijed ciklizacije znak prelama u kontekstu kulturnog pamćenja u odnosu na kulturni model”. Stoga, Brković u pomenutoj zbirci pravi potpuni otklon od onog što jeste prihvaćeni sistem i norma ponašanja u tradicionalnom društvu, a kraljicu Jakvintu oblikuje kao pramajku erotizovane Crnogorke koja se prvi put pojavljuje upravo u ovoj zbirci. Književnost ima potrebu povratka fiktivnim narativima, ali i potrebu da osmisli njihovu funkciju u sadašnjem vremenu (Obermayr, 2018, 313). Brković izlazi iz okvira u kojima se crnogorska kultura dugo kretala, koristeći se likom kraljice Jakvinte, kako bi dekonstruirao sliku Crnogorke ponikle na modelu pokornosti i poslušnosti. Pomenuta zbirka predstavlja model onog ženskog raščitavanje dominantne kulture putem (re-)interpretacija arhetipskih likova i motiva (Šoštarić, 2021).

Revitalizacija dukljanskog nasleđa poklapa se s idejom obnove crnogorske neovisnosti, a kako konstatuje Ervin Šinko (1951, 250) “interesovanje za prošlost raste onda kada sadašnjost postane problematična.” Pomenuti autori su vrhunac svog stvaralaštva vezali upravo za period obnove neovisnosti Crne Gore, prilikom čega je veoma važno bilo dokazati da je crnogorska istorija višestolječna, te su se okrenuli dukljanskim uzorima.

ZAKLJUČAK

U članku dali smo dubinsku analizu povijesnih, kulturnih i političkih aspekata koji su oblikovali percepciju ove značajne ličnosti. Kroz kritičku analizu *Ljetopisa popa Dukljanina* i dekonstrukciju ustaljenog tumačenja vezanih za njezin lik razdvojili smo povijesne činjenice od legendarnih narativa i time smo doprinijeli razumijevanju ne samo lika kraljice Jakvinte nego i cjelokupnog konteksta Duklje za doba njezina života. Ovo uključuje njezin politički utjecaj, društvenu ulogu i doprinos u kontekstu srednjovjekovne Duklje; *reinterpretacijom njezinog lika* koristeći interdisciplinarne metode razdvojili smo stvarne događaje od fiktivnih narativa koji su se nadogradili oko njezinog lika, kroz dijahronijsku ravan. Uz *ulogu kulture i ideologije*: utvrdili smo da su mnogi konstrukti vezani za kraljicu Jakvitnu nastali i održavali se zbog specifičnih kulturnih i političkih okolnosti. Ova saznanja pružaju dublja razumijevanja kako se povijest može reinterpretirati kroz prizmu trenutačnih potreba i vrijednosti društva.

Istraživanje doprinosi poimanju složenog procesa mitologizacije povijesnih ličnosti, te na koje načine njihova fiktivna reinkarnacija može postati dominantna u percepciji. Reinterpretacija lika kraljice Jakvinte Vojsilavljević naglašava važnost kritičkog pristupa povijesnim izvorima i potrebu za interdisciplinarnim metodama u proučavanju sličnih tema.

PRIVITAK: ISJEČAK LJETOPISA KOJI SE ODNOSI NA JAKVINTU

Kralju Bodinu, pak, rodi četiri sina Jakvinta, kćer Arkirica iz grada Barija, čija su imena ova: Mihala, Đorđe, Arkiric i Toma [...]. Potom sklopivši mir sa grčkim carem, vratio mu je grad. Međutim, Jakvintu, Bodinovu ženu, jako je boljelo da gleda kako Branislavljevi sinovi jačaju i množe se. Bojala se, naime da Branislav ili njegovi sinovi po smrti njenog muža ne preuzmu kraljevstvo. Stoga su joj stalno smetali i tražila je zgodnu priliku da ih uništi oca i sinove. Tako u jedno vrijeme kad je Branislav, sa njegovim bratom Gradislavom i sinom Berihnom naivno došao u grad Skadar, Jakvinta, vidjeći da su došli sami, obrađuje se pa prišavši kralju počne bestidno navaljivati i govoriti mu da ih uhvati i stavi u tamnicu, inače nikakav život ne može imati sa njim, ako to ne učini. Govoraše mu: "Znam da ćeš umrijeti, pa će oni preuzeti kraljevstvo, a tvoji sinovi će jesti za njihovom trpezom". Što dužiti? Kralja Bodina pobijedila je žena kao Iroda Irodijada, dok su sjedeli za ručkom i jeli po kraljevoj naredbi uhvaćeni su i stavljeni u tamnicu, a pošto kralj nije htio da se odupre želji svoje žene, posta za trpezom vjerolomnik, kao Irod ubica. Kad su to čula njihova braća, sinovi i nećaci, sakupe sve srodnike i odu u Dubrovnik, pa uđu u grad sa četiri stotine ljudi pod oružjem. Kad je kralj čuo da su pobjegli, sakupivši vojsku, stiže do ovog grada i opsjedne ga, pa počne da ga napada. Tada braća i sinovi kneza Branislava, i oni koji su bili sa njima, izlazeći naoružani iz grada svakodnevno su činili veliki pokolj nad vojskom kralja Bodina. Jednog dana kad su izašli i mnoge pobili i ranili, Kočapar bacivši koplje iz ruku probode nekog Kosara kojega je kraljica mnogo voljela. Vidjeći to, kraljica odmah rasplete kose pa se počne žestoko udarati po licu, plakati i govoriti svom mužu: "Jao, jao, jao, da li zbilja ne vidiš, o kralju, kako ubijaju tvoje?! Zar još ne vidiš što učini Kočapar? Zašto da pustiš da žive njihova braća koju držiš u okovima?" Tada kralj razbješnjen, ispruživši svojom rukom mač, naredi da se pred gradom Dubrovnikom i u prisustvu njihove rodbine odsiječe glava knezu Branislavu, njegovom bratu i sinu, dodajući tako ubistvo na vjerolomstvo. Dvanaeste godine vladanja kralja Vladimira, Jakvinta, kako su je savetovali neki vrlo rđavi ljudi, koji bijahu neprijatelji župana Vukana, dade im smrtonosni napitak koji je načinila u Kotoru, đe je boravila. Kad ovi stignu u Skadar, približe se kralju preko ruku njegovih slugu, i on prevaren od njih, pade u postelju. Jakvinta, pak, znajući da će on umrijeti, dođe sa svojim sinom Đorđem u Skadar da posjeti kralja, ali čim je kralj vide, gurnu je od sebe i naredi da izađe napolje. Kad je izašla onima koji su tu stajali reče: "Zašto kralj tako radi? Kakvo sam zlo ja učinjela? Ako gospodin kralj želi da zna: njegov stric Dobroslav, koji se nalazi u okovima, sam je učinjeo da on ne naslijedi kraljevstvo." I odmah odatle ode i dođe do Gorice čekajući kraljevu smrt. Potom tajno, mnogo obećavajući, poruči kraljevim ljudima da čim kralj umre ubiju Dobroslava, što je i učinjeno. Naime kralj je umro i sahranjen je u manastiru Svetih Srđa i Vakha, a kraljevi ljudi, iskoristivši priliku, po savjetu Jakvinte udruže se protiv kralja Dobroslava, pa izvukavši ga iz zatvora, iskopaju mu oči i odsijeku mošnice, i pošalju ga u manastir Svetih Srđa i Vakha, đe je živjeći dugo vremena sa kaluđerima, kasnije umro. Poslije smrti kralja Vladimira kraljevstvo preuze Đorđe, sin kraljice Jakvinte (Mijušković, 1988, 139–143).

THE REINTERPRETATION OF THE CHARACTER OF QUEEN JAKVINTA VOJISLAVLJEVIĆ OF DUKLJA: BETWEEN HISTORY AND FICTION

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SUMMARY

This article provides an in-depth analysis of the historical, cultural, and political aspects that have shaped the perception of Queen Jakvinta Vojislavljević of Duklja. Through a critical analysis of the Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja and a deconstruction of the established interpretations related to her character, we separated historical facts from legendary narratives, contributing to a better understanding of not only Queen Jakvinta's character but also of the entire context of Duklja during her lifetime. This includes her political influence, social role, and contribution within the framework of medieval Duklja. By reinterpreting her character using interdisciplinary methods, we distinguished real events from fictional narratives that have developed around her, through a diachronic perspective. Regarding the role of culture and ideology, we established that many constructs associated with Queen Jakvinta emerged and were maintained due to specific cultural and political circumstances. These findings provide deeper insights into how history can be reinterpreted through the lens of a society's current needs and values. The research contributes to the understanding of the complex process of mythologizing historical figures and how fictional reincarnations can become dominant in their perception. The reinterpretation of Queen Jakvinta Vojislavljević's character emphasizes the importance of a critical approach to historical sources and the need for interdisciplinary methods in studying similar topics.

Keywords: Jakvinta, reinterpretation of literature, history, mythology, Duklja

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ENTANGLEMENT OF NATURE WORSHIPPERS FROM POSOČJE WITH STONES

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that the beliefs and belief system of nature worshippers from Posočje differ significantly from the Greco-Roman or Judeo-Christian hierarchical anthropocentric perspectives, which classify the ecosphere according to its usefulness. The mythical thinking of nature worshippers from Posočje is examined from an ecofeminist perspective. They viewed non-living entities not only as autonomously functional, i.e., without human domination, but as agencies that organize life around them. The intertwining of humans with the ecosphere, including the inanimate world, as found in the mythical thinking of Posočje nature worshippers, is analyzed in terms of accounts of media ecology and machine-oriented ontology, and treated considering some recently discussed posthumanist notions, such as “machinic assemblages” and “folding with the world.” Posočje nature worshippers understood trees and stones with special powers as shaping the actions and social relations of humans. Therefore, these entities should be seen as media, machines, or apparatuses that organize human life.

Keywords: nature worshippers, Ancient-Believers, apparatus, die Umwelt, media ecology, ecofeminism, stone

LA CONNESSIONE DEGLI ADORATORI DELLA NATURA DEL POSOČJE CON LE PIETRE

SINTESI

Questo articolo dimostra che la fede e il sistema di credenze dei fedeli del Posočje erano significativamente differenti dalle prospettive gerarchiche antropocentriche greco-romane o giudeo-cristiane, che classificano l'ecosfera in base alla sua utilità. Il pensiero mitico degli adoratori della natura del Posočje è esaminato da una prospettiva ecofemminista. Essi consideravano le entità non viventi non solo come autonomamente funzionanti, cioè non sottomesse al dominio umano, ma come agenti che organizzavano la vita attorno a loro. L'intreccio di uomini ed ecosfera, incluso il mondo inanimato, come si

nota nel pensiero mitico degli adoratori della natura di Posočje, è analizzato in termini di resoconti di ecologia dei media e di ontologia orientata agli oggetti, considerando alcune recenti nozioni post-umaniste, come “machinic assemblages” e “folding with the world”. Gli adoratori della natura di Posočje credevano che gli alberi e le pietre fossero animati da poteri speciali e potessero influenzare le azioni e le relazioni sociali degli uomini. Perciò queste entità dovrebbero essere considerate come dei media, macchine o apparati che organizzano la vita umana.

Parole chiave: adoratori della natura, antichi credenti, apparato, die Umwelt, ecologia dei media, ecofemminismo, pietra

INTRODUCTION¹

Given the reality of the Anthropocene—a term that emphasizes the irreversible impact of humanity on the Earth’s ecosystems—it is becoming increasingly urgent to reframe our relationship with the ecosystem and other living beings. Rather than viewing humans as rulers over nature, it is crucial to recognize our interconnectedness as part of a larger ecological community. In response, the humanities have developed various frameworks to examine the complex relationships between human and non-human beings within their ecosystems. Environmental ethics, for example, has championed biocentrism, asserting that all living species have equal intrinsic value and belong to an interdependent ecological network (Taylor, 1986). Ecofeminism extends this perspective and calls for an egalitarian society free from hierarchical domination (Braidotti, 2021) and an environmental ethic with a new ecological paradigm to replace the dominant mechanistic paradigm of the last three hundred years (Merchant, 2005). The first and second generations of critical studies have re-examined the concepts of otherness and animality within feminist studies (Haraway, 1989; 2003; 2007) or in the broader field of critical studies (Agamben, 2004; Åsberg & Braidotti, 2018). Critical posthuman studies have explored the relationships of humans to the environment (environmental humanities) and between human and non-human beings, especially artificial intelligence (Braidotti, 2019). While ecofeminism has discussed relationality and various non-anthropocentric

1 This article was written within the research project N6–0268 *Political Functions of Folktales* and the research program P6–0435 *The Practices of Conflict Resolution between Customary and Statutory Law in the Area of Today’s Slovenia and Neighboring Countries*, co-funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS). The author thanks Daša Medvešček, Radivoj Zavadlav, Boris Čok and Rafael Podobnik as well as Darja Skrt from the Regional Museum Goriški Muzej for their kind permission to reproduce the photographs.

perspectives, it has largely overlooked the importance of relationships between humans and other living beings with “non-active” inanimate entities. This article attempts to fill this gap by examining the ecofeminist tenets found in the beliefs, belief system, and practices of nature worshippers, particularly from the Posočje region of Slovenia, in which both living and non-living entities played an essential role in their non-anthropocentric worldview.

In 2015, the Slovenian ethnographer and folklore collector Pavel Medvešček-Klančar published a comprehensive book entitled *Iz nevidne strani neba: razkrite skrivnosti staroverstva* (*From the Invisible Side of the Sky. Revealed Secrets of the Ancient Beliefs*), which is full of ethnographic material that speaks about the culture of nature worshippers from the westernmost part of Slovenia, particularly from the mountainous region of Posočje along the Soča River (Medvešček, 2015), who inhabited the region with their Catholic neighbors. They called themselves “Ours,” while others called them Ancient-Believers, explained one of them, Janez Strgar from Strgarija in Volčanski Ruti (Medvešček et. al, 2014, 143), who was also Medvešček’s main source in his ethnographic research. The terms Ancient-Belief or Old Faith, and the related term Ancient-Believers,² which refer to the attitude of these people to the world and faith, became established among the Slovenian public after the first public exhibition of Pavel Medvešček’s extensive collection of artifacts, which took place in 2014 at the Regional Museum Goriški Muzej. Two catalogs accompanied the exhibition. In the same year, an association of Ancient-Believers called “Slovenski staroverci” (Slovenian Ancient-Believers) was also founded, which is interested “in the Slovene pre-Christian faith, Slovene/Slavic mythology and other pre-Christian beliefs that appear on the Slovene ethnic territory throughout history” (Slovenski staroverci, 2024). It seems that this association has a somewhat broader interest than just Ancient-Belief. However, the terms Ancient-Belief or Old-Belief³ could be misleading, because on one hand, the Old Belief in Slovenia refers also to the Slavic mythology, and on the other hand, Old Believers, called Old Ritualists, were a completely different religious community of Eastern Orthodox Christians. Compared to the Catholic community, the relationship of the Ancient-Believers to “nature” is different:

They, too, are farmers, and thus incorporate “nature” into their production, yet they show greater respect toward all things natural. For them, “everything,” regardless of form—plants, animals, hills, stones, water, etc.—is alive. Not only do humans have a soul, called zduhec; and after death, a soul can reincarnate into a different body than it previously occupied. Natural forces—and therefore life itself—are revered at prominent outdoor locations, such as mountain peaks, caves, and gorges. The supreme representative of natural forces is the goddess Nikrmana (Kozorog, 2020, 112).

2 In the catalogue of the Regional Museum Goriški Muzej, the Slovenian term *staroverstvo* was translated to English as Ancient-Belief (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 143).

3 The Slovene term *stara vera* could be translated as Ancient-Belief or Ancient-Faith or Old-Belief or Old-Faith.

For nature worshippers from Posočje, man is not the master of the world, but is essentially not only intertwined, but entangled with everything that surrounds him, the living and non-living entities. Accordingly, archaeologist and ethnologist Andrej Pleterski (2016, 16) as well as political scientist Cirila Toplak (2023, 33) came to use the term nature worshippers to refer to this community (cf. the testimonies of Frlin and Štajcn in Medvešček, 2015, 258, 267). This term will also be used to refer to the community from the Posočje region, exhibiting beliefs and practices addressed in the continuation of this discussion.

The culture of nature worshippers was largely unknown to or denied by the academic community. It coexisted as a counterculture to the dominant Christian culture until the early twentieth century and was allegedly subject to religious persecution. Testimonies, folk tales, and material remains tell of a way of life and a community that was interwoven with the world around it. This predominantly patriarchal culture had a cult of the Great Mother (Nature) and practiced various rituals at sacred sites. Of particular importance were sacred stones and sacred trees, which the people worshipped. Nature worshippers turned to certain trees, such as those that stood alone and were a symbol of perseverance and humility, as well as very old trees that had survived for centuries and had accumulated a lot of energy, because they believed that these trees possessed special powers that people could draw on to obtain healing or that were a source of comfort. The belief system of these people differed significantly from the Greco-Roman or Judeo-Christian hierarchical anthropocentric view that classifies the ecosphere according to its utility. Instead, Posočje nature worshippers viewed non-living beings not only as autonomously functional, i.e., without human domination, but as agencies that organize life around them. The intertwining of humans with the ecosphere, including the inanimate world, as found in the mythic thinking of nature worshippers, is addressed in this article through the consideration of concepts from media theory and machine-oriented ontology, such as media and machine, “machinic assemblages of nature” (Bryant, 2014), and “folding with the world” (Deleuze, 1993; Parikka, 2010).

RITUALS WITH STONES AND OTHER RITUALS

The Posočje region is a very mountainous alpine karst area, rich in rivers, streams, and caves. The nature worshippers lived in deep connection with the local landscape, especially with stones, water sources, mountains, and trees. They believed in the sacredness of nature and regarded it as inherently alive and spiritually powerful. They respected and were connected to the spirits of the ancestors, whom they regarded as protectors and guides. Certain natural places (stones, rivers, springs, mountains) were considered spiritually charged and had magical or healing powers (cf., e.g., *Belinov tron* in Medvešček, 2015, 106). Stones, especially those naturally shaped and found in certain places, had a special spiritual significance. They were believed to contain special energies that could be used to protect, heal, increase fertility, or influence personal happiness. The community of nature

worshippers knew rituals that were usually simple and intimate. They emphasized personal and communal connection to nature rather than formalized or institutional ceremonies (Medvešček, 2015, 554–555):

The purpose and meaning of a ritual act are to influence the conditions and events in the world. It can be an imitation of an event told by a myth at the time of the ritual so that the desired consequence is created in the world. A special space and time may also be part of the ritual. Such a space is usually called a sanctuary. [...] The power of ritual to influence conditions and events is ritual power (magic) (Pleterski, 2016, 17).

The water and spring rituals of nature worshippers included ritual ablutions or baths in springs and rivers during certain phases of the moon or seasonal turning points (solstices, equinoxes). Seasonal festivals were associated with seasonal cycles, such as *mlajanje* (Jože Čančar in Medvešček, 2015, 146). They also performed ritual offerings in sacred places, often caves or abysses (Medvešček, 2015, 102, 549, 551, 557). The Snake Cave is one of the sacrificial caves in which

the most important ceremony took place during the winter fire, when a ritual purification fire was lit inside it in the presence of nine selected men chosen by the community. The sword that all dehnars [spiritual leaders] used when taking the oath also originated from this cave. [...] The winter fire that burned in the darkest night was intended also for the snake that slept at the bottom of Snake Cave. The fire was supposed to help it wake up in time in spring and protect the crystal stones that the healers once used for healing and predicting the future (Štajcn in Medvešček, 2015, 267).

Nature worshippers collected stones with special powers from rivers, mountains and special places. Some stones were ritually charged, for example through the ritual of *ozbenanje*. Stones were also used for therapeutic purposes by placing them on certain parts of the body or around a person during healing rituals as a form of healing or spiritual cleansing. Stones symbolized stability, permanence, memory, and the continuity of community traditions. In the worldview of nature worshippers, stones were not passive objects but active participants in rituals.⁴ Stones were believed to have the ability to ward off negative influences, illness, or misfortune. Stones could be used to contact the spirits of ancestors. Certain rituals with stones supported fertility (both in agriculture and human), prosperity, or good luck.

4 Through their tacit, performative resonance, the stones functioned as silent carriers of meaning. As Katja Hrobat Virloget (2023) has shown in her study of memorial silence, silence itself is not absence, but a form of agency that organizes memory and social response in affective ways. Similarly, the power of the stone lies precisely in its silence—its resistance to representation—which invites touch, ritual, or secrecy, and commands reverence without speech.

The ritual called *ozbenanje*, through which the stones called *snakeheads* became sacred, took place before the First World War in the Doblarec River basins (Tone Javor in Medvešček, 2015, 123), or in cauldrons filled with river water (Medvešček, 2015, 538). “Snakehead is a stone that was transformed into a sacred object through a special ritual (*ozbenanje*)” (Medvešček, 2015, 563). “The *ozbenanje* ceremony was performed by the sworn in with yellow and white chadron⁵, boxwood, and water in the Doblarec riverbed” (Medvešček, 2015, 565). *Ozbenanje* used to be performed at a sacred place next to the Soča River, called Dobnik, overgrown with old oak trees, called *dob* (*Quercus robur*), felled by Napoleon’s army. The ritual was described in a testimony by a nature worshipper, Štajcn:

The oak, which was several hundred years old, was a sacred tree. One of its root-stocks grew down the bank and reached a basin from which it drew water, where it formed a root crown, under which the water spirit lived. Larger stones were placed in a circle around the tree where the community met. Water was drawn from the second basin, which, like all the others, constantly carried water, in the dry season using a special device made “by weight” (Štajcn in Medvešček, 2015, 266).

During the construction of the Doblarec power plant, a large rock was also blown up, on which ancient signs were carved. After that, the Ancient-Believers abandoned Dobnik and performed their rituals further upriver. In the village of Ukoplce on the right bank of the Soča, where the Doblarec stream flows in and where the “women’s water” (Soča) mixes with the “men’s water” (Doblarec), ritual ablutions used to be performed, but only until the construction of the power plant began (Štajcn in Medvešček, 2015, 266).

THE CULT OF THE TREE AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE POSOČJE REGION

Between 1950 and 1978, Pavel Medvešček Klančar (1933–2020), as an employee of the Nova Gorica Institute for Monument Protection, conducted a series of interviews with the inhabitants of the remote Eastern Alpine mountain regions of Primorska, Slovenia. After his interviewees began to trust him and accept him into their secret community, they demanded that Medvešček not reveal their secret. Medvešček kept his promise, but published some materials with contents related to the nature worshippers, such as fairy tales collected in the Idrija region (Medvešček, 1991), and together with Rafael Podobnik published a monograph on the secrets and sacredness of stone (Medvešček & Podobnik, 1992) and stories about ancient beliefs in which the stones play the main role. With these two monographs, Medvešček and Podobnik covered the area from Bovec in the Posočje region to the Slovenian-Croatian border in Istria.⁶ The existence of this community and their faith was to remain secret due to their persistent persecution by the Christian major-

5 A local folk term *čadron* denotes stone lichen (Medvešček, 2015, 123), yet the exact botanical identity remains uncertain.

6 Medvešček also published numerous articles (cf. Toplak, 2023, 20).

ity (Vrabec, 2020). While Posočje has been an integrated into the broader Adriatic and its hinterlands for millennia, the mountainous areas of this region are still difficult to access. “It is the extraordinary secrecy and geographical isolation in the inaccessible subalpine and Dinaric areas of western Slovenia that may have contributed decisively to the survival of the community, which is said to have survived for centuries” (Toplak, 2023, 20).⁷

While the wider (Slovenian) public was fascinated by the book *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*, as evidenced by the great interest in it,⁸ the reaction of the academic community was rather ambivalent. The ethnologist Miha Kozorog was particularly critical of the legitimacy of an ethnographic source.⁹ According to Kozorog (2021, 206), it would be more appropriate to speak of scattered folk practices, for which only Medvešček created an entire framework of ancient beliefs. However, one of the best-known historians who studied the history of the region, Simon Rutar (1851–1903), mentioned the existence of an ancient faith in his writings. In the region around Bovec on the Soča River, the Christian religion was propagated in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages by the Patriarchate of Aquileia. However, Christianity spread very slowly in this mountainous region. “The Slovenes clung to their old faith, customs and habits” (Rutar, 2001, 31). According to Rutar, the remnants of the old faith could be found in the fairy tales and local names, such as Triglav—the sun god, Baba, Bohinj, etc.,¹⁰ as well as in local customs. There were remnants of the “old idolatry” in Kobarid, on the main road, even in 1331 (Rutar, 2001, 31). These reminders of the old beliefs in this region reminded Rutar of the old Slavic mythology, with the worship of the sun, and mythological figures, such as dwarfs, white women,¹¹ and others (Rutar, 2001, 32). Due to Christianization, but also because of military unrest, the people of the Tolmin region fled to the mountains and forests.¹² The following quotation of Rutar in France Bevk’s historical tale speaks of the conflict between the Christian church and the vernacular culture:

7 Concerning the history of settlement of the Middle Soča region between Gorica/Gorizia and Tolmin, cf. Bizjak (2022).

8 By 2023, the fifth edition of the book was published. The complete edition in Slovene is available at: https://zalozba.zrc-sazu.si/sites/default/files/medvescek_iz_nevidne_2015.pdf.

9 “A comparison of Medvešček’s ethnological material and older material shows an important difference in the representations of the culture in question: whereas in the older material there are indications of merging heterogeneous traditions and of a hybrid cultural form, Medvešček reports about ordered and complete cultural wholes. The latter is very unusual in ethnology, which is why Medvešček’s material may raise doubts as an ethnographic source” (Kozorog, 2020, 111). Kozorog as an ethnologist is suspicious of the “discovery of the new culture,” which is extremely rare in ethnology, and always creates a spectacle, while it is often not genuine. Kozorog can hardly imagine the Ancient-Believers living so secretly with their customs while living in the same villages, visiting the same pubs, underway in the same forests, paths and elsewhere with others. He asks, why no one spoke publicly of the existence of another community, if they were persecuted (Kozorog, 2020, 113). Cf. the response to Kozorog by Katja Hrobat Virloget (2021; 2022).

10 Baba does not refer only to an old woman, but also to a slender, stony tine rising from the ground or rocks, an unusually thick stone, a detached rock, even a mountain peak, a summit, or a head-shaped formation. The origin of the geographical name Bohinj remains etymologically unresolved (Snoj, 2009, 50, 67–68).

11 White woman or white lady was a fairy in Slovenian folklore (Kropej, 2012, 146).

12 In 1319, the count of Gorizia had to hand over the region of Tolmin to Aquileia (Rutar, 1994, 50–51), when Patriarch Pagano della Torre was formally granted authority in Istria as well as in Carniola (Štih, 2010, 273).

In 1331, on August 16, the religious inquisitor for Venice and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Francesco de Clugia, began to preach a crusade against the people of Kobarid. The Slovenes of the time prayed to the tree and the well below it. The war rose from Cividale del Friuli under the leadership of Clugia and came to Kobarid, cut down the tree, blocked the well, and uprooted what was left of the old faith (Bevk, 2021, 5; cf. Pleterski, 2016, 21).

This record locates the phenomenon of the sacred trees in the Posočje region in the fourteenth century. Sacred trees, as well as the Christian practice of felling them, were recorded at several locations across medieval and early modern Europe (cf. Toivo, 2016, 111; Young, 2022, 7). Yet, the strong connection the people of the Posočje region had to trees has been witnessed up until modern times.

The profound relationship of the inhabitants of the mountainous region on the eastern bank of the Soča River with the surrounding environment, i.e., with “nature,” was described in several writings by the Slovenian writer France Bevk (1890–1970). Bevk himself originated from this region, from the village of Zakojca near Cerklno, and spoke a lot with the locals as part of his own research. In his historical tale *The Dying God Triglav*, which is about the crusade in Posočje in 1331, predicated on Rutar’s writings, he wrote about the entanglement of humans with the rest of the world and trees in particular:

At that time, people felt at one with the trees; they were like living beings. Man observed and eavesdropped on them. They saw and heard more than people see and hear today, because they were still connected to nature; they understood the whispering of the leaves and branches. He was aware that he was a part of nature. The tree was sacred to him. If someone felled the tree, the man took pity on it as if it were an animal. When one spoke to the evil spirits and gods, his mediator was a tree (Bevk, 2021, 13).

Recent testimonies report of the belief in the existence of trees with magical powers in the region. In 1964, a retired teacher Murovec from Nova Gorica testified several times of the existence of sacred trees in Črnovška planota, Trebuša, Kanomlja, and elsewhere. One of them was a linden tree that was taken to be 365 years old when it was cut down because it was old and full of mushrooms and mistletoe. When it was felled, people took the mushrooms and mistletoe home with them at night. When it was standing, it was a ritual place. People lit a bonfire next to it and on the fifth full moon, when the tree turned green, they danced around it (Medvešček & Podobnik, 2006, 69). In 1968, Silvester Ražem, with the local pseudonym Silko Kralj, told the story of a more than two-hundred-year-old oak tree that grew in Gropada and possessed magical powers.

The story tells of an old man from Gropada who once felt very ill and decided that if he had to die, he would die under this village oak. He sat down on the roots of the tree and leaned back against the trunk, taking a nap, and after a while felt a strange tingling sensation all over his body. The discomfort disappeared and strength



Fig. 1: A more than two-hundred-year-old oak tree near Gropada, also known as the Napoleon Oak, is said to have magical powers. It stands in the middle of the intersection of three old roads that once connected the neighboring villages of Bazovica, Sežana and Orlek (photo: Boris Čok) (Čok, 2016, 85–86).

returned to his body. He stood up like a young man and walked home happily. The family was surprised that their grandfather had become twenty years younger. After this event, the word spread of the oak's magical power, and sick people from near and far came to recover under the oak. But now that people have doctors and modern medicine, the younger generations no longer come under the oak tree. Nevertheless, testimonies from 2016 report that some villagers still visit the tree to hug it and that it helps them with its alleged magical energy (Čok, 2016, 85–86).

According to Simon Rutar, the Catholic Church in the Tolmin region accepted a pragmatic compromise with a pre-Christian tradition, as the population itself elected its parish priests, who were then confirmed by the Church (Rutar, 1994, 66). The Tolmin region was divided into parishes, and these into tithing districts, which meant ten houses. According to the old custom in the region, the head of the municipality was the village leader or *župan*, who presided over the council of twelve municipal elders, *dvanajstija*, from Slovene *dvanajst* for twelve (Rutar, 1994, 147). The existence of ritual meetings of the *dvanajstija* board was attested by Andrej Hvala in 1968.

The meetings took place in the sinkhole Zagomila under a mighty linden tree. Twelve stones were arranged around the linden tree, on which the members of the *dvanajstija* council sat. The *župan*'s stone was located to the west of the circle so that it was illuminated by the morning sun (Medvešček, 2015, 392).

The belief system of nature worshippers as summarized by Cirila Toplak—if one can speak of an elaborate system—was supposed to base on a primordial force of creation called *Nikrmana*, which occasionally appeared to people as clouds, lightning, rainbows, various animals, and the like. The sun, as the source of light and warmth needed by all living things, was worshipped on the solstices, the most important holiday. The moon was revered for its power over nature, especially water. The *tročani* (a neologism coined from the words *troje* and *trojica* meaning three and trinity) had a very important role for nature worshippers. These were spatial or abstract triangles/triads that promised protection and fertility and were administered with the help of ritually empowered pebbles with embedded eyes, the so-called snakeheads, as well as self-standing sacred megaliths, the *matjars* (Toplak, 2023, 21).

The old faith began to disappear, according to Medvešček's informant Pepo Pangerc from Dolgi Laz in an interview from 1967, with the arrival of the Christian faith, which was supposed to be "better, albeit foreign. But it was rich, organized and educated and, above all, connected to the authorities" (Medvešček, 2015, 455). Thus, the community of nature worshippers used various survival compromises and strategies, such as social mimicry. Toplak claims that social mimicry, i.e., the preservation of apparent similarity, was used in the context of the inequality of beliefs in the state—a defensive religious mimicry was a means of the nature worshippers' political struggle for their survival as an oppressed community (Toplak, 2023, 25). The community also established a troop of *črna vahta* (black guard) of a protective and defensive character (Medvešček, 2015, 62). The community of nature worshippers had their own informal and undogmatic system of lifelong learning. They did not have such schools as were established by the government in the nineteenth century. Their education began with fairy tales and various types of narratives that introduced young children to the community's spiritual life in an undogmatic way and inculcated them with ethical norms of the community (Toplak, 2022). People learned mostly from life practice at home within the family. However, the *dehnar* was the teacher of the community who transmitted the knowledge he received from his inner teacher—*zduhec*, the spirit or soul, and from the ancestors of those who wanted to learn, through conversation and by being a model to emulate. He was also responsible for moral education (Toplak, 2023, 28–29).

THE SAFEGUARDING, RESISTANCE, FORTUNE-TELLING, AND OTHER MAGICAL FUNCTIONS OF STONES

Although the community of nature worshippers had its educational system, the children went to elementary school according to compulsory education. But since some educational content in the public schools was often contrary to what nature worshippers taught their children, they protected their children from potentially



Fig. 2: The krint is a flat pebble that the children of nature worshippers carried to school to ward off what was imposed on them (photo: Radivoj Zavadlav) (Medvešček, 2015, 93).

harmful content with amulets called *krints*, which the children wore secretly around their necks (Toplak, 2023, 26). A *krint* is a flat pebble (Fig. 2) intended to ward off what was imposed on the children of nature worshippers. The surface of this pebble was divided on at least one side into four parts or *tročans* with a common center. “A *krint* radiated great power and thus repelled what was being forced upon you” (Strgar in Medvešček, 2015, 93) and was used especially during Fascist rule and the Italian ban on the public use of the Slovene language. Children took it to school to preserve their identity, language, and culture.¹³

Stones, especially pebbles, had several important roles in the lives of the nature worshippers. Most often, they were used as safeguards (*varovalo* in Slovene). The objects from Pavel Medvešček’s ethnological collection show several functions of stones. They safeguarded people from evil spirits, and people wore them around their necks¹⁴ or people simply carried them with them. A small pebble called *cinč* or *bulč* was worn exclusively by women, sewn into their clothing under the left armpit to safeguard against evil spirits and spells.¹⁵ The stones, *tročan*, placed over the fireplace also served as safeguards for the houses (Fig. 3)¹⁶ and the people living in them (three stones were placed next to the fireplace to safeguard the house and the people;¹⁷

¹³ Object no. 405 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2016, 95–96).

¹⁴ Objects no. 20 and 45 (Medvešček et al., 2014, 19–20, 28–29, 78–79).

¹⁵ Object no. 97 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 59).

¹⁶ Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 78–79.

¹⁷ Object no. 203 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 112–113).



Fig. 3: The tročan (small stone in the middle below) is a pebble that was placed over the hearth to safeguard the house, while a “snakehead” (large stone on the right) safeguarded the house and a person, being worn around the owner’s neck (photo: Radivoj Zavadlav) (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 78).



Fig.4: The bezlaks were pebbles used in folk medicine (Pavel Medvešček’s collection) (Medvešček & Podobnik, 2006, 152).

a *snakehead* (Fig. 3) safeguarded the house and was also used for personal safeguarding, worn around the owner's neck¹⁸), or they were simply generally regarded as *safeguards*.¹⁹ Some stones were referred to as *house spirits* and also served as *safeguards* for the house against evil spirits²⁰ or a lightning²¹ strike. Some pebbles were used to *safeguard* treasures.²² A stone called the *forest spirit* safeguarded the forest.²³ A stone called *rajtar* was used to *safeguard* a tree from lightning and ensure fertility.²⁴ Pebbles *safeguarded* the seeds²⁵ and livestock²⁶. Some pebbles—*snakeheads*—were used in the ritual called *samoč*.²⁷ When cooking a ritual meal called *žompa*, instead of salt, a stone called *stunik* was cooked together with the dish in the cauldron.²⁸ Stones were used in *fortune-telling*.²⁹ A pebble called *bezlak* (Fig. 4) was used in medicine.³⁰ A stone full of crystals called *Belinova kapa* (Belin's cap) weighed down the collected herbs until the end of fermentation. They believed *Belinova kapa* gave the herbs healing power.³¹ *Lintverni kamen* (the lindworm³² stone; Fig. 5–6) of triangular shape with traces of activity of marine organisms was supposed to bring good luck,³³ while the dark gray stone called *skorjaš* (a neologism that could be translated as “cruster”), half smooth and half damaged, was a bad stone and was supposed to bring bad³⁴ luck.

Stones called *veziči* (a neologism that could be translated as “knitters”) were used to establish and preserve ties among the nature worshippers; there are ten objects in Medvešček's collection.³⁵ A special stone called *svetlik* (a neologism that

18 Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 78–79.

19 Objects no. 162, 187, 227, 236, 252 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 86–87, 105, 124–125, 129–130, 138); object no. 378 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2016, 75).

20 Objects no. 32, 56, 63, 79, 202, 230 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 20, 23, 33–35, 45, 112–113, 126–127).

21 Object no. 182 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 100–101).

22 Object no. 77 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 43).

23 Object no. 177 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 98–99).

24 Object no. 199 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 110).

25 Object no. 54 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 33).

26 Objects no. 61 and 409 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 34–35, 98).

27 Objects no. 48, 234–235 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 30–31, 128–129).

28 Object no. 41 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 27).

29 Object no. 148 was used in fortune-telling by Frin's aunt (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 82–83). Object no. 177 had several different functions. Before the First World War it stood on the top of Jelenk and was called *Videc* (the Seer). It had a function of a calendar. After the war it stood in front of the Buhnja or Babja Jama and was called *Kozlova glava* (the Goat's Head). Women used to visit it because they believed it helps in fertility. The fortune tellers who predicted the future for women found their place in this cave (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 97–98). Object no. 189 is a series of pebbles called *bulcne*, which was used in fortune- and fertility-telling (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 106–107). Objects no. 209 and 210 are two sets used in fortune-telling in Buhnja or Babja Jama. Objects no. 244 and 246 are stones used in fortune-telling by foreteller Hajdna (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 115, 134–135).

30 Object no. 220 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 119); object no. 379, the *Spirit of Belin* (Medvešček & Skrt, 2016, 76–77); image 93, a pebble called *dujc* (Medvešček, 2015, 333).

31 Object no. 223 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 121).

32 A sort of (Germanic) dragon in the shape of a giant serpent monster (German *Lindwurm*) (Lindworm).

33 Object no. 224 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 122).

34 Object no. 225 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 122–123).

35 Object no. 198 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 109).



Fig. 5: The lintverni kamen (the lindworm stone) of a triangular shape with fossilized traces of marine organisms was supposed to bring good luck (photo: Radivoj Zavadlav) (Medvešček & Skrt, 2014, 122).



Fig. 6: Another lindworm stone was found among the coal in the Vremska Valley. It is associated with the belief that a lindworm hatches from the egg of an old black rooster in the coal layers. The stone was supposed to bring good luck and health to the finder (Pavel Medvešček's collection) (Medvešček & Podobnik, 2006, 211).

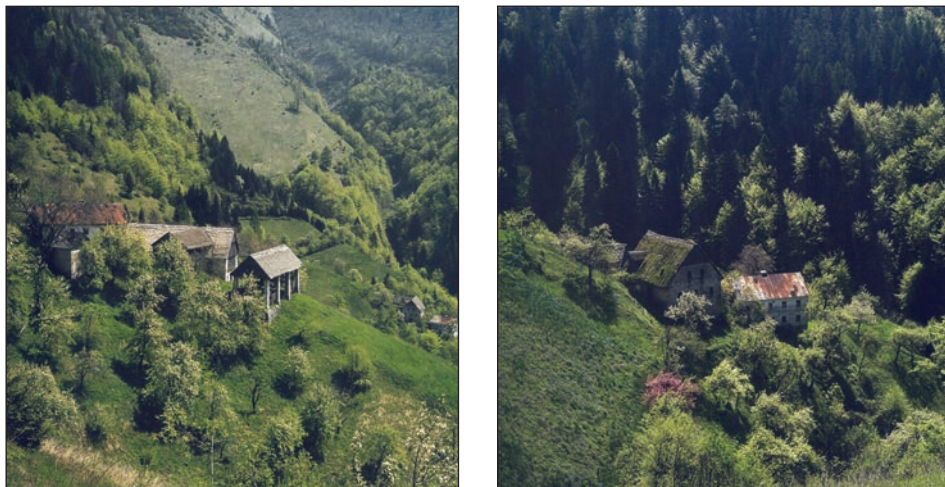


Fig. 7: The farms of Obid and Mušč (left) and the Muščeva farm in Zakojske Grape. Both pictures were taken by Rafael Podobnik on May 19, 1974. Every nature worshipper's house used to have its binkel. When they decided to build a house, a granary, or a stable, they would first find three stones and establish a tročan out of them. Two served as the foundation, and the third was used as a safeguard, called a binkel. It was kept secretly so that only the builder knew its location (Medvešček & Podobnik, 2006, 56–57).

could be translated as “shiner”), a white-gray piece of marble with shiny minerals of mica, which did not originate from this region, was to serve as a pedestal for the statue of the Great Mother. It is said that once lightning struck and shattered the stone. Supposedly, the stone's power attracted lightning that gave it heavenly power. As everyone wanted a piece of its power, parts of it were carried to all the houses in the area. The Great Mother is supposed to remain in the Snake Cave where the statue was taken. The Great Mother was still known in 1965 (Toni Javor from Kuk) as an ancient deity, but who was no longer worshipped.³⁶

When Aldo Trnovec was teaching in Zakojca, the birthplace of France Bevk, in 1958–59, he met the farmer Janez Krivec from Zakojske Grape (Muščeva farm), who kept a stone in the middle of the field, although he had to dig around the stone by hand. The reason for this was a house secret, which, as he lay on his deathbed, he confided only to his son, like his ancestors confided this to their sons (Medvešček & Podobnik, 2006, 55). In 1965, Janez Obid from Bukovo talked about *tročan*, which meant a way of life. When they decided to build a house, a granary, or a stable, they first looked for three stones. Two served as

³⁶ Object no. 404 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2016, 94–95).

the foundation, and the third was considered the guardian, called the *binkel*, its location known only to the builder. The secret was passed on to the next master of the house on the dying master's deathbed. Every house used to have its *binkel* (Medvešček & Podobnik, 2006, 55).

THE MYTHICAL ENTANGLEMENT OF HUMANS WITH STONES

In his testimony, Frlin told of the soothsayers who regularly went into the riverbeds after the floods had uprooted or overturned trees, to predict the future, but also divine from the past, from the stones, roots, and other objects. Frlin kept a pebble (Fig. 8) that had a special meaning for him. He found it in the Bača River in the roots of an old tree that had been washed up on the gravel bank.³⁷ For Frlin, this pebble symbolized the permanent connection between the tree and the stone. He found it interesting simply because the tree had kept it and because it had been by his side for many decades, experiencing the tree's growth and falling together with it. Frlin took it to a fortune teller who told him that he was meant to find this stone. Based on the white line surrounding the stone, she recognized Frlin's life path until his end (Medvešček, 2015, 535).



Fig. 8: Frlin's pebble was collected in a riverbed of the Bača River in the roots of an old tree that had been washed up on the gravel bank. For Frlin, this pebble symbolized the lasting connection between the tree and the stone. It was also used for prophecies (photo: Radivoj Zavadlav) (Medvešček & Skrt, 2016, 96).

Many cited examples of the considerations and functions of stones for nature worshippers tell of their intense attitude towards stones. The people and stones are inseparable in a mythical sense. Significantly, these people lived in an alpine, karstic world in which stone is the primary material that determines everything that exists

³⁷ Object no. 407 (Medvešček & Skrt, 2016, 96).

in this world. This strong attachment to stone is therefore not surprising. The attitude of nature worshippers towards stones was mythical. Mythical consciousness sees the connection of things in the world to the extent that they can also merge into one another. The Indologist Hermann Oldenberg explained the networks of fantastic arbitrary relationships in the context of magical and sacrificial practices, where they are embraced by all beings believed to explain the structure of the sacrifice and its effect on the world. They affect each other through contact. They permeate each other, they merge with each other, they become the other, they are the form of the other; they become the other. When two representations are in such proximity, it is impossible to separate them (Cassirer, 1955, 45). In this case, Oldenberg speaks of mythical metamorphosis as a change from one individual and concrete material to another. In the case of Frlin's pebble, Frlin felt so strongly connected to the stone that he believed his life was embodied in it. The stone was his life.

The myth "sees real identity. The 'image' does not represent the 'thing'; it is the thing; it does not merely stand for the object but has the same actuality so that it replaces the thing's immediate presence" (Cassirer, 1955, 38). In myth, "[t]he object does not exist prior to and outside of synthetic unity but is constituted only by this synthetic unity; it is no fixed form that imprints itself on consciousness but is the product of a formative operation effected by the basic instrumentality of consciousness" (Cassirer, 1955, 29). In other words, the symbol is coalescent with what it signifies (Frankfort & Groenewegen-Frankfort, 1946, 12). "The imagery of myth is therefore by no means allegory" (Frankfort & Groenewegen-Frankfort, 1946, 7). It is a cloak for abstract thinking. "Myth, then, is to be taken seriously, because it reveals a significant, if unverifiable, truth—we might say a metaphysical truth" (Frankfort & Groenewegen-Frankfort, 1946, 7). For mythical consciousness, the world "is not merely contemplated or understood but is experienced emotionally in a dynamic reciprocal relationship" (Frankfort & Groenewegen-Frankfort, 1946, 5). Accordingly, mythical consciousness knows no inanimate world (Frankfort & Groenewegen-Frankfort, 1946, 5). For mythical thinking, the distinction between subjective and objective knowledge is meaningless. Equally meaningless is the distinction between reality and appearance. "Whatever is capable of affecting mind, feeling, or will has thereby established its undoubted reality" (Frankfort & Groenewegen-Frankfort, 1946, 11). The principle of mythical causality is established based on spatial and temporal proximity. Mythical thought does not know the impersonal, mechanical, and lawlike functioning causality. It looks for the "who" and not for the "how." Mythical thought "looks for a purposeful will committing the act. [...] When the river does not rise, it has refused to rise" (Frankfort & Groenewegen-Frankfort, 1946, 15).

Based on the testimonies of Medvešček's interlocutors, Miha Kozorog recognizes the coexistence of at least two parallel but unconnected ontologies in the Posočje region. He bases this on the classification of the contemporary French anthropologist Philippe Descola, who distinguished four basic ontologies, i.e. different basic relations of humans to themselves and to non-humans, such as animals, plants, parts of the environment, objects, etc., which are established according to the human perception of similarities or

differences between human and non-human “interiority” (soul, mind, consciousness) and “appearance” (body). According to Kozorog’s interpretation, the ontology that emerged under the influence of Christianity is analogistic, because beings are divided into orders that differ in terms of their “interiority” and their “exteriority,” but at the same time, these orders of beings are also similar to each other; they are analogous. Humans were created in the image of God, and saints are like humans but have supernatural qualities. Non-human animals have no soul, although some of them have certain similarities to humans. Further down the scale of living beings, this resemblance to humans becomes weaker and weaker until it is completely lost. Unlike the Catholic analogists, Kozorog continues, the nature worshippers are animists. It is typical for them to regard living beings—people, animals, plants, and some parts of the environment—as physically different but spiritually the same. Kozorog believes that in addition to these two, we can recognize at least one other ontology that coexists in Posočje: naturalism, which combines analogism and animism with schooling. According to this ontology, all living beings are created based on the same biological or “natural” principles, but differ in their “interiority,” i.e., in their spirit (Kozorog, 2020, 112).

Three terms that have been used in connection with nature worshippers need to be discussed. These are animism, religion, and nature. Animism is found in explicit form in the testimony of Janez Strgar about Javor, a nature worshipper from Posočje, who rejected the concept of “inanimate matter” because for him everything that surrounded him was living matter. The body disintegrates after death, while the deceased’s spirit (*zduhec*) passes into another life form and thus lives on (Strgar in Medvešček, 2015, 56). However, Strgar also says that Javor was the only one “among them” who was “often connected to the other world” (Medvešček, 206, 56), which makes him a kind of an exception. The cases of the functions of stones presented above speak of different conceptualizations of stones that are not exactly animistic. For animism, it is significant to attribute a soul to non-human beings. For animism, the characteristic is

the attribution by humans to nonhumans of an interiority identical to their own. This attribution humanizes plants and, above all, animals, since the soul with which it endows them allows them not only to behave in conformity with the social norms and ethical precepts of humans but also to establish communicative relations both with humans and among themselves (Descola, 2013, 129).

In the case of the nature worshippers’ beliefs about stones, particular stones could heal, safeguard, and give strength to people. Some stones were considered spirits, but perhaps a different way of conceptualizing them would better describe the power of stones in nature worshipper culture, which is offered below. Furthermore, Javor’s case speaks of the inconsistency of the nature worshippers’ worldview, which proves questionable if it is thought to be a clear and coherent belief or even religious system. The fact that the knowledge of nature worshippers does not form a coherent whole is also one of the main arguments of Kozorog’s criticism of the ethnological reception of what he calls the Ancient-Believers (Kozorog, 2020, 117).

The religious scholar Lenart Škof considers the belief system of the nature worshippers to be a religion. He also sees the existence of a hidden cosmic correspondence “between man, nature and its forces” in what he considers a “religious” tradition of the Ancient-Believers (Škof, 2022, 87). Thus, Valentin Hvalica says in his testimony that “if you ‘cradle’ the green snake’s head with a special intention, you may hear the prehistoric time, how it was born in a consecrated river that springs from the heart of the holy mountain Triglav, in which our faith is rooted” (Hvalica in Medvešček, 2015, 236). In his testimony, Valentin Šmončev spoke about Bizet, who emphasized that it is necessary to live in such a way that one “identifies with all living beings that live around us and with us” and that “among us also exists what we do not see or understand, and yet it works” (Šmončev in Medvešček, 2015, 179). Bizet also explained that he could communicate with animals and plants and receive messages from the world of the dead and the distant stars. This was supposed to give him special powers to heal people. Some people mocked him and thought he was crazy (Medvešček, 2015, 179).

Miha Kozorog distinguishes between the animistic ontology of the worshippers, which is mythical, and the analogistic ontology of the Catholics, which is religious. The beliefs of the nature worshippers differ from the belief system of the Catholics. The nature worshippers had no idols (Medvešček, 2015, 47). The consciousness expressed in the testimonies is mythical. A person with mythical consciousness is immersed in a world that he experiences subjectively. The world around a nature worshipper is his subjectively perceived surroundings, *die Umwelt*. When the behavioral biologist Jakob von Uexküll (1864–1944) studied the lives of animals, he confirmed a similar observation to the mechanistic theorists, namely that an animal’s tools of perception and action are linked by a control mechanism, so that the animal functions in some ways like a machine (Uexküll, 2010, 42). But von Uexküll resisted viewing animals as mere objects. Instead, he emphasized a key factor in understanding how the animals function, namely that they must be understood as subjects. In doing so, he believed he introduced Kant’s Copernican Revolution into the field of biology. Everything that is perceived by the subject belongs to its world of perception, and everything that is produced by the subject belongs to its world of action. These two worlds, the world of perception and the world of produced effects, form a closed unit, namely the environment of the subject or *Umwelt*.

Von Uexküll linked the activity of the animal with its interests, which are focused on the fulfilment of certain functions. In the environment, there is an object with a perceptive sign that the animal perceives with its perception organ. A perceptive sign is a particular feature of an object that is important to the animal. The subject and the object are connected in such a way that they form an ordered whole, which von Uexküll called the functional cycle. It is conceivable that subjects can be connected to the same object or to different objects through a series of functional cycles. When an animal performs the

function for which it has connected with an object, it produces an effect with the help of an effect organ. Von Uexküll emphasized that this is not a purely mechanical action, but that the subject plays a decisive role. The subject must perceive every stimulus (Uexküll, 2010, 46), for which it can wait a long time, and every subject, like a spider, unravels the threads of its relationship to certain properties of things and spins them into a tight web that supports its existence (Uexküll, 2010, 53). Neither time nor the environment can be perceived independently of the subject, but both depend on the subject; time and space are subjective dimensions. Every subject is therefore not a passive product of the environment, a reflection of the milieu, but is the master of its *Umwelt* (Winthrop-Young, 2010, 216). Its attributes are not the product of random mutations and evolution, as Darwin explained, but the organism adapts to the possibilities available to it in the environment in which it lives by adapting its perception and effect organs. *Die Umwelt* can be visualized as the bubble in which the animal lives. When we enter such a bubble, the subject's previous circumstances change completely, certain features of the environment or objects disappear completely, and others lose their coherence with each other, but new connections are created, and a new world emerges in each bubble. The nature worshippers of Posočje are connected to their environment, *die Umwelt*, in their subjective functional cycles.

Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, influenced by von Uexküll, explained man's immersion in the world meant in universal terms:

Space is not what it was in the Dioptrics, a network of relations between objects such as would be seen by a third party, witnessing my vision, or by a geometer looking over it and reconstructing it from outside. It is, rather, a space reckoned starting from me as the null point or degree zero of spatiality. I do not see it according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it. After all, the world is around me, not in front of me (Merleau-Ponty, 1993, 138).

Although such immersion is not exclusive to pre-modern people, it is explicitly experienced in mythical consciousness. Nevertheless, man's experience of the world has changed "historically." Why, for example, should the Greeks have questioned their myths (Veyne, 1988) if they had a mythical consciousness? It was not only with the industrial revolution and technological progress that man became disconnected from his environment. The turning point in man's perception of the world came with the Axial Age between the eighth and third centuries BCE, when major epistemological changes took place and rationality and rationally explained experience began to fight against myth (logos versus mythos) (Jaspers, 1965, 1). Although mythical consciousness has historically been abolished with certain social changes, it has nevertheless survived in parallel in some places to the present day.

Furthermore, Škof (2022, 8) writes about the correspondence “between man, nature and its forces,” excluding man from nature, which enables man to get in contact with it as with a kind of external being. If we accept this notion, nature does not exist as a *trompe l’œil* (the metaphor borrowed from Descola) in front of humans but is all-encompassing and includes humans as part. Moreover, Philippe Descola called for the binary opposition between nature and culture advocated by his teacher Claude Lévi-Strauss to be abandoned (Descola, 2013).³⁸

MACHINIC ASSEMBLAGES OF STONES AND PEOPLE

A nature worshipper named Puš predicted people’s good or bad luck by boiling eggs. He also had several pebbles (Fig. 9) collected on the stone table in front of his house. Puš covered the eyes of everyone who wanted to choose his pebble with a handkerchief and told them that he would feel a kind of tingling in their fingers if they touched his stone. If that did not happen, he should stop. When he touched the stone, he should not think about the stone itself, but about the person or thing he loved most at that moment. Only in this way would the chosen stone give the person new strength. The stone would also be able to ward off an evil spirit. However, the stone could lose all its powers at some point. When that happens, the person must get rid of it as soon as possible (Medvešček & Podobnik, 2006, 22).

The essential characteristic of Puš’s stones, as well as other stones and trees discussed earlier, is that they have the power to influence people. Certain stones and trees exerted an extraordinary power on nature worshippers, even though it could not be measured by any instrument. Although very subjective, this intertwining of humans with the environment and non-human entities could perhaps be explained in a kind of mechanistic way. Contemporary philosopher Levi R. Bryant introduced a broad concept of a machine in his machine-oriented ontology, according to which “a tree is no less a machine than an airplane” (Bryant, 2014, 16). In short, a machine is an entity that dynamically operates on inputs by transforming them to produce outputs (Bryant, 2014, 9). There are several different worlds, and “worlds are ecologies of machines.” Space consists of paths, which in turn consist of machines. The “topological structure

38 Lévi-Strauss warned his students of the need to explore the Amazon rainforest because, in the mid-1970s, South America was the least known continent ethnographically. At the urging of his teacher, Descola went to the Achuar people before they were culturally assimilated, but he also wanted to go into the jungle. He had already conducted a short field study with the Celta people in the Lacandon Jungle in Chiapas. The farming Celtas were not used to the forest, so they established agricultural colonies in the vast scrublands and avoided the jungle. In the forest, the natives gathered, hunted, and “gardenized” by slash-and-burn. Ethnographers have hypothesized that the forest environment was not a natural but a cultural landscape for the indigenous people. A cultural landscape is an environment transformed by human labour, an agricultural landscape as created by agriculture (Baskar, 2018, 662). Descola, however, gradually realized that the contrast between nature and culture had no meaning for the locals. The forest dwellers are at home in the forest, they know the forest, which is full of “memorials” that help the locals preserve and shape their collective memory. The people who lived in the forest have accepted the forest as their habitat, which they have mastered.



Fig. 9: Two pebbles from Puš's collection, which Puš offered to his visitors, and which were supposed to ward off evil spirits (Medvešček & Podobnik, 2006, 23).

of paths plays a key role in how power is organized within assemblages" (Bryant, 2014, 9). To overcome the anthropocentric notion of "power," Bryant introduced the term "gravity" to describe how machines bend spacetime. He believes that by using the term "gravity" he is "drawing attention to the ways in which non-human machines such as plants, animals, bacteria, technologies, infrastructures, and geographical features also contribute to the shape that social assemblages take" (Bryant, 2014, 10). As a materialist social and political philosopher, Bryant is interested in how the geographical features of the material world play an important role in social relations and the organization of societies. For example, if there is a river, it provides a kind of barrier for people or it

allows them to travel and transport past it. A river and a mountain organize life around them.³⁹ And this also applies to a tree. Bryant's philosophy opens up the possibility of considering non-living entities as functional without humans controlling them.⁴⁰

Drawing on one of the first media theorists, Marshall McLuhan, and his famous 1964 idea that the "medium is the message" (McLuhan, 2003, 17–35), Bryant posits that for a craftsman it is not a matter of imagining a model in his mind and then designing matter according to that form, but that matter contributes to the final products, non-human machines or materials contribute to the design. In posthuman media ecology, "a medium is understood as any entity that contributes to the becoming of another entity and provides and constrains possibilities for movement and interaction with other entities in the world" (Bryant, 2014, 9). According to this formulation, stones are media in several of the cases presented, such as the stone called *krint*. In contrast to Martin Heidegger, who claimed that machines always need a creator and an operator, Bryant argues that media or machines "are formative of human action, social relations, and designs in a variety of ways that don't simply issue from humans themselves" (Bryant, 2014, 22). The nature worshippers collected certain stones modeled by a river and believed they had the power to dry fruit, so they built them into the drying house constructed of "common" stones to ensure the harvest. Since stones can be understood as shaping the actions and social relationships of nature worshippers, according to this view, they should be considered as mediums or machines.

Four years before Bryant's machine-oriented ontology, the media theorist Jussi Parikka discussed swarm systems as media in a very similar way and spoke of media ecologies based on a dynamic concept of nature. Parikka starts from media archeology and Gilles Deleuze's connection of the ethology of ticks (after von Uexküll) with the concept of assemblages (Parikka, 2010, 63). The previous theories of Jacques Loeb and John B. Watson explained the relationship between bodies and milieus in a mechanistic fashion so that the milieu was seen as determining the organism's pose as part of the milieu and conceptualized as a physical continuation of its surroundings. In the 1920s and 1930s, von Uexküll introduced a radical posthumanist perspective that unfolds "a panorama of perceptions and ways of approaching the world that are closed to us humans but continuously lived by other life forms" (Parikka, 2010, 66). There "was no objective time and space but a reality consisting of various differing ways of contracting time and space" (Parikka, 2010, 64), which also reflected the same views in physics, cubist art, and philosophy. "What an animal perceives (Merkwelt) becomes structurally integrated into its action-world (Wirkwelt). Hence, the world of an animal is characterized by this

39 In his world history, Hegel considered the geographical and climate features as significant for the establishment of cultures and civilization. "Contrasted with the universality of the moral Whole and with the unity of that individuality which is its active principle, the natural connection that helps to produce the Spirit of a People, appears an extrinsic element; but inasmuch as we must regard it as the ground on which that Spirit plays its part, it is an essential and necessary basis" (Hegel, 1956, 96).

40 On a similar note, Marko Štuhec (2017) describes a case in which non-human nature gradually reclaims a cultural environment, as living trees and ivy slowly overpower the ruins of a once imposing building. Here, non-human nature emerges not as background but as a self-organizing, encroaching force, pushing the dead—stone, ruin, memory—aside, and reterritorializing space in a silent, material way.

functional circle, which integrates an entity into environment (or milieu to other milieus)” (Parikka, 2010, 65–66). Instead of the given objects of nature, von Uexküll introduced the “subject-object relations that are defined by the potentiality opened in their encounters” (Parikka, 2010, 66). Based on von Uexküll’s understanding of milieus with structural couplings in functional circuits and Deleuze’s concept of assemblages, Parikka discussed the “machinic assemblages of nature:”

The leaves of an oak form a coupling of melodies with raindrops, the leaves acting as a channeling and a distribution machine while the raindrops engage in a compositional becoming with the “living machine” of the oak and its cells. In the animal kingdom, an apt example is the living machine formed by an octopus and seawater, with the water becoming a “carrier of significance” (Bedeutungsträger) for the animal, which uses it for its movements (Parikka, 2010, 70).

In the same way, such “couplings,” or “foldings” with the world (a term borrowed from Deleuze) constantly take place in the world of insects, as noted by Parikka (2010, 70). The stones that Puš gave to people also formed connections with the people to whom they gave power. Similar connections or intertwining of stones and people were made for nature worshippers with *krint* and other safeguarding stones. The sacred or special stones were essential factors in the lives of nature worshippers from Posočje, especially because they functioned as machines that organized people’s lives. The safeguarding stones were safeguarding people’s homes so that they could live there, they were safeguarding the harvest, the forest, the children, etc. These stones organized life like the mountains, the trees, and the water. The river and the mountain create obstacles, but also provide water and food. The tree makes connections with mushrooms and bees. On the one hand, all these “machinic assemblages of nature” represent a rather mechanistic or even “objective” world, as the dynamics take place independently of the perception of the individual. On the other hand, the connections of nature worshippers with the empowering or safeguarding stones are made in the milieu of nature worshippers’ perception. However, this fact has not diminished the power of the stones over the people who believe in them.

THE STONES AS CAPTIVATING APPARATUSES

In an experiment that Martin Heidegger later discussed, von Uexküll observed the bee’s relationship with the honey within the bee’s *Umwelt*. Heidegger noticed that the bee was completely *taken* by the honey. Von Uexküll called this element of the *Umwelt* that is captivating the animal the “carrier of significance” (*Bedeutungsträger*, *Merkmalträger*). Heidegger named it the *disinhibitor* (*das Enthemmende*), and instead of the *Umwelt* Heidegger spoke of the *disinhibiting ring* (*das Enthemmungsring*) (Agamben, 2004, 51). Heidegger drew the difference between an animal and a human precisely as regards the mode of existence of the animal, which is determined by the *animal being taken by the disinhibitor*, wherein he claimed, “*the animal is poor in [the] world*” (Heidegger, 1995, 273). The experiment with the bee being placed in front of a cup, full of honey, was a case

used by Heidegger to describe the state of captivation of the animal by the disinhibitor. In the experiment, the bee began to suck the honey, then its abdomen was cut away. The bee continued to suck, while the honey poured out of its open abdomen. Heidegger recognized an instinctual drivenness “toward,” which prevents the animal from establishing a distance toward the disinhibitor in its disinhibiting ring: “It is precisely being taken by its food that prevents the animal from taking up a position over and against” (Heidegger, 1995, 242). The bee is captivated by the scent and honey. This peculiar captivation related to the honey is a driven activity, which Heidegger called *behaving (sich benehmen)* (Heidegger, 1995, 243). It is this relationship with its environment, that particular relationality that determines the behavior of an animal, as the animal is *driven forward* and *driven away*, which means it is in a state of *captivation* by the disinhibitor, which determines the essence of *animality* (Heidegger, 1995, 240). Humans, on the contrary, can comport themselves (*sich verhalten*) and act (*handeln*) in the world. According to Heidegger the fundamental relationship of human Dasein toward beings, i.e. man towards beings—such as humans and other living beings, as well as lifeless beings—is determined differently than the essence of animal relationality, which is captivation in the disinhibiting ring, as humans “are capable of being awakened” (Heidegger, 1995, 276). In contrast to the animal, the human being is “world-forming” (Heidegger, 1995, 285).⁴¹

Based on an examination of Heidegger’s reflections on the difference between humans and animals, Giorgio Agamben has discussed the “animalization of man,” which coincides with the humanization of the animal (Agamben, 2004, 77). Heidegger’s discussion of humans as a being distinct from other beings refers to man in universal terms. In this respect, he does not distinguish between modern and mythical consciousness. When Agamben states an “animalization of man,” one could argue that he is referring to a “contemporary” man or posthuman condition when animals are “humanized.” So we see that Agamben is aware, to a certain extent, that there are differences in the conceptualizations of animals and humans that are “historically” conditioned, or rather, that depend on the epistemological conditions of human consciousness. This is also how we can distinguish between modern and mythical consciousness.

In this respect, the application of Heidegger’s conceptualization of the animal’s captivation by the disinhibitor becomes interesting when one considers the entanglement of the nature worshippers with the empowering or safeguarding stones. The nature worshippers did not distance themselves from the chosen stones or take a position “against” and “over” these stones. People were driven to the stones, and they were captivated by the stones. This essential “animality” that was typical of mythical consciousness and to which Agamben perhaps appeals in the context of posthumanities could be contrasted

41 In mythical thought, it is not the human that is world-forming, but non-human nature that acts upon humans. Figures of Alpine mythology, such as the Goldenhorn (*Zlatorog*)—the chamois with golden antlers who dwells in the alpine heights above the Soča valley—articulate a moral order embedded in the landscape, where non-human nature punishes human greed and intrusion (Crowther, 2022). Much like the sacred stones of the Posočje region, the Zlatorog myth presents non-human nature not as passive terrain subject to human control, but as a sentient force capable of protecting, avenging, and restoring balance. It is another instance of nature functioning not as scenery, but as a sovereign agent.

with the modern instrumental rationality that Heidegger described as the essence of the human relationship to the world.

For this discussion, it is helpful to draw attention to another concept discussed by Heidegger, which is technology. When Heidegger discussed the question concerning technology, he initially considered technology as a contrivance, an instrument (Lat. *instrumentum*). This defines the human relationship toward technology, which is instrumental, as the initial definition of technology supposes technology is “a means to an end.” To be more precise, we could add that Heidegger speaks of technology as being a means to a *human* end. Heidegger discusses technology as regards the human will to master it. “The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control” (Heidegger, 1977, 5). The traditional work of the peasant does not challenge the soil of the field, since the peasant only sows the grains and places the seeds, then he watches over their increase. But with technology, even the cultivation of the field has come under the grip of another kind of “setting-in-order, which sets upon [*stellt*] nature” (Heidegger, 1977, 15). Man is “challenged to exploit the energies of nature” (Heidegger, 1977, 18). The animal in its captivated activity, in contrast to man, cannot relate itself to “what is present at hand as such” (Heidegger, 1995, 248). Man, on the other hand, encounters things as “present at hand”. The “mere presence” or “presence-at-hand” (Ger. *Vorhandenheit*) means a “simple awareness of something present-at-hand in its sheer presence-at-hand” (Heidegger, 1962, 48), while “readiness-to-hand” (Ger. *Zuhandenheit*) implies that man sees things as useful. In the first case, a person has a disinterested view of a thing, whereas in the second case, a person’s interest depends on the usefulness or utility that a person recognizes in the thing. When considering the question concerning technology, Heidegger acknowledged that things exist in the world for humans as “standing-reserves:” “Thus when man, investigating, observing, ensnares nature as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve” (Heidegger, 1977, 19). Here we find Heidegger’s application of von Uexküll’s idea of what we can call “a variety of subjective worlds” to the instrumental rationality as to be found in Heidegger’s comprehension of the essence of technology, as according to Heidegger, man, equipped with technology, sees the river as a standing-reserve:

even the Rhine itself appears as something at our command. [...] What the river is now, namely, a water power supplier, derives from out of the essence of the power station. In order that we may even remotely consider the monstrousness that reigns here, let us ponder for a moment the contrast that speaks out of the two titles, “The Rhine” as dammed up into the power works, and “The Rhine” as uttered out of the art work, in Hölderlin’s hymn by that name (Heidegger, 1977, 16).

In this passage, Heidegger addresses the difference between pre-industrial and industrial society and presents two different conceptions of the Rhine—the Rhine for the industrial man and the Rhine for the Romantic poet. Heidegger speaks of the world becoming a standing reserve with “technology,” or rather, in the industrial age. For Heidegger, the

essence of technology is determined by the essence of the goal towards which technology is directed. Technology is not a mere means of reaching the objective, but the mode of human existence, since it profoundly changes man's relationship to the world.

According to Heidegger, the world does not exist per se for humans, especially with technology, i.e. industrialization. For industrial man, the world exists in front of him and is at his disposal. The various entities in the world are not simply things, for some "things" never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves" (Heidegger, 1962, 97–98). The things in the world are not "merely present", but also "ready-to-hand" (from the German verb *zuhanden*). The equipment of a room—inkstand, pen, ink, paper, furniture, etc.—has their equipmentality, in the sense of belonging to other equipment. These things have an assignment or a relationship of something to something—the "in-order-to." The equipment is thus only revealed in its use, which is tailored to its own measure. The "in-order-to" is therefore constitutive of the equipment we are using at that moment. The hammering reveals the specific manipulability (Ger. *Handlichkeit*) of the hammer. The kind of being that the equipment possesses is what Heidegger called "readiness-to-hand." If one only looks, one cannot discover and understand the readiness-to-hand by its outward appearance. But "when we deal with them by using them and manipulating them, this activity is not a blind one; it has its own kind of sight, by which our manipulation is guided and from which it acquires its specific Thingly character" (Heidegger, 1962, 98). Heidegger discussed the readiness-to-hand in relation to tools, as they direct man to use them. However, the concept of standing-reserve that Heidegger discussed in relation to technology shares the characteristic usefulness that man find in the things that surround them. In Heidegger's philosophy, man's relationship to the world is not only defined by the fact that he considers the things existing in the world to be useful, but man also strives to master his actions as well as the tools and technologies he uses to utilize things. According to Heidegger, machines, like other things in the world, should also be instrumentalized by humans, as opposed to

Hegel's definition of the machine as an autonomous tool. When applied to the tools of the craftsman, his characterization is correct. Characterized in this way, however, the machine is not thought at all from out of the essence of technology within which it belongs. Seen in terms of the standing-reserve, the machine is completely unautonomous (Heidegger, 1977, 17).

The pioneering media theorist Vilém Flusser offered a further distinction, not only between tools and machines, but also between tools, machines, and apparatuses. According to Flusser, tools are extensions of the human body that serve to reach further into the world to perform work, wherein work means investing labor to change the form of things. Performing work, then, means manipulating the world and changing the shape of things or the state of beings. Tools simulate the organ from which they are extended: the arrow simulates the finger, the hammer the fist, and the pick the toe. A brush is a tool. Ontologically speaking, tools belong to pre-modern man. Machines also perform work and change the state of things, i.e., they change the world. However, machines are not extensions of human organs but operate autonomously. In this case, machines do the work and human subjects connect

with the machines so that they are at the service of the machines. Machines emerged with the industrial age and are relatively autonomous operating systems that perform labor and subjugate humans (as in the Marxist critique of capitalism). In this respect, Flusser presents a more Fordist, mechanistic concept of machine. Flusser introduces a third concept, the apparatus. If tools are replaceable when people use them, then people are replaceable when machines are in operation. In the case of machines, the machines are constants and the people are variables. There is a fundamental distinction between industrial and postindustrial society, between the functioning of tools and machines on the one hand and the apparatuses on the other. Both tools and machines define the ontological status of man, who is a working man, a worker or *homo faber*. According to Flusser, in postindustrial society the category of “work” must be replaced by the category of “information:” “The basic category of industrial society is work. Tools and machines work by tearing objects from the natural world and informing them, i.e. changing the world. But apparatuses do not work in this sense. Their intention is not to change the world, but to change the meaning of the world” (Flusser, 2000, 25). According to Flusser, apparatuses belong to postmodern society. They do not work. They interact with people. The relationship between humans and apparatuses is different from the relationship between humans and machines. The person in the apparatus is a functionary of the apparatus. Man is exhausting the potentiality of the program of the apparatus with every single operation of the apparatus that produces outcomes. The outcome in this case is not the world transformed. The apparatuses do not change the states of beings, but the meaning of things. They produce information. Ontologically speaking, a person who is in a relationship with the apparatus is a “playing man,” a player or *homo ludens*.

Flusser’s concept of the apparatus can be applied well to postmodern technologies. However, it is also interesting for this discussion because it implies a certain degree of captivity of man within the apparatus. Man is an operating subject within the apparatus, but not an autonomous subject, because he is a functionary of the apparatus, which places him in a relationship of dependence to this *Umwelt*. And vice versa—the apparatus cannot function without a person. Although the empowerment and safeguarding stones are not types of postmodern technologies, they involve man in a similar relationship as postmodern devices involve contemporary man. The nature worshipper functions together with the stone, and the stone functions together with the nature worshipper.

Agamben also discusses the concept of the apparatus. He recognizes that the apparatus is the crucial strategic concept in Foucault’s thought when he speaks of “governmentality” or the “government of men” (Agamben, 2009, 1). What is the apparatus according to Foucault, summarized by Agamben:

- a. It is a heterogeneous set that includes virtually anything, linguistic and non-linguistic: discourses, institutions, buildings, laws, police measures, philosophical propositions, and so on. The apparatus itself is the network that is established between these elements.*
- b. The apparatus always has a concrete strategic function and is always located in a power relation.*
- c. As such, it appears at the intersection of power relations and knowledge relations (Agamben, 2009, 3).*

Agamben then traces the genealogy of an apparatus and links it to a theological genealogy of economy, for the Greek term *oikonomia*, which meant the administration of the *oikos* (home) and management in general, was translated in Christian theology into the Latin term *dispositio*, where it was applied to God, who administers and governs the created world. In Christian theology, the term *dispositio* (or *dispositif* in French, apparatus in English) is thus also linked to the concept of creation, as it produces its subjects. “The term ‘apparatus’ designates that in which, and through which, one realizes a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being. This is the reason why apparatuses must always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject” (Agamben, 2009, 11). Agamben even finds a connection to Heidegger’s concept of the *Gestell* (frame, *Ge-stell*—en-framing), which “means some kind of apparatus” (Heidegger, 1977, 20). “Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering [*bestellen*] as standing reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology” (Heidegger, 1977, 20). Agamben notes a proximity of Heidegger’s notion of *Gestell* with the theological notion of disposition as well as to Foucault’s notion of apparatuses, as they all refer back to *oikonomia* as “a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient—in a way that purports to be useful—the behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of human beings” (Agamben, 2009, 12).

In the extreme phase of capitalist development, we experience “a massive accumulation and proliferation of apparatuses” (Agamben, 2009, 15). One of these common devices that function as apparatuses is the cell phone. The apparatus incessantly “captures” the subject (Agamben, 2009, 13)—to use Heidegger’s words—in the “disinhibiting ring.” Apparatus captures and subjectifies the desire (Agamben, 2009, 17). According to Agamben, apparatuses are thus captivating systems that first de-subjectivize their subjects to then produce them as subjects with desire. Furthermore, as we have seen, Agamben adds the dimension of supposed or apparent usefulness to the definition of apparatus. For Heidegger, however, the word *stellen* (to set upon) in the name *Ge-stell* (enframing) means challenging (Heidegger, 1977, 21) and is related to the instrumental mind, which seeks to find the use of things utilizing technology. The apparatus, as part of technology, thus supports the relationship of man to the world, which consists in seeing its elements as “standing-reserves,” i.e., as sources that are to become useful for humans with the aid of technology. In this sense, apparatuses help people to make use of the world. Agamben and Foucault, on the other hand, speak of (especially capitalist) apparatuses that capture people, a multitude of *Umwelten* with “carriers of significance” that attract people’s attention and arouse desires, that have strategic functions and are located in power relations, i.e. they manage, govern, control and orient their subjects.

The *Umwelt* of nature worshippers seems to be something quite different from this conceptualization of an apparatus in the context of capitalist society, because it belongs to a different ontology. However, the concept of apparatus as discussed by Agamben and Flusser shows certain similarities between ancient mythical consciousness and contemporary consciousness. The captivity of humans in

postmodern apparatuses speaks of a mythical entanglement of contemporary man with “intelligent” technologies. A reference to *oikonomia* could also be found in the entanglement of nature worshippers with stones. The given entities attract the attention of nature worshippers to such an extent that they orient and determine their lives. Certain entities found in the world, such as stones that give strength or safeguard them, do not exist as “standing reserves” available to man waiting to be transformed into something else—as Heidegger speaks of industrial man equipped with technology—but have the power to direct the lives of nature worshippers. Nature worshippers are seized, *taken* by the empowering or safeguarding stones that have the function of disinhibitors, capturing people who believe in them into the disinhibiting ring. Nature worshippers do not tend to change the world with the help of empowering or safeguarding stones. Nevertheless, these stones are a kind of “standing-reserves” to be used in the lives of nature worshippers.

CONCLUSIONS

The belief system and practices of Posočje nature worshippers provide a profound ecological and philosophical framework that challenges dominant anthropocentric views. Their worship of living and non-living entities reflects a worldview in which humans are inextricably linked to their environment. Through rituals and symbolic practices revolving around sacred trees, stones and other natural elements, nature worshippers demonstrate an intimate connection with the organic and inorganic world around them that emphasizes interdependence and mutual respect. These insights are closely related to contemporary ecofeminist and posthumanist discourses that seek to deconstruct hierarchies between human and non-human entities and advocate for a more egalitarian relationship with the earth.

The nature worshippers’ understanding of static but empowering or safeguarding non-living entities as agencies that organize life around them invites a reassessment of how we engage with our ecosystems. It highlights the potential for a more inclusive relationality that embraces all forms of existence and reflects the demands of environmental ethics to recognize the intrinsic value of all beings. By integrating these ecofeminist teachings into modern ecological and feminist thought, we can continue to dismantle exploitative systems and move towards a more harmonious coexistence with other beings in the ecosystem, guided by respect and recognition of the interconnectedness that sustains life.

PREPLETENOST NARAVOVERCEV IZ POSOČJA S KAMNI

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POVZETEK

Leta 2015 je slovenski etnograf in zbiratelj Pavel Medvešček-Klančar izdal obsežno knjigo z domoznanskim gradivom, ki govori o kulturi častilcev narave iz zahodnega dela Slovenije, zlasti Posočja, z naslovom *Z nevidne strani neba: razkrite skrivnosti starega verstva*. Kultura teh starovercev, popolnoma nepovezanih z vzhodnimi pravoslavnimi kristjani, ki so tudi opredeljeni kot staroverci, je bila prej večinoma neznana ali zanikana s strani akademske skupnosti. Soobstajala naj bi kot protikultura prevladujoči krščanski kulturi do začetka 20. stoletja in je bila predmet verskega preganjanja. Pričevanja, ljudske pripovedi in materialna dediščina pripovedujejo o načinu življenja, ki je bil esencialno prepleten s svetom, ki je obkrožal ljudi. Posebno pomembni so bili posebni kamni in drevesa, ki so jih ljudje častili. Članek obravnava mitsko misel naravovercev iz Posočja z ekofeminističnega vidika. Avtorica zagovarja trditev, da se njihova verovanja in sistem prepričanj bistveno razlikuje od antropocentrične grško-rimske ali judovsko-krščanske hierarhične antropocentrične perspektive, ki razvršča ekosfero na podlagi uporabnosti. Posoški naravoverci so neživa bitja razumeli kot avtonomno delujoče entitete, ki organizirajo življenje okoli sebe. Članek obravnava človekovo prepletenost z ekosfero, vključno z neživim svetom, kot jo najdemo v mitološki misli posoških naravovercev, z vidika medijske ekologije s premislekom pojmov »mehanski sklopi« in »prepogibanje s svetom«. Naravoverci so drevesa in kamne s posebnimi močmi imeli za oblikovalce delovanja in družbenih odnosov ljudi, zato jih je treba obravnavati kot medije, stroje oziroma aparate, ki organizirajo človeško življenje.

Ključne besede: naravoverci, staroverci, aparat, die Umwelt, medijska ekologija, ekofeminizem, kamen

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OCENE

RECENSIONI

REVIEWS

Marta Verginella (ed.): WOMEN, NATIONALISM, AND SOCIAL NETWORKS
IN THE HABSBURG MONARCHY, 1848–1918.

West Lafayette, Purdue University Press,
2023, 258 pages

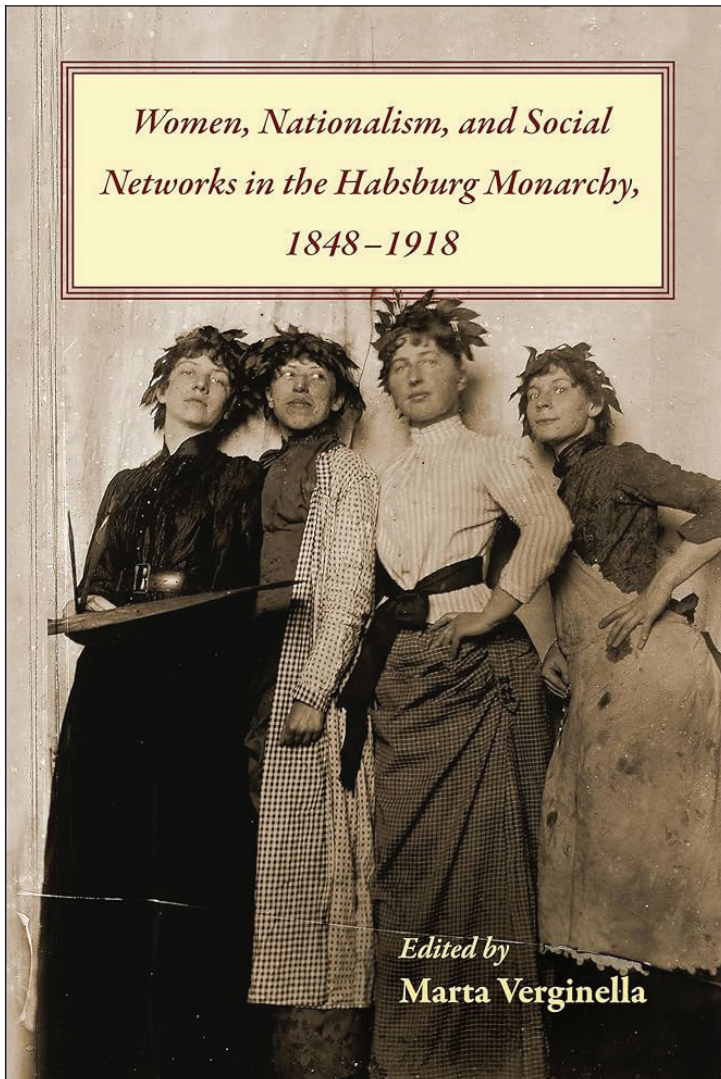
The volume *Women, Nationalism, and Social Networks in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848–1918* provides a critical examination of the often overlooked role of women in nation-building processes across Central and East Central Europe, with a particular focus on the multiethnic and multilingual peripheries of the Habsburg Monarchy during the latter half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The volume delves into how women contributed not only to the consolidation of national identities but also to the navigation and, at times, the transcendence of cultural and national boundaries, both within their private and public lives.

The first chapter, written by Irena Selišnik and Marta Verginella, explores the role of women in national activism and nation-building within the Austrian lands throughout the long nineteenth century. Focusing on Slovenian, German, and Italian women from Cisleithania, particularly in the Austrian Littoral, it examines how national ideologies influenced women's activism, especially among Slovenian women, where national and feminist goals were often intertwined. By contrast, the connection between nationalism and feminism was less clear among Italian and German women. The chapter reveals how, despite societal constraints, women shaped national culture and social change, transitioning from national participation to embracing radical feminist ideas, as evidenced by the journal *Slovenka* (*The Slovenian Woman*). The authors conclude that women's activism was deeply influenced by national identities, political contexts, and the struggle for gender equality.

The second chapter, written by Oana Sorescu-Iudean and Vlad Popovici, focuses on the associative activities of Romanian women in Transylvania and Hungary prior to World War I. The chapter highlights the connections between individual and collective actors and the broader Romanian (male-dominated) society. Women's roles were mainly confined to education, philanthropy, and religious causes, with little involvement in broader political struggles. Although political enfranchisement seemed achievable by 1918, Romanian women in these regions largely refrained from pursuing suffrage, reinforcing their supportive roles within nationalist frameworks.

In the third chapter, Natka Badurina explores the roles of women in pedagogical and political debates within the schools in the Austrian Littoral, particularly with regard to national identity, language, and minority rights. The study emphasises how women, once confined to domestic education of their own children, emerged as influential figures in public discourse, advocating for national culture, educational reforms, and gender equality. Badurina also discusses the impact of the Slovenian-Italian conflict on individual female intellectuals and their contribution to feminist thought, especially through the journal *Slovenka*. Though their activism in the educational sector was moderate by contemporary standards, it marks a significant development at the intersection of pedagogy, nationalism, and female emancipation in the region.

Christina Cugnata's chapter on Elizaveta Ivanovna de Vitte offers a fresh perspective on the lesser-known literary and travel experiences of the Russian pedagogue, who explored Slavic communities within the Austro-Hungarian Empire before World War I. Focusing particularly on de Vitte's travel accounts from Ljubljana and Trieste/Trst, the chapter investigates her efforts to promote Slavic unity through cultural exchange. De Vitte's work provides valuable insights into the evolving roles of women in nineteenth-century Russia, especially in education and intellectual movements. Her advocacy for



a transnational Slavic network and her emphasis on the role of education, particularly initiatives led by women, highlight her belief that education was central to preserving Slavic identity and fostering solidarity.

Tullia Catalan's contribution in the fifth chapter delves into the life and work of Carolina Coen Luzzatto, a Jewish intellectual from Gorizia/Gorica, who was active in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Known for her leadership of the pro-Italian newspaper *Il Corriere di Gorizia* from 1883 to 1899, Coen Luzzatto played a significant role in promoting Italian irredentism within the city's complex ethnic dynamics. Her views shifted over time, evolving from an inclusive stance to a strong anti-Slavism, influenced by anti-Semitic attacks and the growing Slovenian nationalist movement. While her public work was focused on Italian nationalism, her Jewish identity and intellectual relationships were central to her personal and professional life.

Xavier Andreu-Miralles, in the following chapter, explores a more transgressive form of women's agency, using the life of Lola Montez (Mary Elizabeth Gilbert), a nineteenth-century dancer, as a case study. Andreu-Miralles demonstrates how Montez embodied a "Spanish national femininity" that transcended national borders, revealing the transnational dimensions of gender and nation-building. Through her rebellious femininity, Montez challenged conventional gender norms, engaging with both local and international cultural and political dynamics.

The seventh chapter by Urška Strle and Beti Žerovc explores the artistic career of Ivana Kobilca through the lens of her social networks and personal connections. The analysis illustrates how Kobilca, despite societal constraints, navigated the challenges of being a female artist in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. Her international mobility, familial support, and professional networks were pivotal to her success. The chapter underscores the role of personal and professional relationships in facilitating opportunities and overcoming social and institutional barriers in Kobilca's artistic endeavours.

The final chapter, written by Katja Mihurko Poniž, examines Zofka Kveder, a prominent multilingual writer and feminist at the turn of the twentieth century. By analysing Kveder's correspondence, particularly with other intellectual women of her time, Mihurko Poniž offers valuable insights into the complexities surrounding the formation of identity of a "new woman." The chapter also explores Kveder's struggles to balance her career, family life, and societal expectations, and highlights how both female and male personal networks shaped her professional and personal development.

The volume *Women, Nationalism, and Social Networks in the Habsburg Monarchy* provides valuable contributions to women's roles in the national and cultural transformations of the Habsburg Monarchy at the turn of the twentieth century. It highlights their involvement in nation-building, social change, and modernisation, despite the societal constraints they faced. By analysing individual biographies, the study demonstrates that women were central to the promotion and co-creation of national culture while also negotiating their identities within a gendered framework. It shows that women played an important role in shaping ideologies, education, and feminist movements, often transcending cultural and national boundaries.

The collection underscores the significance of women's networks, periodicals, and personal narratives in expanding cultural and political spaces. By focusing on these aspects, it deepens our understanding of women's agency within the historical context of the Habsburg Monarchy and emphasises the transformative potential of their contributions to shaping modern European identities.

Furthermore, the volume lays an important foundation for further research in this field. Its sustained focus on women's ego documents opens avenues for future studies that could offer deeper insights into their roles, interpersonal relationships, interwoven networks, and broader societal influences.

Veronika Kos

Aleksej Kalc, Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik & Janja Žitnik Serafin:
DARING DREAMS OF THE FUTURE: SLOVENIAN MASS MIGRATIONS 1870–1945.
Peter Lang, Berlin – Brussels – Chennai – Lausanne – New York – Oxford,
2024, 460 pages

The international publishing house Peter Lang is a name that holds renown in the world of the humanities. In the context of this review, its cooperation with the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU), dating back to 2014, bears special mentioning. It was in 2014 when the existing framework for publishing scientific studies focusing on present-day Slovenia and its neighboring regions was established. Content-wise, this includes a wide array of disciplines required for in-depth studies of social, cultural and linguistic topics, bringing together close collaboration of the two institutions on both the editorial and research level. The compendium *Thought, Society, Culture: Slovenian and South Eastern European Perspectives* recently saw the release of the English translation of *Velika doba migracij na Slovenskem* (2020), here in review. This book is the result of the labors of Aleksej Kalc, Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik and Janja Žitnik Serafin, each of whom brought a wealth of experience in the field of migration studies to the table.

The book represents a synthesis of findings in the field of migration history as accumulated by the three authors, all associates of the Slovenian Migration Institute of the ZRC SAZU. Since 1990, the Institute has been continuously active on the publishing front with the international scientific journal *Dve domovini / Two Homelands*. Initially, it covered topics related to emigrant history yet gradually expanded its editorial politics towards a more interdisciplinary approach of migration studies, all the while gaining international recognition. The Institute saw the release of over a hundred scientific publications exhibiting a panoply of approaches in terms of topics and disciplines, with the history of migration still retaining its central position. In recent years, the Institute published a series of works in the English language with the aim of presenting its findings to an international audience. Even though its primary mission remains that of science and research, its activities are also focused on bringing the topic of migration closer to a wider readership. Keeping the historical narrative attractive for the general public was an apparent lodestar during its creative process, demonstrating each author's stylistic flow and clarity. Despite its voluminousness, the book received ample attention from the domestic audience, was sold out swiftly, reprinted and published in an English-language edition in 2024.

Daring Dreams of the Future, a part of the book's English title, was not literally translated from the Slovenian original. Instead, it is the translation of a line by Oton Župančič (1878–1949), who counts amongst the most eminent literary names of Slovenian modernism. The very line "*smele sanje bodočnosti*" was translated into English by Slavic studies expert, literary historian and

translator Henry R. Cooper, Jr., and is without a doubt an appropriate choice. Namely, Oton Župančič himself lived through the period described in the book, while his place of birth, the mostly rural White Carniola (Bela Krajina), experienced a large degree of emigration. His patriotic poem *Duma* (1908) supplies the titular line and sets its sights on the relationship between home and abroad, underscoring the emigration that at the time left a lasting mark on Slovenian society. The book's poetic title succinctly puts forward the universal motivation of those who left their homes in hope of living a better life. The change of the title is not the only one, however. Comparing the English version with the Slovenian original reveals subtle differences in the content as well as linguistic choices. Along with the authors, the book's editor Martin Pogačar devised several changes in the content to bring the subject matter closer to international readers who are less acquainted with the past of the territory it discusses. In addition, the book was meticulously translated by playwright and translator Barbara Skubic, who herself counts issues of migration and gender among her research interests. The complex and voluminous text was thus brought into harmony with the English language.

Glancing over the index, the three-part structure of the book reveals itself, with each author signing their name under one of the sections. Aleksej Kalc, leaning upon his theoretical, methodological and empirical skillfulness, structurally elucidates on the complex migration processes in the area. His expansive chapter supported by abundant references is imbued with a fine-tuned astuteness with regard to the demographic, economic and social aspects of migration history of the modern age. A rather late onset of modernization and economic marginality for the period (1870–1945) is indicated in the studied area where population density was low and larger urban centers few and far between. Kalc, however, introduces his research topic based on recent findings within the field of migration history, which claim that the preliminary phase of the nineteenth-century mass migrations exhibited a high degree of mobility as well. He stresses that “migration did not emerge as a new phenomenon with modernization. Instead, it adjusted—in form, methods, and extent of movement—to the times and means and started happening with increasing speed in an expanding international and transcontinental realm” (p. 27). As the socioeconomic fields of the era intertwined the traditional with the modern, so bloomed the notions of a better life being possible abroad. A series of global and more localized social crises significantly added to a share of a population inclined toward emigration. Over 300,000 are thought to have left the territory of current-day Slovenia from the mid-nineteenth century up until World War I, decreasing demographic growth by a whopping 58%. In his synthesis, Kalc does not just focus on emigrating from the area (especially to the USA, Germany and France), but also takes into account the rich tapestry of internal migration indices. He thus underscores the notion that migration processes are shaped by both the global and the local environment, and that they

Aleksej Kalc,
Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, Janja Žitnik Serafin

Daring Dreams of the Future

Slovenian Mass Migration 1870–1945


PETER LANG

exhibit temporal and spatial mutability. In addition, Kalc paints an impressive picture of the effects these migrations had on Slovenian society. He relays the reactions of the contemporary publicists with a certain plasticity as he describes the “draining” of the nation’s substance. Moreover, he explains the development of national migration policies, with World War I being defined as a clear tipping point with regard to the control of population mobility. To help better understand migration processes in an era when the rhythm of life

still intertwined more closely with nature, Kalc to a certain extent also takes into account natural factors that determined the population's livelihoods and influenced their migratory choices.

In the second part of the book, Janja Žitnik Serafin focuses on collective ways of preserving original identities, drawing on her long-standing knowledge of the cultural treasure trove shaped by Slovenian diaspora communities around the world. She provides a synthesis of cultural processes as well as the informative and educational activities related to those immigrants who had associated themselves chiefly with a Slovenian cultural milieu. Moreover, Žitnik Serafin presents how diverse activities of the Slovenian diasporic communities exhibited an interplay of different affiliations. They were not limited merely to the ethno-national level, but also included locale, region, religion, social status, affinities and professional concerns. Sources highlighting the collecting activities of Slovenian migrants with the aim of increasing social security and preserving language, values, norms and traditions have chiefly been preserved on ethno-national grounds. Yet Žitnik Serafin retains a sensitivity to other types of networking, especially in the broader (South) Slavic, Catholic, Socialist and other spheres, which often transcended ethnic boundaries. By far her broadest treatise is the one dedicated to the Slovenian community in the USA, a community that created a strong empirical foundation for a multitude of interpretational insights with their unsurpassed social and publishing activity. She also points out the activities of Slovenian emigrants from a myriad of different destinations in the Americas or elsewhere in Europe who banded together due to similar inclination. Žitnik Serafin's chapter offers a condensed look into the founding of an almost immeasurable number of supporting associations, newspapers and educational foundations, all the while placing them in their temporal and spatial contexts with ease while retaining empirical correctness. The concluding part is dedicated to literary production, a topic she had presented over 25 years ago in three comprehensive books as part of an anthology of Slovenian immigrant literature together with Helga Glušič. Within this highly encapsulated piece, she underlined that Slovenian literary production largely reflected "the group belonging to the new hybrid culture". Even though literary works often deal with highly specific fortunes of an individual, they paint a picture of a collective experience, a picture that reflects the multi-layered migrant identity.

Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik's chapter provides six biographical narratives placed solidly within the historical context. These life stories, each with a migrant background, testify to the added interpretational value that arises when the observer's gaze is fixed on a single life story—instead of the nameless masses or the activities of diaspora communities. Biographical studies reveal the complexity of migratory processes in an organic manner. They elucidate on them more comprehensively than merely slapping on a label ever could, as the various authorities that oversee the migration process are wont to do.

As Milharčič Hladnik deftly illustrates in her case studies, reconstructions of an individual's life path challenge regular perceptions of migrants being caught in the structural norms, directives and prohibitions dictated by society in their country of arrival. They demonstrate how migrants can be pushed to the edge of the law and into difficult living conditions, yet still strive to better themselves, the lives of those closest to them, and even their (imagined) community. The cases lay out how an individual's identities, loyalties and social networks were (re)formed, how the migration processes were dictated by their original survival capabilities and how their positioning in society changed over time. They demonstrate the role of the family environment in an immigrant's life, their private aspirations, personal affinities, social intelligence and psychological resilience. Through the perspective of the individual, the wider social and cultural backdrop emerges clearly, regardless if through the lens of locale, economy, history, religion, ideology or ethnicity. It is hardly a coincidence that Milharčič Hladnik dedicates five of the six stories to female protagonists. The choice to explore women's migratory stories, that she follows throughout her career, speaks to the scientifically justified premise of migratory processes also being defined by gender. The focus on women's fates serves to balance out the insights on specific migration experiences, which are usually presented as masculine or gender neutral.

The tripartite structure of the book illustrates the three foundational perspectives employed in the observation of migration processes; the macro (structural and systemic), meso (community) and micro (individual) levels, which gained a strong impact in migration studies. Each of the three levels presented in its own chapter draws explanations from the other two. The authors thus chose the uniting principles of each of their syntheses without losing sight of the awareness that the subject matter of migration is so dynamic that framing it into one perspective alone would harm the interpretational options.

Even though the main focus of the book lasers in on the Slovenian ethnic territory, it also spills out across its borders as dictated by the population's migrations—as well as by the changes in political border demarcations. Each chapter provides a common thread, woven together by strong empirical support: migration processes do not only define demographic changes and the broader socio-political shifts that come with them. They also allow for the integration of spaces that the immigrants connect with their own agendas on political, economic, societal and cultural levels.

The territory of present-day Slovenia, despite being geographically small, exhibits an astounding degree of natural and cultural complexity. Within the European framework, it represents a form of cultural uniqueness, seeing how it is embedded within the four major cultural groups of modern-day Europe: Romance, Germanic, Ugric and Slavic lands. Historically, its socio-political dynamic was a turbulent one as well, making for an interesting vantage point for migration studies. It bears mentioning, of course, that the massive increase

in migrations from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth century was not just limited to the studied area. The entirety of Europe and beyond set the stage for people seeking better living conditions. It happened against a backdrop of objective factors emerging in the modern era, such as the growing availability of information and technological advancements that multiplied population movements, as well as expedited them and extended their distance. Finally, this was accompanied by new service branches that sought to make money from these movements.

The importance of this book on the international level is exemplified by the fact that it is precisely this corner of Europe that at certain periods of time showed the most intense migration patterns within the entire European context. This is made all the clearer when comparative findings are put in series, particularly those in Kalc's chapter. The research efforts of three internationally acclaimed authors being available in the English language allows for a dissemination of their findings within the broader international context. Alongside an attractive historiographical narrative, illustrative maps and other forms of visual material, the stage is set for a wider readership to gain access to the research at hand.

Urška Strle

*Hamid Dabashi: POST-ORIENTALISM: KNOWLEDGE AND POWER
IN A TIME OF TERROR.*

London, Routledge,
2009, 310 pages

Hamid Dabashi's *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in a Time of Terror* is a bold and deeply reflective critique of the enduring legacy of Orientalist thought in contemporary scholarship and politics. Building upon Edward Said's foundational work, *Orientalism*, Dabashi examines the ways in which discourses about the Middle East, Islam, and the Global South have evolved in the post-9/11 era. While Said exposed the symbiotic relationship between Western knowledge production and imperial domination, Dabashi argues that Orientalism has not simply persisted but has transformed, adapting to the changing realities of globalization, the rise of digital media, and the reconfiguration of empire. Through this lens, Dabashi reimagines Said's critique for the twenty-first century, presenting an urgent call for decolonizing knowledge and dismantling the entrenched systems of power that sustain neo-imperial narratives.

Dabashi begins by revisiting Said's argument, acknowledging its groundbreaking impact while identifying its limitations in addressing the complexities of the current global order. For Dabashi, Orientalism today operates in subtler, more insidious ways, often masquerading as objective or progressive scholarship. He introduces the concept of "post-Orientalism" to describe this shift, where old stereotypes about the "Orient" are perpetuated under the guise of modernity and universalism. Post-Orientalism is not merely a continuation of older paradigms but a mutation, one that appropriates the language of globalization, multiculturalism, and human rights to reinforce Western hegemony. For instance, Dabashi critiques the co-optation of Middle Eastern intellectuals and cultural figures who, in seeking legitimacy within Western institutions, often become complicit in perpetuating reductive narratives about their own societies. These "native informants," as Dabashi terms them, act as intermediaries, translating the complexities of their cultures into terms palatable to Western audiences, thereby reinforcing the very power asymmetries they claim to challenge.

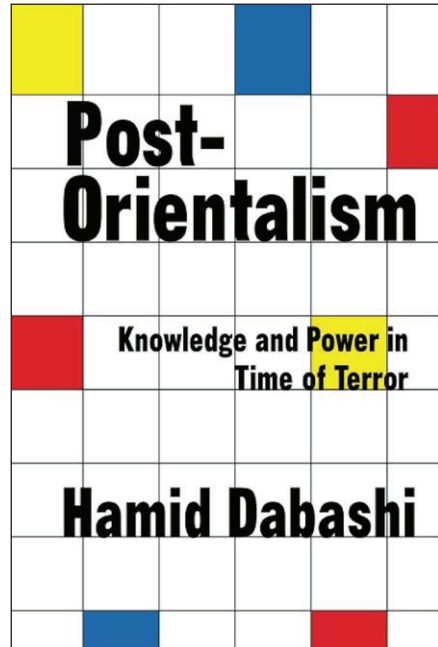
Central to Dabashi's argument is the role of knowledge production in sustaining empire. He meticulously dissects the institutional mechanisms—academic departments, think tanks, media outlets, and cultural industries—that perpetuate Orientalist logic in the post-9/11 world. The so-called "war on terror" serves as a case study for how knowledge and power are intertwined, as intellectuals, journalists, and policymakers collectively construct a monolithic image of the Middle East and Islam that justifies military intervention, surveillance, and political domination. Dabashi traces these narratives back to their colonial roots, revealing a continuity in the way Western empires have historically framed the Global South as a site of chaos, violence, and backwardness. What is particularly striking in Dabashi's analysis is his attention to the subtle ways in which these narratives have been rebranded for a globalized audience. For example, he critiques the fetishization of certain aspects of Middle Eastern culture—such as literature, art, and cinema—while simultaneously erasing or decontextualizing the political realities from which they emerge.

Dabashi's critique is not limited to exposing the mechanics of post-Orientalism; he also offers a vision for alternatives to these hegemonic frameworks. He advocates for the creation of a polycentric world of knowledge, one that prioritizes the epistemologies and experiences of marginalized communities over the dictates of Western academia. For Dabashi, decolonizing knowledge requires more than critiquing Orientalism; it demands a fundamental reimagining of how knowledge is produced, circulated, and consumed. He emphasizes the need for intellectual collaboration across the Global South, arguing that such solidarities can challenge the monopolization of knowledge by Western institutions. Dabashi's vision is profoundly optimistic, rooted in a belief that art, literature, and philosophy from the Global South can offer not only resistance to empire but also new ways of understanding the world.

While Dabashi's work is theoretically rigorous and richly detailed, it is not without its challenges. His prose, while impassioned and eloquent, is dense and demanding, requiring a high level of familiarity with postcolonial theory and critical discourse analysis. This density, though reflective of the complexity of his ideas, may pose a barrier to readers outside of academia who could benefit from his insights. Furthermore, while Dabashi critiques the elitism of Orientalist scholarship, his engagement with non-academic voices is somewhat limited. The voices of grassroots activists, local artists, and non-Western intellectuals are occasionally overshadowed by his focus on theoretical debates within Western academia. This imbalance, while not undermining the core arguments of the book, does highlight the difficulty of fully decolonizing knowledge within the confines of academic discourse.

Nevertheless, *Post-Orientalism* stands as a monumental contribution to postcolonial studies, offering a nuanced and urgent critique of how Orientalist paradigms continue to shape our understanding of the world. Dabashi's ability to bridge scholarship and activism is particularly noteworthy, as his critique is firmly rooted in the political realities of the post-9/11 era. His call for a decolonized, polycentric approach to knowledge resonates far beyond the field of Middle Eastern studies, challenging scholars, artists, and activists across disciplines to rethink the relationships between knowledge, power, and resistance. Ultimately, Dabashi's work is not merely a critique but a call to action, one that invites readers to imagine and build a more just and equitable intellectual and political order.

Hamid Farahmandian



POROČILA

RELAZIONI

REPORTS

Izvještaj sa Simpozija *Valtazar Bogišić in Franc Miklošič o običaju krvnega maščevanja ter oblikovanje državne zakonodaje / Valtazar Bogišić i Franc Miklošič o običaju krvne osvete i stvaranja državnog zakonodavstva*, 20 decembar 2024, Koper i Podgorica (online)

Istraživanja Valtazara Bogišića (1834–1908) iz Cavtata i Franca Miklošića (1813–1891) iz Ljutomera pružaju značajan uvid u običajno pravo, posebno fenomena krvne osvete, koji je obilježio društveno-pravne odnose u jugoistočnoj Europi tijekom XIX stoljeća. Miklošič je, kroz proučavanje jezika i običaja, imao značajan utjecaj na Bogišića, koji je ovu metodologiju primijenio u analizi narodnih običaja i pravnih normi prilikom izrade *Opšteg imovinskog zakonika za Knjaževinu Crnu Goru* 1888. godine. Stoga se može reći da su zajedno doprinijeli razumijevanju običajnog prava u jugoistočnoj Europi, a njihovi su radovi ostavili dubok trag u pravnoj, kulturnoj i društvenoj povijesti ovoga područja.

U tom smislu, ovom temom su se bavili sudionici Simpozija *Valtazar Bogišić in Franc Miklošič o običaju krvnega maščevanja ter oblikovanje državne zakonodaje / Valtazar Bogišić i Franc Miklošič o običaju krvne osvete i stvaranja državnog zakonodavstva*, koji je održan 20. decembra 2024. godine online putem Zoom platforme u organizaciji Instituta IRRIS za istraživanje, razvoj i strategije društva, kulture i okoliša iz Slovenije i Univerziteta Crne Gore. Simpozij je nastao u okviru bilateralnog projekta *Valtazar Bogišić in Franc Miklošič o običaju krvnega maščevanja ter oblikovanje državne zakonodaje / Valtazar Bogišić i Franc Miklošič o običaju krvne osvete i stvaranja državnog zakonodavstva*, financiranog od strane Javne agencije za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije (ARIS) i Ministarstva prosvjete, nauke i inovacija Crne Gore.

Simpozij je obuhvatio dva panel skupa na kojima su šest izlagača iz Slovenije i Crne Gore predstavili rezultate svojih istraživanja. Radovi su se bavili povijesnim, pravnim i društvenim aspektima običajnog prava u jugoistočnoj Europi, s posebnim osvrtom na običaj krvne osvete. Nakon uvodnog obraćanja koordinatora bilateralnog projekta, doc. dr. Žige Oman i prof. dr. Marijana Premovića, prvim panel skupom je moderirala dr. Angelika Ergaver s Instituta IRRIS, dok je prvi rad pod nazivom *Franc Miklošič in Valtazar Bogišić o običaju krvnega maščevanja pri Slovanih* predstavio prof. dr. Darko Darovec s Instituta IRRIS. Fokus njegova izlaganja bio je na analizi značaja rada Franca Miklošića, posebice njegova djela *Die Blutrache bei den Slaven* (1887), u kojem je Franc Miklošič istraživao običaje krvne osvete kod Slavena. Tijekom izlaganja istaknuta je i uloga Valtazara Bogišića, nekadašnjeg studenta Franca Miklošića, u prikupljanju i dostavi materijala iz Crne Gore, koji su bili ključni za Miklošićeve analize. Na kraju izlaganja zaključeno je da je prikupljanje pravne kulturne baštine u drugoj polovici XIX stoljeća vjerojatno bilo dio šireg paneuropskog projekta organiziranog u suradnji s međunarodnim konzorcijem

pravnih stručnjaka. Ova teza bi mogla biti potvrđena ili opovrgnuta dodatnim arhivskim istraživanjima, koja bi rasvijetlila prirodu i opseg suradnje između Miklošiča i Bogišića.

Drugo izlaganje u ovom panelu održao je doc. dr. Žiga Oman s Instituta IRRIS, koji je predstavio rad *Onkraj Miklošiča: pomiritve za uboj na Gorenjskem v 17. stoletju*. U izlaganju je analizirao praksu pomirenja za ubojstvo na Gorenjskom u XVII stoljeću, s posebnim naglaskom na običaje i pravila koja su uređivala odnose između počinitelja i obitelji žrtava. Tijekom prezentacije usporedio je teze Franca Miklošiča o ranom prestanku krvne osvete kod Slovenaca s povijesnim dokazima koji ukazuju na dugotrajnije opstajanje ovog običaja u kasnijim stoljećima. Također, posebna pažnja posvećena je ulozi lokalnih sudova u regulaciji pomirenja, uključujući novčane kazne i privremeni izgon počinitelja radi smanjenja napetosti. Na kraju, u prezentaciji su analizirane sličnosti između slovenske i crnogorske prakse pomirenja, čime se otvara mogućnost za širu komparativnu analizu pravnih i običajnih normi.

Posljednje izlaganje prvog panela održala je dr. Teodora Stanković s Instituta za napredne studije Univerziteta Crne Gore, gdje je prezentirala rad pod nazivom *Usklađivanje tradicije i običaja sa pravnim dostignućima s kraja XIX*



Slika 1: Franc Miklošič i Valtazar Bogišić (Wikimedia Commons).

vijeka kroz crnogorski zakonik. Ona je analizirala pravni razvoj Crne Gore kroz ulogu Petra I Petrovića Njegoša i Valtazara Bogišića u oblikovanju crnogorskog pravnog sustava. Petar I je kroz svoje poslanice postavio prve pisane norme koje su uređivale crnogorsko društvo u XVIII i XIX stoljeću, oslanjajući se na tradicije i običaje. Valtazar Bogišić je kasnije, od 1873. do 1888. godine, sastavio *Opšti imovinski zakonik za Knjaževinu Crnu Goru*, kombinirajući te običaje sa suvremenim pravnim standardima. U svom izlaganju, dr. Teodora Stanković je naglasila da je Zakonik imao ključnu ulogu u procesu modernizacije Crne Gore, a njegov značaj se i danas ogleda u doprinosu pravnoj stabilnosti i promociji multietničke tolerancije.

Drugi panel skup, kojim je predsjedavala dr. Teodora Stanković, otvorila je dr. Angelika Ergaver s Instituta IRRIS izlaganjem rada *Korespondencija Baltazara Bogišića s Konstantinom Vojnovićem i promjene u zakonodavstvu Knjaževine Crne Gore s utjecajem na običaje krvne osvete i umira*. U fokusu njezina izlaganja bila je analiza 11 sačuvanih pisama koje je Valtazar Bogišić u razdoblju od svibnja 1888. do siječnja 1889. godine razmijenio s Konstantinom Kostom Vojnovićem, profesorom prava na Pravnom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu i članom Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti. Korespondencija se bavila terminološkim pitanjima vezanim uz *Opšti imovinski zakonik* i pripremama za njegovo javno izlaganje, koje je Kosta Vojnović održao u travnju 1889. godine. U izlaganju dr. Angelike Ergaver istaknut je Vojnovićev pozitivan osvrt na Bogišićev rad, posebice na reforme zakonodavstva koje su utjecale na pravnu regulaciju običaja krvne osvete u Crnoj Gori.

Sljedeći rad pod nazivom *Evropska pravna kulturna baština u drugoj polovini XIX vijeka – Valtazar Bogišić i Crna Gora* predstavio je prof. dr. Marijan Premović s Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta Crne Gore. Njegov rad analizira europsku pravnu kulturnu baštinu u drugoj polovici XIX stoljeća, s fokusom na doprinos Valtazara Bogišića u izradi *Opšteg imovinskog zakonika za Knjaževinu Crnu Goru*. Također, istražuje pravne običaje, uključujući Bogišićeve ankete i njihovu ulogu u razumijevanju društveno-pravnih struktura. U izlaganju je istaknut značaj Bogišićeva rada na kodifikaciji narodnog prava i stvaranju pravne terminologije temeljene na narodnom jeziku. Posebna pažnja posvećena je utjecaju Zakonika, koji je preveden na više jezika i postao prepoznatljiv u međunarodnim pravnim krugovima.

Posljednje izlaganje u ovom simpoziju bilo je *Suzbijanje krvne osvete u crnogorskoj krivično-pravnoj tradiciji* koje je prezentirala dr. Aleksandra Rakočević s Pravnog fakulteta Univerziteta Crne Gore. U svom izlaganju je analizirala fenomen krvne osvete u crnogorskoj pravnoj tradiciji, koristeći povijesne i pravne izvore. Posebno se osvrnula na razvoj ovog običaja, od njegove prakse u plemenskom društvu do postupne integracije u formalne sudske procese. Također, tijekom izlaganja istaknula je potrebu za sveobuhvatnom studijom kako bi se ovaj složeni društveni fenomen bolje razumio i sustavno rješavao u budućnosti.

Nakon završnog izlaganja uslijedila je diskusija među sudionicima, tijekom koje su razmijenjeni različiti stavovi i perspektive. Simpozij je zaključio prof. dr. Marijan Premović, istaknuvši da je ovaj skup uspješno obradio temu i istražio ulogu Valtazara Bogišića i Franca Miklošića u proučavanju običaja krvne osvete i razvoja državnog zakonodavstva i to kroz povijesnu, pravnu i društvenu perspektivu. Također je naglašeno da su istraživanja Franca Miklošića i Valtazara Bogišića imala značajan utjecaj na pravni i kulturni razvoj, osobito kroz povezivanje običajnih normi s pravnim reformama iz XIX stoljeća, čime su ostavili trajno nasljeđe. Zaključeno je da njihov doprinos i danas ima ključnu ulogu u proučavanju pravne kulturne baštine i razumijevanju razvoja pravnih sustava u regiji.

Teodora Stanković

