

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN LEGENDS ABOUT TURKISH ATTACKS

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of Slovenian legends about Turkish raids was made to identify and analyze religious elements in them. The legends express superiority of Christianity, but also contain belief elements that diverge from Christian teachings, such as traditional Slavic beliefs about the afterlife. The mixture of different beliefs can be summarized under the term “vernacular religion”. The Turks in folklore represented an archetypal demonic “Other” and as such they threaten the “Our” world. In these legends traditional and pre-Christian beliefs were intermixed with Christian symbolism and characters and as such they express the diversity and flexibility of religious imagery.

Keywords: Turkish raids, vernacular religion, Christianity, otherness, sacred space, sacrilege, miracles, the world beyond

IL RUOLO DELLA RELIGIONE NEI RACCONTI SULLE INCURSIONI TURCHE

SINTESI

L'articolo presenta un'analisi dei racconti sloveni sulle incursioni turche realizzata allo scopo di identificare e spiegare gli elementi religiosi in essi contenuti. I racconti comunicano la superiorità del cristianesimo, ma allo stesso tempo contengono anche elementi di credenze incongruenti con la dottrina cristiana, come, per esempio quelle tradizionali slave sull'aldilà. Questa mescolanza di credenze diverse si può identificare con il termine «religione vernacolare». I turchi nel folklore rappresentano l'archetipo demoniaco «Altro» e come tali minacciano il «Nostro» mondo. Nei racconti le credenze tradizionali e precristiane si intrecciano con il simbolismo e i personaggi cristiani, manifestando in tal modo la varietà e flessibilità dell'immaginario religioso.

Parole chiave: incursioni turche, religione vernacolare, cristianità, alterità, spazio sacro, sacrilegio, miracoli, aldilà

INTRODUCTION

The Turkish¹ raids to Slovenian lands lasted for around 150 years, from 1408 to around 1560 when they almost completely ceased (Simoniti, 2003, 73). Though their intensity and devastation varied during this time they imprinted a sense of continuous danger and uncertainty into the inhabitants of lands they targeted (Simoniti, 2003, 73; Voje, 1996, 32–36). In the collective perception and memory, they took the place of barbaric invaders that threatened Europe in previous centuries (the Skits, the Huns, the Hungarians, the Mongolians) and were ascribed a drastic otherness and similar characteristics than their predecessors: savagery, lack of civilization, greed, dirtiness, animality (cf. Gießauf, 2005). In Slovenian collective memory the time of Turkish raids is perceived as an extremely difficult time (cf. Bartulović, 2012), yet simultaneously the fight against the Turks was given patriotic dimensions and an important role in Slovenian nation building process (Baskar, 2000, 4; 2012, 141).

Slovenian folklore also casts the Turks in the role of the demonised barbaric “Other” lacking any individuality and whose only aim is to destroy (Mlakar, 2019, 55). Many of the Slovenian legends about Turkish raids express the importance of Christianity that is intensified in this fight against the demonic infidel.

The legends about the Turkish raids clearly express the superiority of Christianity. However, while the characters in these stories are Christian saints and the divine agency is understood as being the Christian God, there are motives that diverge from what can be considered official Church doctrine. While all the elements might seem Christian, they sometimes express beliefs that can be categorised within vernacular religion. While these elements constitute a very small part of what can be considered vernacular religion they still offer a glimpse into a diversity of beliefs that do not limit themselves to official Church teachings. The Catholic Church had a very strong influence on the beliefs, identities and conduct in Slovenian territory which is clearly expressed in Slovenian legends about Turkish attacks. Yet this did not mean that all the psychological needs of the community were met within the official Church teachings. Among the lay people these teachings were adapted, transformed, new elements were added, along with pre-Christian beliefs that received a Christian makeover.

In the minds of the carriers of this folklore these elements are probably not considered to deviate from Church teachings and the contradictory nature in regards to them might not be recognized. This is very typical for vernacular religion. While in scholarly discourses a sharp divide between the “official religion” and the “folk religion” was determined, this does not exist in everyday life. The focus of this contribution will be to explore the mixing of these different beliefs. This mixing of different beliefs and their adjustments is not limited to the past. Today the plurality of beliefs is more accessible

1 In this article I use the term “Turk” which is not the most appropriate term as it actually refers to the Ottoman Turks, i.e. peoples of the Ottoman Empire. The number of inhabitants of Turkish origin within the Ottoman Empire was rather small compared to other peoples that came under domination of the Empire (Pust, 2007, 210). Yet I still use the term “Turks” because this is a term used in Slovenian folklore.

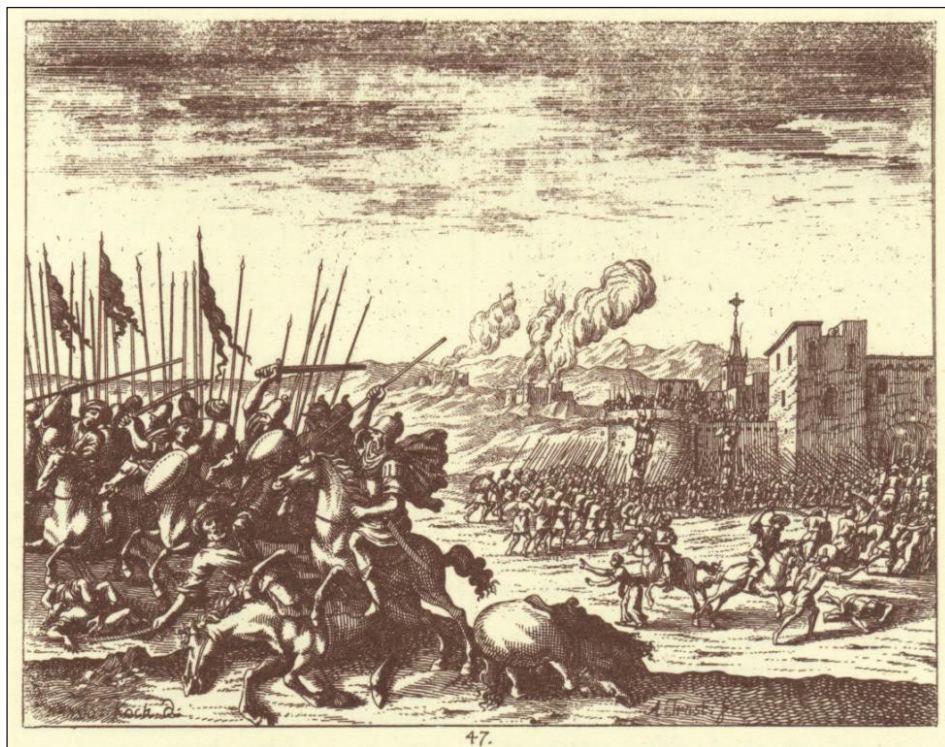


Fig. 1: Battle with Turks. Copper engraving by Janez Vajkard Valvasor, dated to 1689 (Wikimedia Commons).

than ever and new forms of religiosity exist. Religious expression, despite seeming quite rigid (especially regarding institutional religions such as Christianity) is always in flux and adapting to contemporary needs of society and the individual.

In order to try to understand certain motives and elements regarding belief and religion in Slovenian legends about Turkish raids a diachronic aspect will be used in order to see how they could have developed in through time. Studying vernacular religious beliefs from the past is difficult as aspects of beliefs that diverged from the official ones were either condemned, but most often simply not written about. Therefore, when analysing such beliefs in folklore one must take a cautious approach. I do not claim that the legends collected in contemporary times derive unchanged from the Middle Ages, however I do believe it is important to recognize the historical aspects that contributed to the insight that these legends give about religiosity. There is no way of knowing how these legends changed throughout the centuries, as systematic collecting of Slovenian folklore only started in the mid-19th century. Yet some elements of

folklore have proven to be very resilient through time and despite adapting their content to current socio-historical circumstances in order to make sense to their current bearers they still reflecting older concepts. Therefore, I find it useful to explain their diachronic aspect.

THE HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF THE LEGENDS ABOUT TURKISH ATTACKS

Although the atrocities performed by Turkish soldiers and the Turks themselves are completely demonised in folklore, the defences against them often fictional (e.g. miraculous salvations) the legends to some extent still express collective memory of the time of the Ottoman attempts of conquering Slovenian lands (for example legends that refer to anti-Turkish forts as a means of defence that had actually existed). An important purpose of collective memory is providing a usable past for the creation of coherent individual and group identities and the legitimation of the present social order as participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory (Connerton, 1989, 3). The role that Slovene legends about the Ottoman Turks have had for their communities in terms of self-identity and strengthening of the sense of belonging has been thoroughly demonstrated (cf. Mlakar, 2014; 2019). But what is the difference between history and collective memory? Researchers point out different aspects that set them apart. Novick (1999, 4), similarly to Eliade (1954, xi, 34–48), summarizes that collective memory simplifies and sees events from a single, committed perspective, it doesn't tolerate well ambiguities of any kind and reduces events to mythic archetypes. Historical consciousness focuses on the *historicity* of events that they took place then and not now. Memory, by contrast, has no sense of the passage of time. It denies the "pastness" of its objects, but rather focuses on their continuing presence. Additionally, collective memory generally assumes that it reflects the unchanging essence of a group, and it is consequently less likely to recognize any transitions it has undergone (Wertsch, 2002, 43).

Slovene folklore displays the lack of historical objectivity that is part of all interpretations of the past. The complex relationship between the past, collective memory and folklore has been quite well researched (for a detailed summary of references regarding these topics (cf. Mlakar, 2019), but in summary we can say that the past offers a timeframe for folklore, that chooses certain historical periods, events and personalities from it in order to make a story more credible. While it can contain historical data, being historically accurate is not a priority for folklore. What matters is to fulfil society's needs in regards to its identity, beliefs, fears and desires.

One of the most prominent features of Slovenian legends about Turkish attacks is the religious dichotomy between Turks and Christians. The Turks are ascribed to have immense hatred towards Christianity (for example in sacrileges acts they

attempt to commit). Yet the legends express nothing about the nature of their own religion – Islam. The emphasis is on the “wrongness” of their religion. They are almost seen as having no faith at all. Being seen as faithless or demonic is a typical characteristic ascribed to “the Other” (Belova, 2007, 336–337). Christianity is portrayed as the superior religion and the only correct one. It is presented as a strong identity factor for the bearers of folklore (cf. also Hrobat, 2010, 50–51, 54; 2012, 43). It is thus not unusual that the Turks are sometimes equated with the Devil himself.

VERNACULAR RELIGION

While Slovenian legends about Turkish attacks always display a strong bond with Christianity they also contain elements that diverge from Christian teachings. The plurality of beliefs that is shown to coexist in folklore can best be explained by the term “vernacular religion”. Vernacular religion is sometimes described with terms such as “folk religion”, “popular religion” or “unofficial religion”. Leonardo Primiano (1995) expressed his criticism regarding these terms as he sees them as derogatory. He also problematizes the opposite of these terms, i.e. “official religion” as religious beliefs and practices cannot be so clearly divided between this dualistic system – this dichotomy is a scholarly invention (with “official religion” being a standard against which variations of religious expressions are measured). Instead he proposes the term “vernacular religion” and defines it as religion as it is lived and as people understand, interpret and practice it (Primiano, 1995, 44). Despite this understanding and wider adoption of the term it has often just replaced previous terms of “folk”, “unofficial” or “popular religion” in academic writing (Johanson & Jonkus, 2015, 119) and the erroneous dichotomist relation to “official religion” is still present. Primiano’s emic viewpoint that primarily acknowledges the correctness of interpretations and understanding of religion by the people themselves is rather impossible to apply to materials of historical or archaeological nature



Fig. 2: Turkish soldiers taking captives (by Niklas Stör, 1530) (Wikimedia Commons).

or even to collections of folklore used for the analysis made in this contribution. Therefore, as Johanson and Jonkus (2005, 120) put it “the wisest thing to do is to acknowledge the multifaceted character of our source material, the absence of clear and unambiguous patterns, but continue with classifications, statistical analyses, and other academic tools needed for drawing wider generalisations”. It is also worth considering that the characteristic of “vernacular” maybe completely scholarly in nature and does not reflect the way practitioners or believers consider them. This is not to say that they are not aware of the difference their beliefs and practices have from the official ones, they may just not put them in such categories² (Johanson & Jonkus, 2015, 121). Historian John Kent (2002) proposes a different term intended to encompass the complexity of human belief: “primary religion”, but its definition remains rather elusive³. Scholars such as Gay (2006) have pointed out how different scholarly paradigms and agendas (such as nationalism)⁴ have influenced the perceptions and definitions of “folk traditions”.

Not only are the official and vernacular religion not forming two opposing systems of belief, they are interconnected and influence (cf. O’Connor, 2012,

- 2 Researchers have theorised about cognitive explanations of coexistence of such un-uniformity in belief and practice. For example, Harvey Whitehouse (2004) and Ilkka Pyysiäinen (2004) offer interesting theories that there are types of religiosity that are more natural to human cognition (i.e. cognitively optimal religion) and types that are more complicated and that need to be learned and rehearsed (i.e. cognitively costly religion). Theologically correct religion is cognitively costly, while some facets of vernacular religion derive from everyday thinking and are focused on practical solutions for everyday problems, not on creating general theories (Hukantaival, 2013, 104).
- 3 He proposes we distinguish »a primary level of religious behaviour, when human beings, caught between strong, limitless desires and fears on the one hand, and a conscious lack of power over their situation on the other – and this applies whether one is talking about material or moral needs and ambitions – assert that there may be supernatural powers which can be drawn advantageously into the material environment; they also suspect the existence of hostile supernatural powers, against which defences must be devised. [...] Institutional theologies are imposed on the primary level of religion and breed sects, denominations, churches, what you will – sources of power in themselves, social and political. But the primary level, with its basic belief in intrusive supernatural power survives at all times (and this is frequently forgotten) at all social levels« (Kent, 2002, 5–6). In that sense the theological teachings of official churches could not completely eliminate non-Christian supernatural beliefs as the folk stuck with religious beliefs and practices that could answer their primary religious needs (Gay, 2006, 79).
- 4 For example: in the 19th century early folklore scholars saw elements of vernacular religion of the peasants that diverged from the official theological teachings (e.g. magic or legends of mythological characters) as “remnants” of pre-Christian belief systems, often disregarding the importance of Christianity in vernacular religion. Gay (2006, 76–77) rightfully emphasizes that “[t]he historical insights that the methods of folklore and the history of religions provide us should not be allowed to overwhelm the insights of phenomenological and ethnographic approaches to the study of these religions if our goal is to understand the religions as experienced by the believers” (cf. also Watkins, 2007, 144).

116) each other.⁵ Vernacular religion may even get inspiration from the official religion, use its symbols, characters and project its own beliefs into established elements of official religion (e.g. the concept of sacred space being projected to the church building). For example: written hagiographies (i.e. biographies of saints) could be based on oral legends, or, vice versa, folk narratives were often retellings of written texts, updated with new details that seem important and correspond with folk traditions that later transformed to legends (Moroz, 2014, 222, 225). Additionally, the boundaries between the beliefs of the folk and the official teachings were not as clear cut in history – not for the folk and also not for the clergy (cf. Watkins, 2007, 146). What people in the Slovenian lands believed was certainly influenced by theological considerations and events, such as the Council of Trent and the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, yet on a daily basis the folk was probably much more occupied with life struggles than with theology (Makarovič, 2006, 188–189). Another problem is that in historical records many of the beliefs and practices were not recorded due to being too ordinary (everyone knew about them) or too vulgar. Or sometimes the clergymen purposely turned a blind eye to them if they did not see them as harmful (Corteguera, 2016, 3). Furthermore, vernacular religion changes constantly and what could be categorised as vernacular religion in the Middle Ages is not the same as the contemporary one.

What was perceived as elements of “folk religion” was used in the nation-building process as it projected an idea of a coherent set of beliefs in the pre-Christian era that gave a sense of ancientness and a common past and the concept of “folk religion” as “remnants” of these presumed set of common beliefs and practices (cf. Valk, 2014). Simultaneously “folk religion” as “heathendom” was positioned in a dichotomous relationship with Christianity, the latter being associated with rationalism and modernisation and the former with modernity’s otherness (Valk, 2014, 154). That concept of residualism remained present in folklore research for a long time (cf. Primiano, 1995, 39). Yet vernacular religion is also not just about remnants of pagan time, but also about fulfilling emotional and psychological needs of people. Thus, not everything classified as elements of “vernacular religion” are survivors of pre-Christian belief systems (cf. O’Connor, 2012, 116). Historical, mythological or philological research often drew conclusions that some Christian saints just replaced old pagan deities which often leads to unjust simplifications (cf. Moroz, 2014). However, some vernacular elements do have pedigrees that have old roots and are international in their content, although their meanings might have changed and been reinterpreted with time (Hukantaival, 2013, 104). This

5 Vernacular imagery and official Christian teachings did not exist separately, but intermixed and inspired each other. A good example of that is saint George whose imagery was inseparably linked with the character of Green George, a pre-Christian mythical character whose parallels can be found in European and Near-eastern folklore (cf. Šmitek, 2012, 169–198).

might consequently lead to rethink the concept of “pagan” as often times in the past something that was described as “pagan” or “paganism” was actually, for example, a vernacular interpretation of Christian traditions that were demonised by Christian writers (Johanson & Jonkus, 2015, 139). Despite the often claimed assertions of disenchantment of the world (cf. Thomas, 1991), superstition and magic being replaced by rational thought, enchantment never really went away. The boundaries between concepts such as religion, superstition and magic were in the perpetual process of being readjusted and redefined⁶ (cf. Walsham, 2008). Vernacular beliefs have and still do present alternatives to official Church teachings. Superstition, for example, that often penetrated vernacular discourses was attempted to be systematically eradicated by different Christian Churches as uncontrolled folklore processes and beliefs can undermine official religious truths and the authority of the Church (Valk, 2012, 25–26). However, researchers such as Primiano (1995) or Bowman (2004) have recognized the relationship between organised religion and “folk religion” not as opposite discourses, but rather as partners in partners in a symbiotic relationship (Valk, 2012, 26). What results from this intermingling is a dynamic and non-consistent whole that includes elements that seem contradictory, but cause not conflict in the minds of the practitioners (Hukantaival, 2013, 104). In the territory of Slovenia vernacular beliefs and practices such as magic (cf. e.g. Kropelj, 1999), witchcraft (e.g. Mencej, 2006), non-Christian beliefs about the world beyond (e.g. Mencej, 1997; Šmitek, 2003; Hrobat, 2009) and stories about pre-Christian mythological characters (cf. Kropelj, 2008a), although often highly criticized by the Church and authorities (many examples of that can be seen in the newspapers of the 19th century like *Kmetijske and rokodelske novice*) as signs of backwardness and superstition, in actuality coexisted without much conflict on a daily basis. As also attested by the Slovenian legends about the Turkish raids, elements of vernacular religion that diverge from official Christian dogma do not appear as problematic, but coexisting peacefully with the Church’s teachings.

Some vernacular elements are universal by nature in the sense that they correspond with intrinsic psychological *modus operandi* of human cognition. Thus they can be found in different belief systems through different times, yet in the form that corresponds with prevailing belief systems and religions of the time. The Turks in Slovenian folklore function in the role of the demonic enemy or “the Other”, an element of Chaos that come from the “world beyond” and threaten “Our” Cosmos. These are archetypal roles that are manifested in different cultures and historical eras with contemporary “figures” (e.g. enemy

6 The Reformation, for example, did not represented a complete break with the Catholic past in regards to perceptions of the sacred and the divine intervention in the world, but rather it modified it. It did not completely abolish the concepts of holy persons, places or objects, but rather it forged rituals and magic of its own. Also places such as churches and churchyards continued to be regarded, in a way, as sanctified. Consequently, with these forms of consecration and setting apart of these special, sanctified places the concept of sacrilege also survived the Reformation in modified form (Walsham, 2008, 500, 508, 512–513).

that was threatening in a particular historical moment) taking places of the threatening “Other”. The popular (collective) memory thus has an antihistorical character and consequent inability to retain particularities of historical events and personalities due to its tendency to transform them into archetypes (Eliade, 1954, 46).

In the legends about the Turkish raids elements of different belief systems were interwoven. Such is the case of divine interventions, unclean souls, treasures and other elements that will be explained in the continuation. They are all presented within the Christian and actual historical framework with figures being presented in them having names and appearances of the Christian God, the Virgin Mary, the saints, the Devil, the Ottoman Turks, yet a closer inspection reveals theological and historical divergences from the official teachings of the Church and historical reality.

THE SUPERNATURAL, OTHERWORLDLINESS AND RELIGION IN RELATION TO THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN LEGENDS ABOUT TURKISH ATTACKS

Researchers in the field of cognitive anthropology have noticed a strong tendency in humans toward religious expressions⁷. As Pascal Boyer (2001, 329) puts it “religious concepts and norms and the emotions attached to them seem designed to excite human mind, linger in memory, trigger multiple inferences in the precise way that will get people to hold them true and communicate them”.

Different fields of study, such as psychology and cognitive science (e.g. Boyer, 2001; Atran, 2002) have observed that humans tend to assign human properties such as intention or will to inanimate objects, non-human entities or natural phenomena (Pongratz-Leisten & Sonik, 2015, 51). Even when the divine is seemingly immaterial it is still usually imagined in anthropomorphic terms or attributed anthropomorphic behaviours (Pongratz-Leisten & Sonik, 2015, 51).

7 When trying to explain the origins of religious thinking Boyer (2001) proposes that human beings have an overactive agency detector due to our long history of predation and being victim of predators as this has been vital for our survival as a species. This also means that humans intuitively interpret events that they encounter in the world in terms of agency. Therefore, when a person encounters an externalized religious representation that attributes certain agency to an event it will easily make sense to them, it will be easy to process and to recall (Dulin, 2011, 227). Boyer also proposes that a successful religious concept has the characteristic of being “minimally counterintuitive”. That means that it only contains one or two violations of domain-specific expectations (for example that a person can walk through walls). The counterintuitive elements make the religious concept attention grabbing and consequently more likely to be internalized and recalled. However, Panchenko (2012, 59) believes that when studying religious expressions biology is not sufficient to explain their nature and that the domain of religion is socially constructed and that counter-intuitive categories and agents are arranged in collective imagination in accordance to specific needs of various communities.

Also, the supernatural categories can be surprisingly durable and there are cases when despite a change in ideology (for example conversion to Christianity) its new categories continued to mirror older mythological ones (cf. Dulin, 2011, 234). An example for this would be the perception of the Turks as archetypal demonic “Other”. In Slovenian legends they are presented as a generalised, stereotypical figure without any individuality, as demonic “Others” whose intent is to destroy Us in the physical and religious sense (Mlakar, 2019, 55–56). The Turks in these legends could be characterised within Eliade’s (1987, 29, 47) theory that traditional societies divided space between the “known” space that belonged to the community (“Cosmos”) and the “unknown” outside world, characterised by chaos and danger, where demons and foreigners reside (“Chaos”). Every intrusion from “Chaos” into “Cosmos” represented a risk that the world would collapse into the primordial Chaos. In this sense the Turks can be seen as foreigners that intrude into Our world from “the world beyond” that has connotations of Chaos. In a certain historical moment, the historical Ottoman Turks thus took over the archetypal role that is in itself much older. This could be a reflection of something that researchers have noted: when processing new information, individuals retrieve old schemata to make sense of the new experience. As Wertsch (2002, 55–56) points out »narrative is one of a few different instruments we have for representing settings, actors, and events of the past«. Others means include chronicles and annals, but they employ a different kind of memory (Wertsch, 2002, 56). Other researchers have also noted the prominent role that narrative has in human consciousness (cf. for example Bruner, 1990) and that it represents “a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted” (White, 1981, 6). Alasdair MacIntyre (1984, 216) even claims that humans are basically »story-telling animals« and that our thinking, speaking and other actions are essentially shaped by narratives. The “narrative tools” we use in this sense are shaped by the particular cultural, historical, and institutional circumstances in which we live. He additionally claims that the narratives we use to make sense of our lives to come from a “stock of stories” from which any particular individual may draw as they form part of a “cultural tool kit” of its society and culture.

ABOUT THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SACRED SPACE IN LEGENDS ABOUT TURKISH RAIDS

Legends are a folklore genre that is not detached from the physical environment (like, for example, fairytales), rather they are embedded into the familiar setting of its bearers. Collective memory is often tied to the physical landscape (cf. Nora, 1989; Hrobat, 2010, 36; González Álvarez, 2011, 137). Telling and listening to stories is an essential practice of building places and in this process some places or features of the landscape are prioritized and start being perceived as sacred (Valk

& Sävborg, 2018, 7). Places can store collective memories of the mythical past (cf. Tuan, 2001). Legends are also oriented to everyday life and they tell of events that happened to real people in real surroundings. They draw from the realm of the unknown, of the otherworld, and enchant the world of everyday by shifting elements that derive from the legendary into the daily environment (Valk & Sävborg, 2018, 19). They also often offer explicit or implicit arguments against other, often dominant systems of belief (Valk, 2012, 26).

Simultaneously with dramatic content, legends also contain guidelines for behaviour in certain (critical) situations. With localization to a familiar setting these legends charge certain places and objects, such as churches, with supernatural aura (Valk & Sävborg, 2018, 19). The localization of events in legends into the physical landscape is also characteristic for legends about the Turkish attacks. Many of these attacks were directed towards the church. The church represented more than just one of the most valuable material objects of the community. It was a symbolic centre of the community and a place of contact with the divine. Thus, attack on the church endangered the community not only materially, but it also represented an attack on its very core, its values and its God.

However, there is nothing inherently sacred about a place or an object – it is the human agency that gives them the qualities of the sacred. Places are empowered through narratives existing in numerous variants that mark them as extraordinary locations. The landscape itself, when it becomes “storied”, turns from a passive surrounding into an active participant in creating the supernatural environment (Valk & Sävborg, 2018, 10). For defining the sacred we can use the definition by Durkheim (1964, 47) who described sacred objects as “things set apart and forbidden” in opposition to the profane ones. Durkheim postulated that that nothing is inherently sacred, but that society itself imposes sacred character on certain objects. The sacred, as it is understood in Western European Christianity, refers to the earthly presence of a transcendent divinity (Hunter, 2006, 109). At this point, we have to take into account the concept of “the sacred”. The famous historian of religion Mircea Eliade sees the sacred and the profane as two modes of being in the world. For *homo religiosus*, a traditionally religious person, the reality, according to Eliade (1987), is “non-homogenous”, divided into the “sacred” and the “profane” spheres. Eliade (1987, 313) also proposes the term “Hierophany” to refer to the material manifestation of the sacred. These objects become the focus of veneration and are no longer just material things, but become the representations of “the Wholly Other” (Eliade, 1987, 313). He also acknowledges “sacred time” as occasions of festivals or religious rights that is, similarly to sacred space, set apart from the “profane time”. Sacred space and time are thus manifestations and echoes of *ilud tempus*, the primal time recognized in mythology as times of creation and salvation, when divine powers were strong. Temples and rights are reminders of *ilud tempus* and provide access to it. Holly sites and sanctuaries are thus a

symbolical “centre of the world” (Eliade, 1959, 39),⁸ a point that is equivalent to the creation of the world.

While the presence of the divine may not be a necessary characteristic of sacred space for every culture (as Eliade claimed; see Smith, 1987) the spatial organization of people in specific ways is a quality shared by all sacred and religious spaces. As Kilde (2008, 7) points out: “[h]ow people organize themselves and behave within specific places imbued those places with sacred importance. In this view, space is sacralised by human action and behaviour, and certain spaces become sacred because people treat them differently from ordinary spaces.” The concept of the sacred could be understood as a socially marked category that is set apart from everyday life (Koski, 2018, 54). In the 19th century, for example, the Lutheran church in Finland was seen as sacred. There were two reasons for that: firstly, it was a symbol of social order and shared values of the community.⁹ Secondly, it was sacred because of its supernatural character (Koski, 2018, 54). Similarly, as in Slovenian folktales the Finnish folklore also reflected these ideas. While the content of these stories may refer to the church building and objects associated with it what they actually reflect is a broader value system and religious ideas of their time.

Religious space is a powerful space within which the power of the divine is often understood to reside. The proximity to this power is seen to give authority and spiritual empowerment to individuals (Kilde, 2008, 4). The sacred spaces are those sites that serve to articulate the relationship between the community and its religious practices. They manifest the relationship between the human and the transcendent, the divinity (Aulet & Vidal, 2019, 238). Yet, as mentioned, no building or place is sacred on its own – it is the people that give them a sacred meaning. Sacredness is a construct and also in a constant process of negotiation, confirmation and restoration of its sacred status (Hamilton & Spicer, 2005, 3–4). Church buildings were important symbols of medieval Christian cosmic order, which protected the community from evil and regulated human relation with the divine. The church building thus embodied a miniature of the world order (Koski, 2018, 56–57).

Understanding an object is part of understanding its historical and cultural context and its meaning is always tied to a particular community and the

8 Eliade received criticism for the selective use of data to support his models and for representing religion and nature as having an objective, unchanging nature (Ellwood, 2014, 518). For the summary of criticism of Eliade’s work see Barth (2013).

9 Shrines were physical spaces where the sacred was tangible and where the faithful could directly encounter holiness, which made them symbolic and emotional centres of the community (Pfaff, 2013, 195). Thus, as Harold Turner (1979, 157) defines it the church building’s sacredness was simultaneously derived from being *domus ecclesiae*, i.e. a meeting house of the community, and from being *domus dei*, the house of God with the latter seeming to be more important in Christian tradition (Koski, 2018, 56). However, with time the focus of the sacred moved away from the community toward the church building itself (Hamilton & Spicer, 2005, 5–6).

understanding of the materialization of the divine depends not only on the experience of the individual, but also on cultural memory that allow the construction of meaning (Pongratz-Leisten & Sonik, 2015, 5–6, 10–11). Therefore, in the Catholic context in which the Slovenian legends about the Turkish attacks were forged, the sacred was in the form of the church building, the altar, statues of saints etc. Objects of devotion may not have the likeness of the divinity itself, yet they evoke its presence (for example the altar evokes the presence of the Christian God) and possess some of the qualities of the divine. It is through the cultural learning that the material objects are recognized as medium pointing to or marking the presence of the divine (Pongratz-Leisten & Sonik, 2015, 32).

As seen in Finnish vernacular beliefs and practices sacredness was much more interpreted as supernatural otherness – while Christianity and object associated with it provided protection, they could also, if violation occurred, possess a threat (Koski, 2018, 61). This could, at least partially, derive from non-Christian conceptions of the sacred. The old Finnish system of social organization was based on dichotomies such as “own” and “other” or “internal” and “external” (Koski, 2018, 61). Transgressions of social values, either spatial, temporal or bodily, might have fallen into the category of Finnish prehistoric sacred (Anttonen, 1996, 52–55; in: Koski, 2018, 61). In this dichotomous conceptualization in vernacular beliefs the sacred is composed of both the positive and the destructive and polluted (Koski, 2018, 61). Such concept would fit well with Slovenian folklore narratives that depict the church ground as a place of benevolence and protection, but also as a place where transgressions of sacred and social values are punished (for example in the motives of sacrilege). As the Turkish element in Slovenian legends is characterised as completely demonic and destructive, only the negative aspect of such conceptualization of sacred space is expressed. To get a more complete picture of this conceptualization we would have to take into account also the narratives in which the transgressor is not a demonic entity (such as the Turks), but a member of the community who transgresses in a sacred site and is punished for it or who unknowingly transgress and barely avoids danger (e.g. *S. Thompson Motif Index* category E492 *Mass (church service) of the dead*) in which a person barely escapes after accidentally attending a mass of the dead;¹⁰ (cf. also Lindow, 2018, 43) (more about sacrilege in the continuation).

Sacred spaces are a thus a reflection of the wider belief system. The sacredness of some points in the landscape can be preserved for centuries or millennia (cf. Roymans, 1995) and sometimes a disregard of its sacredness or even its destruction cannot be understood only as an expression of a disappearing

10 Frightening events that take place in the church often happen at night. Midnight or festive nights represent breaks in the temporal cycle and consequently liminal times when the supernatural and otherworldly can cross the boundary to »this world« and disturb the living (e.g. Kropce, 2008b, 193–194).

importance of these spaces for the community, but also as a deliberate act of erasing their importance due to ideological, religious or political changes¹¹ (cf. Roymans, 1995).

MIRACULOUS SALVATIONS FROM TURKISH ATTACKS

The motif of miraculous salvation when facing a Turkish attack is very frequent in Slovenian legends.

This happened at Ptujška gora. The church there has a black wall on the side where the Turks wanted to attack it. They wanted to rob and destroy it. But the Virgin Mary protected it by means of a thick fog that prevented the Turks from finding the church. And until this day that side of the church is black. [...] (Gričnik, 1998, 285)

The reality of miracles is fundamental for institutions such as the Catholic Church¹² (Shanafelt, 2004, 321).

For defining miracle, we can use the definition proposed by Firth (1996, 206) who explains it as “an unexpected performance resulting from supernatural power, exercised by direct divine agency or through the agency of a divinely inspired person, such as a saint”. Therefore, as works of God (though often conducted through intermediaries such as saints, angels or relics) miracles are distinguished from acts of demonic powers that also have supernatural abilities. Consequently, supernatural acts committed by other agents besides God are considered inferior, demonic (Shanafelt, 2004, 321–322). But miracles through divine intervention not only express religious beliefs, but can also express political ones. The fight between the Ottoman Turks and the Christians was not only a fight between two religions, but also between two politically and culturally diverse entities. Therefore, victory over the demonic Turk that had mythical qualities also meant victory over a military, political and ideological enemy. Hence, miracle stories also reflect the political situations of the storytellers (Weddle, 2010, 3).

The miraculous salvation when facing a Turkish attack was usually performed by saints or the Virgin Mary or by an un-named, but clearly Christian divine force. Miraculous salvations by Christian divine agency against the Turks can be

11 There are indications that pre-Christian sacred sites were often located in nature (outside). For example, pre-Roman and native-Roman cult places were often associated with outstanding features in the natural landscape, such as mountaintops, water sources and forests. This intimate bond between man and nature was seen as problematic in the eyes of the Christian church (Brown, 1982, 125; Gurevich, 1988, 96). The Church wanted to eliminate old cult places and magical practices focused on nature and link Christian faith to *the church building itself* as a centre of the new Christian world (Brown, 1982, 126; Roymans, 1995, 20). Consequently, an increasing opposition developed between culture and nature (Brown, 1982, 124–126).

12 There is also a difficulty in regards to the distinction between miracle and magic (cf. Garland, 2011, 76–77).

seen as an expression of ethnocentrism, as the Christian (“Our”) community has even God on their side. Similar miraculous salvations can be found in Portuguese folklore where Christians are saved from the Moors (cf. Parafita, 2006, 69–71, 190). Saints in general are an important feature of Slovenian folklore. Reasons for this can be traced back to the Middle Ages.

In the Middle Ages the popular perception of Christendom was far from dogmatic and strictly God-oriented. It focused strongly on cults of local saints and the miracles they performed when confronted with demons of all kind and the devil himself (cf. Gurevich, 1988, 11–24). It was during this period that was the fullest flowering of the “cult of miracles” (Netton, 2019, 8). New information spread by the clergy were readily reshaped by the mechanism of collective perception in accordance with the laws of folkloric consciousness. The willingness to accept any kind of fantastic news in combination with an inclination to believe in the supernatural organized the received information in accordance with pre-existing canons of story and legend (Gurevich, 1988, 11). I believe it is fair to say that this kind of collective information processing can be traced into legends recorded much later, as in legends about miracles performed by the Virgin Mary or the patron saint of the church under attack by the Turks. I would argue that these legends came into existence in the time when the Turkish raids or the (collective) memory of them was still topical in the lives of the communities that shared them.

Stories of active agency of divine objects were numerous during the Middle Ages (cf. Bynum, 2015): statues and paintings walked, bled, wept, sacred relics exercised miraculous powers. Thus divine or sacred things were recognized as persons or at least as social “Others” (Pongratz-Leisten & Sonik, 2015, 16).

Since the Middle Ages¹³ lay people often turned to saints for help and protection, rather than directly to God. Saints were believed to provide a go-between the individual and God who was viewed as too powerful to be approached directly. Thus, praying to the saints and the Virgin Mary constituted a central devotional practice of the Middle Ages (Kilde, 2008, 84). The Virgin Mary was the most venerated holy person in the Slovenian territory (and in Europe in general; cf. Netton, 2019, 8) in the late Middle Ages and was perceived to be at least equal to Jesus (Makarovič, 2006, 186).

13 Earlier Peter Brown (1982) concluded that from the period of late antiquity the cult of the saints became an integral part of Christianity itself. He also noted that it was not just a product of superstitious popular piety, but was also supported by religious authorities. While the Church authorities often saw the late medieval cult of the saints as superficial and overly emotional the prevailing view was that, as long as the veneration of saints and their relics remained in its place and fulfilled its popular role the integrity on a theological level could be maintained at the elite level (Beissel, 1976, 72; in: Pfaff, 2013, 196). Also, direct eradication of vernacular beliefs was not necessarily the strategy of the Church. Besides appropriation of certain beliefs or cult sites by giving them a Christian meaning and name. The principal goal of the Church in imperial Russia, for example, was to “confine the sacred” (temporally or spatially) within the ecclesiastical domain (for example, that rituals could only be performed in the parish church) (Freeze, 1998, 221–222; in: Panchenko, 2012, 45).

Communities saw their saints as local heroes who offer them help and protection. They helped to secure the place of the community in the order of the cosmos and protected sinful communities from godly retribution (Pfaff, 2013, 194). In the Christian tradition of the Middle Ages saints were characterised by extraordinary virtues and divinely bestowed supernatural miracle-working powers. The folk turned to them for all manner of worldly assistance, comfort and help and regarded them as spiritual counterparts to earthly nobility (Rothkrug, 1987, 145). The clergy actually endorsed the worship of saints or their relics in order to enhance moral community and the connection with God (Pfaff, 2013, 194).

The role of saints as a sort of cultural heroes is also visible in folklore. In folk narratives they often create certain landscape objects, give names to places, they could be presented as nominators of villages, rivers, creators of roads etc. (Moroz, 2014, 224). They often leave traces in the physical landscape (for example you can still see their footsteps in the stone) that is frequently attested in Slovenian legends. Saints and their cults also held strong social roles in the community. Public veneration of a sacred object is a powerful affirmation of the collective conscience and an incentive to obey the community's morality. During rituals members of the community establish and reinforce collective symbols that act as moral representations of the group and they react angrily to insult when these symbols are profaned (Pfaff, 2013, 197, 199). Saints thus represented collective ideal and an abstraction of communal values and were heroes that bridged the sacred and transcendental sphere with the secular and worldly one (Pfaff, 2013, 198).

SACRILEGE

Sacrilege occurs when the manifestation of the sacred is misused or violated. In the context of the medieval and early modern period when the attacks of the Ottoman Turks occurred in the territory of Slovenia, Christianity was not just exercising spiritual authority, but also represented a formidable earthly force with waste political and juridical power. In this setting sacrilege was both a spiritual transgression and an earthly crime (Hunter, 2006, 110).

Sacrilege was a core part of Christian sacramental practices and occupied the imagery of both popular devotion and theological thoughts (Hunter, 2006, 110). The topics of sacrilege have also reflected in folktales as confirmed by the *S. Thompson Motif Index* in categories Q 222 and Q 558. The affected sacred objects might start bleeding or are impossible to destroy, or the object destroyers might be struck by illness or by sudden death. Stories of such sacrilege induced miracles were widely spread in the Middle Ages (Kuijpers & Pollmann, 2017, 151). The ideas that sacrilege against holy images and objects would result in demonstrations of divine displeasure, such as bleeding of the holy objects that were subjected to sacrilege, were known centuries ago. This idea of divine retribution had been successfully promoted by the Catholic Church despite an ambiguous

attitude towards materiality, especially materiality of sacred objects (cf. Kuijpers & Pollmann, 2017, 151). Material objects were important in Christianity as they provided a means through which individuals might experience and express a relationship and closeness to the divine, they made the abstract divinity more accessible and comprehensible. As such they were often on the limits of what Church authorities viewed as idolatrous and prompted centuries of theological considerations and regulations. The Council of Trent (1545–1563) reaffirmed the veneration of saints and the Virgin Mary, as well as the importance of miracles and of the appropriate usage of sacred images and relics (Mitchell, 2013, 325; Kuijpers & Pollmann, 2017, 161) which might have contributed to the spread of stories about miraculous salvations of Christian churches and objects. This might have been also facilitated by the pre-existing folklore motives of divine intervention and punishment in case of sacrilege.

In Slovene legends about the Turkish raids the most common objects of sacrilege attempts of the Turkish soldiers (and therefore important bearers of transcendent divinity in the eyes of the people) are the church building itself and within it the altar or images or saints or the Virgin Mary. A frequent motif is that they fed their horses from the altar, which is a big humiliation from a Christian point of view. The host, the most sacred religious object, is interestingly not the target of Turkish sacrilege.¹⁴ In these legends the Turks were sometimes successful in their sacrilegious attempts (or partially successful – an object of their sacrilege might miraculously survive destruction), but often they were miraculously prevented from committing them.

After the evil Turks burned the houses in Šent Janž and devastated the surrounding areas they broke into the church that was filled with devout believers. The villagers kneeled in front of the Virgin Mary and begged her to save them. One of the Turks took down the statue of the Virgin, took it out of the church and threw it into the fire. 'It's wood, it must burn,' one of the Turks said. Then he took a sword and stroke the statue twice. He hits the statue's forehead and two bleeding wounds appeared on it. And you can still see them today. The Turks were unable to stand near the fire in which they wanted to burn the statue because the flame kept turning in their direction. Seeing they will not accomplish anything they left in the direction of sunrise. When the Christians come out of the church they found the statue unharmed by the fire. With great piety they carried it back to the church and make a prayer to thank for the miraculous salvation from the ferocious enemy. (Kotnik, 1957, 64–65)

14 It is, however, the object of desecration of Jews as attested by Slovene folk songs (cf. Grafenauer, 1939, 343–347; Golež Kaučič, 2007, 7). Stories about Jewish host desecrations were known all around Europe (cf. Anglickienė, 2004, 86; Dundes, 2007, 389; Erb, 1993, 680; Toš, 2012, 184). Otherness in folklore is frequently associated with an (imaginary) threat to the community's most sacred values.

What is interesting is that traumatic experiences of Turkish attacks on the most sacred objects of the community were turned into stories of triumph. The sacrilege acts, that might have occurred (or were merely a product of fear) were transformed into confirmation of Christianity's victory. What such stories convey is a collective amnesia of Turkish attacks of sacred buildings and (if they happened) in the case when these attacks were successful and consequent lack of divine intervention (by a Christian divinity) that could undermine the belief in the Christian superiority and test the Christian fate itself (why would not God protect his own place of worship?). The idea of superiority of one's own religion comes from the concept of Us vs. Them and is part of an ethnocentric logic of one's religion being the only right one. Victory over the Turkish soldiers attacking a Christian sacred site (similarly in Portuguese folklore victory of Christians over the Moorish soldiers; cf. Parafita, 2006) is presents as an apologetic and theological proof of God's almightiness. The logic behind it is this: if God is almighty, he will do whatever to ensure the victory of the righteous. On the other hand: if the Christians win it is because God was with them and because they are representatives of "the right" religion (cf. Parafita, 2006, 190). Therefore, the sacrilege acts of Turkish soldiers that probably did occur at least occasionally would present an extreme challenge of existing beliefs of the Christian community. Yet the collective memory (I understand folklore about the Turkish raids to be part of it) does not represent such violations as a test of faith. Quite the opposite: the stories about alleged sacrilege act committed by the Turkish soldiers and the supposed material proofs of them (i.e. marks of a Turkish attack on the church building or the intactness of the church building itself) were transformed into evidence of the power of the sacred and the (Christian) divine.

Why are there numerous stories about Turkish attacks on churches and their attempts to perform acts of sacrilege? It is a historical fact that that local churches often contained the most precious commodities of the community and served as shelters for the inhabitants during a raid. However, the abundance of such stories is in my opinion mostly a reflection of the symbolic role of the church building as sacred space connected to the divine and as a reflection of the great importance of Christian identity for the community (cf. Hrobat, 2010, 50–51, 54; 2012, 43). In addition, history is written by the victor. The Ottoman Turks were ultimately unsuccessful in their attempts of military progression in Europe and the victory was in the hands of Christian states. History might even be altered by pre-existing folklore motives. Acts of desecration of a church might be changed into victory only if a single sacred object survived the enemy's attack – it became proof of the power of the sacred (cf. Kuijpers & Pollmann, 2017, 152, 160–161).

Motives of sacrilege and punishment from a divine authority are common in folklore of different nations (e.g. Parafita, 2006, 69–71; Kuijpers & Pollmann, 2017) and it can be concluded that in the case of Slovenian legends about Tur-

kish acts of (attempted) sacrilege and consequent divine intervention this motif already had a foundation prior to the Turkish era. As demonstrated, the concept of sacred places where rules of conduct are especially strict, is an ancient one and preceded Christianity. Christianity adopted this concept and adjusted it to its own theological views. The pre-Christian idea of the Chaos and Cosmos dichotomy also became part of post-conversion folklore and the demonic enemy began being equated with historical enemies, such as the Ottoman Turks. Being a Christian (or Catholic) became an important identity factor which is clearly expressed in folklore and combined with the sacrality of the church territory and the archetypal fear of the demonic invader. The (historically real or imaginary) transgressions made by the Ottoman conquerors were transformed into an abundance of legends that not only express the belief system of the folklore bearers, but also the consequences of not abiding to community's rules. The divine punishment for these transgressions also reflected the threat of punishment in the social aspect when the community's morals and values would fail to be met.

RITUAL ENCIRCLEMENTS OF CHURCHES

Legends also talk about chains, sometimes encircling churches or kept inside the church describing them as a reminder of a certain occurrence connected to the Turkish raids.

'Since people can remember St. Lenart's church under Lepenatko has been encircled by an iron chain,' father Ugovšek told. 'People tell different things to explain why it's there.' [...] 'I was told by my mother that that chain has been there since the Turkish time. Turkish prisoners were supposed to be nailed to it.' (Radešček, 1983, 146)

This is probably a remnant of ritual encirclement of churches and cult sites. This practice was known in the wider Mediterranean area. In the Hellenistic period, for example, the "hub of the universe", *omphalos*, was depicted as bound by chains or knotted ribbons. Later in history pillars in temples were also 'wrapped' in ribbons or chains (Šmitek, 1999, 192). The church represented a sacred space and the sacrality of this most important sacred center of the village had to be protected. One of the ways to do that was through symbolic encirclement (often with a chain). It's a symbolic confirmation and enclosure of the sacred space from the outside, dangerous space. It is also a way of communicating with the otherworld and the divine and imitates the journey of the soul from life to death and rebirth. This practice has much older, pre-Christian origins (Mencej, 2013, 135–138, 141–142). It is therefore not unusual that the Turks as representatives of Chaos and their attacks are often focused right on the churches. As mentioned, churches often contained the most valuable material possessions of the community and served as refuge when attacks occurred (Fister, 1975,

61, 66), yet undoubtably the stories about a Christian supernatural power in the form Christian saints or the Virgin Mary miraculously protecting the church represent the idea of the sacredness of the sacral space itself and the belief in the supremacy of the Christian faith (Mlakar, 2019, 64).

BELIEFS ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE AND THE CONNECTION WITH THE WORLD BEYOND

Some other non-Christian beliefs in Slovenian legends of Turkish raids relate to the ideas of the “world beyond”.

[...] *‘One of the places near the stream is called ‘Under the Turk’s breech’. The elderly people talked a lot about this place. They said it is not safe to walk around there at night, because a dead man can appear. People said that a tall breech tree grew there. And a Turkish soldier who lagged behind was hung there. And often lights were seen appearing in this place. Some of the more courageous ones went closer and saw him. They said he was walking around as if he was looking for something. The Turks were full of sin.’* (Gričnik, 1998, 149)

Legends talk about strange lights or sounds or processions of the dead occurring in places where Turkish soldiers died. Otherness and the supernatural are often connected (cf. Belova, 2007) and the dead that belong to the otherworld represent the most elementary form of otherness (Matteoni, 2008, 193). It seems that imagery of the Turks as “the Other” was mixed with the traditional imagery about the unclean dead or souls that belong to purgatory. Such restless souls can appear in the form of lights (Šmitek, 2003, 5; Kropej, 2008a, 276).

These motives can be related to the conceptualization of the afterlife in vernacular religion and mythology. In traditional Slavic societies there was a great concern for a “good” death as opposed to a “bad” death. A “good” death occurs when it is a natural, “one’s own” time for a person to die, not prematurely or violently. It should also occur in “one’s own” place and “one’s own” society should be present during the burial. This way the dead could safely pass to the other world, while those who died a “bad” death would become an active harmful force that intruded into the world of the living and could cause harm (Vinogradova, 1999, 46–47; also Warner, 2000, 72, 75; Kukharensko, 2011, 68). The concepts of “good” and “bad” death in the traditional Slavic notions of the afterlife are related to the concepts of “clean” and “unclean” death. The “unclean” dead cannot finally pass to the world beyond and are forced to remain in this world causing harm to the living. They become the “walking” deceased, vampires or demonic beings (Vinogradova, 1999, 48). Those who were murdered, for example, went back to the place of their death and such souls of the unclean dead could roam the roads at night and potentially harm passersby

(Kukhareno, 2011, 81). Beliefs concerning such harmful dead that cannot pass to the other world form one of the most stable parts of the Slavic mythological system (Vinogradova, 1999, 49). The persistence of these beliefs coexisted with Christian imagery of the afterlife. Despite not being compatible (Christianity does not acknowledge the liminality between this and other world nor the interaction between the living and the deceased) these beliefs about the afterlife attest to the diversity of beliefs that fulfilled the social and psychological needs of the community.

One of the most frequent motifs in legends about Turkish raids is the hidden treasure. They were either left by the Turks with the intention of once retrieving them or the locals buried them to hide them from the invaders. Attempts to find these treasures are mostly unsuccessful or are stopped by a supernatural force. This motif connects the Turks with the world beyond where these treasures and the Turks themselves originate in traditional beliefs (cf. Hrobat, 2010, 54; Champion & Cooney, 1999, 198; González Álvarez, 2011, 142)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Slovenian legends about Turkish raids contain a mixture of traditional beliefs about the supernatural, the divine and the world beyond and also strong Christian elements. Yet while from a theological point of view being incompatible they coexisted side by side in folklore without a sense of contradiction. This is very typical for vernacular religion within which different beliefs can coexist.

VLOGA RELIGIJE V POVEDKAH O TURŠKIH VPADIH

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POVZETEK

Narejena je bila analiza slovenskih povedk o turških vpadih z namenom identifikacije in razlage religijskih elementov v njih. Turški vpadi na področje Slovenije so trajali okoli 150 let in so pustili globoko sled v slovenskem kolektivnem spominu. Slovenska folklorja vsebuje veliko število povedk o turških vpadih, ki odražajo zmes zgodovinskih informacij in domišljijских elementov, ki imajo pogosto arhetipske lastnosti. Analiza vsebin teh povedk, ki se nanaša na religijske elemente in verovanja, odraža mešanje krščanskega nauka in tradicijskih verovanj. To mešanje lahko umestimo v koncept »vernakularne religije«, znotraj katere lahko soobstajajo različna, tudi kontradiktorna verovanja, katerih namen pa je zadovoljiti družbene in psihološke potrebe skupnosti. V prispevku so iz diahronega vidika analizirani koncepti, kot so sveti prostor, oni svet, svetoskrunstvo in čudeži. Četudi te povedke jasno odražajo superiornost krščanstva in močan vpliv krščanskih idej, pogosto vsebujejo tudi elemente, ki sicer lahko imajo krščansko ime in podobo, a odražajo koncepte ki so pred- ali ne-krščanski. Turki predstavljajo arhetipskega demonskega »Drugega«, ki ogroža organizirani, varen kozmos »Naše« skupnosti, njene vrednote in Boga.

Ključne besede: turški vpadi, vernakularna religija, krščanstvo, drugost, sveti prostor, svetoskrunstvo, čudeži, onostranstvo

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