

Jakob, Jelena, and Bogdin – Three Miniatures on the Assigned Theme

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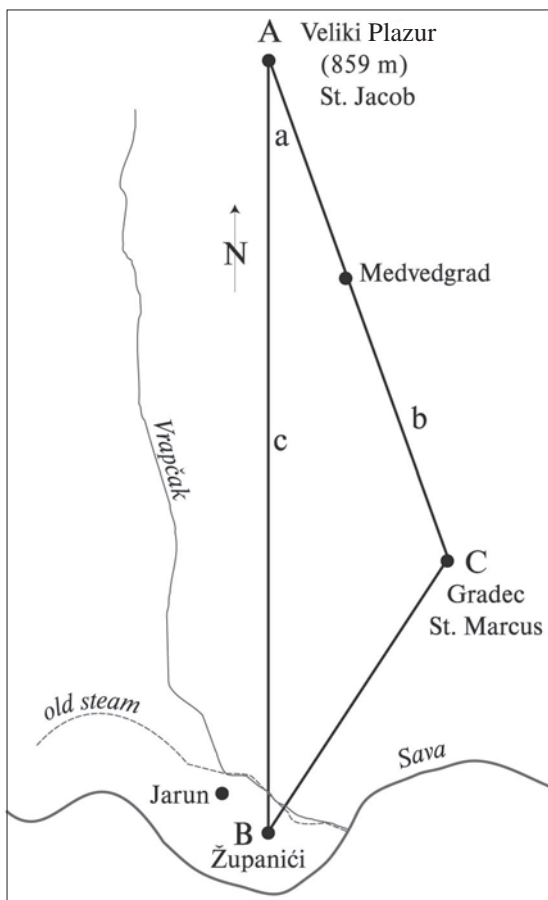
Building upon the research of cultural anthropologists, archeologists and linguists in the area of the Southern Slavs, in particular in Croatia and Slovenia, the authors offer three examples of so far unnoticed paradigms of the “mythical landscape,” and link them to the phenomenon of the cultural landscape and its creation, as seen by the field of the history of visual art. The cultural landscape could have as its matrix a number of old sacred spots, well correlated with the later important human interventions into the environment, something to be born in mind in any environmental modification. In those terms a few words will be also said about a program at the School of Architecture at Zagreb, applying the new humanist research to study of architecture and design.

Discoveries of cultural anthropologists and Slavic linguists in Southern Central Europe, in particular in Slovenia and Croatia, have raised both an important challenge and offered new avenues of research to the historian of visual arts. The research by Andrej Pleterski in Slovenia and Vitomir and Juraj Belaj in Croatia in the field of cultural anthropology and archeology, and of Radoslav Katičić in Slavic linguistics have brought sense and meaning to what had been a wealth of apparently unrelated linguistic and topographic data. The place names were related to the landscape, the connecting glue being the mythical underpinning as proposed by the Russian scholars Ivanov and Toporov, and for the area of Southern Slavs masterfully applied and expanded by Belaj, Katičić and Pleterski¹. The word thus became a visual phenomenon, and the visual phenomenon was enriched by the verbal content. The challenge for the visual arts history consists in transcending the narrow limits of “arts” (in terms of architecture, sculpture, and painting), and accepting that all the arts, visual or not, participate in a much larger phenomenon – the cultural landscape, a record of creative human intervention into the environment in both the material and spiritual sense. For many this is a major challenge which is very difficult to accept. The new solutions involve, on a very basic practical level, an increased ability to locate lost monuments following the lead of territorial organization proposed by cultural anthropology, and on a much higher level, an ability to grasp the essence of human creativity within a certain place and time².

Within this framework we will offer to our colleagues in cultural anthropology and linguistics three landscape structures which might be interpreted in the light of what has been said above. They come from three very different parts of Croatia, the Zagreb area in

¹ See bibliographies *sub nomine* in Belaj 2007 and Katičić 2008. Pleterski 1996 remains the key study.

² Goss 2008, Goss 2009.



1. Belaj's Zagreb triangle (V. Belaj).

the northwest, Central Dalmatia, and the Kvarner area. Two of them involve territories of well-recognized importance for Croatian political history, the Zagreb Prigorje and the Salonian field near Split, and the third a much less studied and politically prominent, but culturally also very important area of the Kvarner gulf.

Studying cultural landscape is for the history of any art, and so also the visual art history, both an apparently new, but also a very old field. If we read Pausanias, we will be amazed by the number of spiritualized points in the landscape. There is practically no tree, rock, bush, water, or crossroad that is not a witness of human presence, or that is not modified by an intervention of human spirit and hand, from a simple name-giving to complex urban landscapes³.

Obviously, human beings cannot live in an environment which is not touched by human spirit, or in which there is no cooperation between the human spirit and Mother Nature. Such total art involves phenomena that we recognize

as basic forms of human creativity – the image, the sound, and the movement, as well as those wherein a major part is played by Nature's contribution – smell, touch, taste, and the sense of space. Since the Renaissance, when art histories (and so also the history of visual arts) emerged as critical humanist disciplines, that totality has been disappearing, giving us separate fields such as the history of literature, of music, of dance, of visual art (*vulgo* "art history"). A return to an integrated, "Pausanian," approach is of a great importance, in particular for the question of the preservation of both natural and cultural ecology, which jointly form the total ecology⁴.

Another important aspect in those terms is practical work in teaching, in particular students and younger scholars, how to analyze, appreciate, and creatively act within the environment. At the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Zagreb there is a Project HyCro (HiperHrvatska) led by Professor Vesna Mikić. The project which has both theo-

³ Pauzanija 2008.

⁴ Goss and Gudek 2009, pp. 9-10.



2. St. Marko at Gradec in Zagreb (Goss/Jukić).

retical and practical, hands-on, dimensions investigates spatial complexities as a part of the process of preservation of the traditional heritage to serve as a basis for concrete urban and architectural design projects. HyCro is formulated as a summer school taking place in Continental Croatia, and was so far conducted in Podravina (2005), Gorski kotar and Gacka (2006), and Gorski kotar and Skrad (2008), and it constitutes a part of a 9th semester course on regional architecture⁵.

The basic goal is to formulate an investigative model which could systematize and evaluate all existing natural and cultural values, in particular in the areas where such values have not been studied or applied in terms of a sustainable development of eco-systems. We consider it extremely important that the fine contributions of a number of humanist disciplines in the field of human space be promoted and applied in practice.

The history of visual arts too should be grateful to cultural anthropology and linguistics for helping it recover lost and forgotten territories. In the light of what has been said so far, let us present our three miniatures on the assigned theme of the Old Gods in the New Country.

1. Jakob (Jacob, James).

Pausanias has done wonders in recognizing and describing the complexity of large cultural landscape structures, e.g., Athens or Delphi. Our first example deals with one

⁵ Mikić 2010.



3. *Medvedgrad and St. Jakob's peak (Goss/Jukić).*



4. *Jakovlje, hill of St. Dorothea (Goss/Jukić).*



5. *Igrišće, the likely site of the sanctuary (Goss/Jukić).*

such complex structure, for Croatia one of its most important historical-cultural landscapes, the Zagreb Prigorje (Cismontana). Professor Belaj has demonstrated how the key points in the landscape could be set to form a “sacred triangle;” these are: the hill of St. Jakob (Jacob, James, figs. 1, 3), at the westernmost end of the central massive of the Medvednica Mountain featuring a rather recent chapel of the Saint – Perun’s place; St. Marko at Gradec – the Upper Town of Zagreb – Mokoš (fig. 2); and Županići, a hamlet on the outskirts of Zagreb along the Sava River (the Jarun area) – Veles. Belaj also noticed, and this is tremendously important, that three key landscape markers – St. Jakob’s peak, the Medvedgrad castle on a lower hill below St. Jacob’s, and St. Mark’s, the parish church of Gradec (figs. 1, 2, 3; the latter two being also supreme works of art), fall on the same line! Independently I have reached a similar conclusion based on the fact, noticed also by Belaj, that the hills of St. Jakob and of Medvedgrad bear the names of Veliki and Mali Plazur (The Big and The Little Crawling Place), a reference to the crawling of Veles attempting to reach Perun’s seat⁶ (figs. 2, 3).

In a recent diploma essay, my young colleague, Tea Gudek, extended that line looking for “interesting” place names on or close by it. Across the Sava river, the line goes through the village of Jakuševac (Jacob’s village), where in the 14th c., and quite probably earlier, there was a parish of St. Mark’s. Behind the Medvednica, the line passes through Jakovlje and Igrišće. At Jakovlje (Jacob’s Place), a long scattered village on a raised beam, it passes through a hill, once surely fortified, bearing a recent chapel of St. Dorothea, a very

⁶ Belaj 2008, pp. 309-310; Goss 2008B.



6. Solin, Otok, location of Our Lady of the Island (Goss/Jukić).



7. View of the Perun above Žrnovnica from the Otok in Solin (Goss/Jukić).

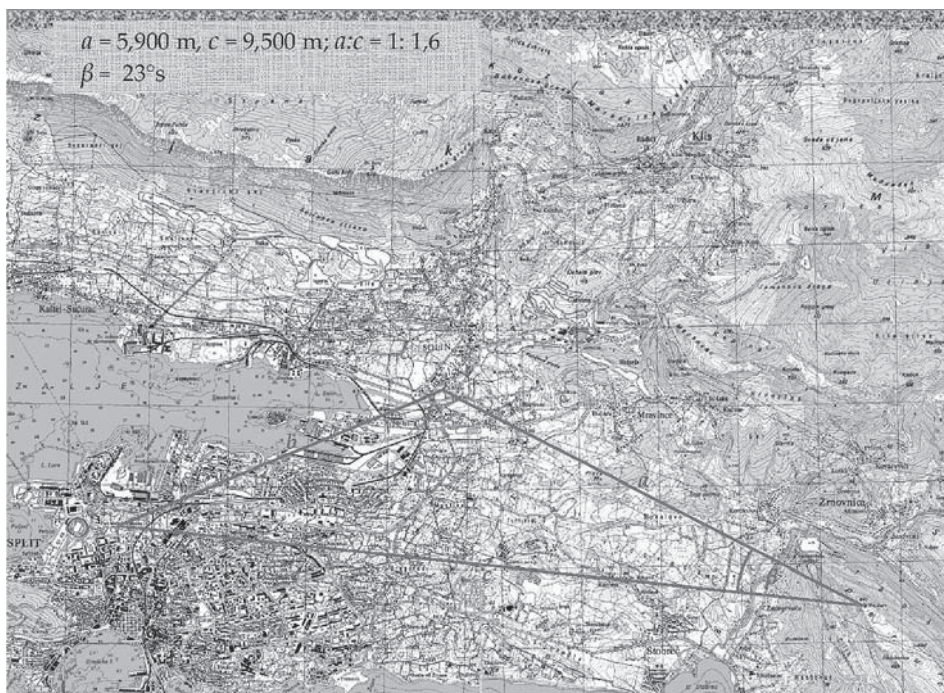


8. Split, Poljud, Holy Trinity and St. Michael, ca. 800 (Goss/Jukić).

rare Saint in Croatia (fig. 4). As she is a patron of fruit and flower growers, having miraculously produced apples and roses in mid-winter in the course of her martyrdom, here a Christian Saint must have landed on top of some ancient fertility Goddess (Flora?). At Igrišće, another scattered beam village just to the north of Jakovlje, it passes through the highest point, a steep hill at the extreme eastern end of the beam, an ideal spot for a small fort and/or a sanctuary (fig. 5). Igrišće is an interesting place name. At Kalnik Mountain it appears within a very indicative context, i.e., at the place of the ruined chapel of St. Martin (single nave with an added, polygonal sanctuary, which indicates a Romanesque if not earlier date for the nave), in front of which there are traces of a circle made of stone, the walls of which seem too thin to be a fortification. As “Igrišće” means the place of dancing, thus of rituals, we may have here traces of an old, Slavic, or even pre-Slavic sacred spot Christianized by the untiring and in Northwestern Croatia omnipresent St. Martin⁷.

To offer at least a temporary conclusion: the cultural landscape of the Zagreb Prigrorje has as its matrix a number of very old sacred spots, well correlated with the later important human interventions into the environment. In other words, they form the basis of Zagreb’s cultural landscape as we mostly know it today, and confirm that the Mountain has been the key factor of the city’s existence. Not only that its two core areas – Gradec and Kaptol – sprang up on the Mountain’s offshoots, but it has acted as a positive climate modifier, and the source of the most of the necessities of life throughout the history.

⁷ Goss and Gudek 2009, pp. 11-16.



9. The Solin “small triangle” (V. Belaj).

2. Jelena (Helen)

Zagreb has established its prominence by the end of the 11th century. As long term investigators of the earliest monumental Slavic art on the territory of Croatia, we asked ourselves the following question: could, or even should, such a process of endowing the human environment with sense and meaning take into consideration some key individual sites and monuments of the nation’s history? To explore this venue of investigation we should descend to the cradle of Croatian past – Central Dalmatia.

Katičić and Belaj have duly demonstrated that the landscape around Žrnovnica to the east of Split follows the pattern of early Slavic mythical structures⁸. If Perun was located at Sv. Juraj above Žrnovnica, could Mokoš and Veles be found at some of the key national monuments in the Podmorje župa, i.e., the Salonitan ager and the land in between Trogir, Klis, and Split. Choices are many – royal estates and foundations at Bijaći, Putalj, Rižinice, etc., but the most obvious and illustrious spot would have been the Otok (Island) in Solin, on the river Jadro, the site of the mausoleum of the Croatian kings, expanded by Queen Jelena (Helen) before 976⁹ (fig. 6). Indeed, the Perun above Žrnovnica looms tall and clear toward the southeast (fig. 7). If so, maybe Veles had his abode in Paljud, *Paludes*,

⁸ Belaj 2007, pp. 441-443.

⁹ Goss 1975-76.



10. The Peak of St. Jakob from Medvedgrad (Goss/Jukić).



11. Sv. Brdo in the Velebit (Goss/Jukić).



12. *The Western Papuk from Bijela (V. Belaj).*

the marshy land to the north of the walls of the early medieval Split, i.e. Diocletian's Palace. A spot worthy of consideration would be the hexaconch church of the Holy Trinity and St. Michael, who often tames Veles by sitting upon his home (fig. 8). At our request Professor Belaj had checked out our suggestions and successfully drawn a so-called "small mythical triangle" in line with our proposition (fig. 9)¹⁰.

The form of the small church, today lost among large suburban buildings, but once on a raised spot of the peninsula and thus much more visible than today, is that of a polyconch, remarkably frequent in the Pre-Romanesque architecture in Croatia. Elsewhere V. Goss has endeavored to demonstrate that the frequency of appearance of the type (be it in its hexaconchal or octoconchal form) is due to the fact that the Slavs recognized a plan which reminded them of sanctuaries in the old country. This is fully in harmony with the established church practice of using places and forms known to the pagan population to facilitate the reception of the new faith¹¹.

Our conclusion is that we should intensely subject the key sites of early Croatian history to such an analysis of surrounding space, for example, the Biskupija area near Knin, the Savior's Church at the spring of Cetina, as well as a number of other key sites in the Zadar and Split hinterland.

¹⁰ On the distinction between «big» and «small» triangles, Belaj and Belaj 2007, 16-23.

¹¹ Goss 2009, pp. 152-163.



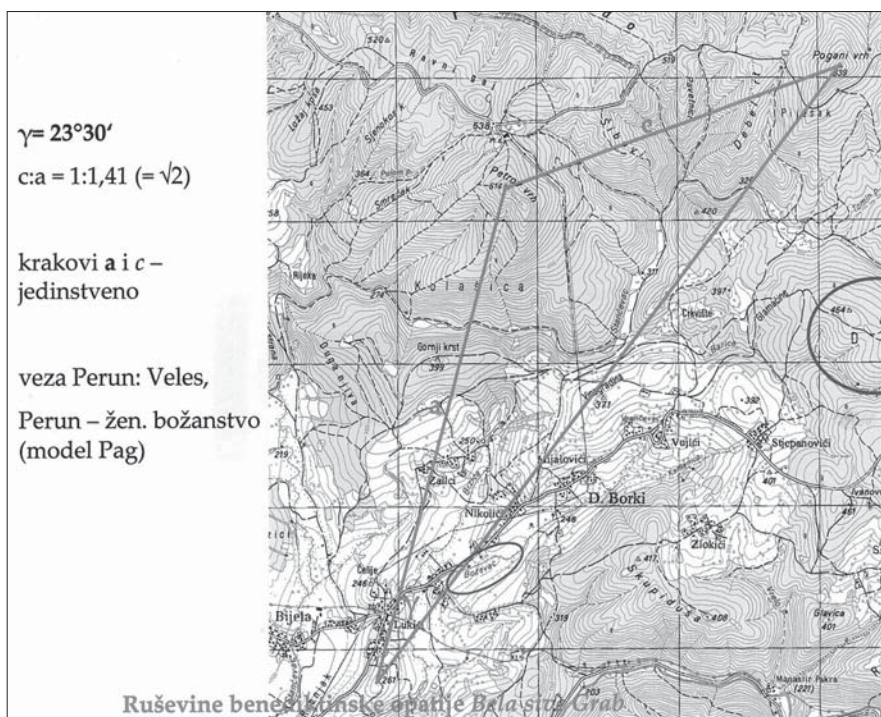
13. The Pogani vrh.

3. Bogdin

It has become quite clear that the patterns resulting from application of mythological matter to the landscape, i.e., of human creative interventions into the environment based on mythological elements, occur with considerable frequency. Are there any indications that some forms keep recurring in terms to tell the same tale?

Viewed from Medvedgrad, St. Jakob appears as a fine pyramidal hill (fig. 10). A pyramid is also the Sveto Brdo (the Holy Mountain, fig. 11) on the Southern Velebit, identified as a Perun's seat; or one could quote the Kajles, a Holy Mountain in the Himalayas. Professor Belaj has confirmed and drawn a sacred triangle at the Western tip of the Papuk Mountain in Western Slavonia (fig. 14), which includes a beautiful pyramid of the Pogani Vrh (the Pagan Peak, Perun's seat), the wiggly Petrov Vrh (Peter's Peak, Veles' home), and Mokoš's location exactly at the site of the Benedictine monastery of Bijela, one of the key monuments of the Croatian Middle Ages (fig. 12, 13)¹².

¹² Here we would like to recall a fine paper on the topic given by Professor Tomo Vinšćak at the Conference «Pag u praskozorje hrvatskoga kršćanstva,» Pag, September 26-28, 2008, entitled «Sv. Brdo na južnom Velebitu.» We remain grateful to Professor Vinšćak for additional information. We are equally grateful to Professor Vitomir Belaj to have confirmed our intuitions concerning the Zapadni Papuk triangle. See also Goss 2008B, pp. 264-266, and Goss and Gudek 2009, p. 14.



14. Western Papuk triangle (V. Belaj).

Pyramidal mountains have recently gained some notoriety, but here our, admittedly still limited sample, indicates that the regular pyramid form may be the standard “image” of Perun’s home.

Frequently traveling between Zagreb and Rijeka, we have noticed from the through-way, as it descends from the Highlands toward the Kvarner Gulf between Oštrovica and Kikovica, a few very fine pyramidal peaks. As one has been more and more exposed to the cultural anthropologists’ doctrine, we finally picked up a map and established that one of them, not the tallest but in the middle, is called Bogdin (Bog=God, thus possibly God’s peak, or definitely a place related to a God) (fig. 15). It is surrounded by two hills called Velika and Mala Pliš (Big and Little Pliš=Plešivica=Bald Mountain, i. e., Witches’ Mountain) and a smaller hill called Svetonjić (Svet=Holy, thus a place related to Holiness).

We would like to draw the attention of our colleagues to the Bogdin group, as we ourselves have been unable to find any other sensibly related spots in the landscape (we would single out, though, place names such as Bojušine and Treska), and yet believe that here we have a basis for expert research. In saying so we rely on both the place names, but also believe that some confirmation is offered by the form of the hill; and that we may be at the trace of an emerging “iconography of the landscape.”

The standard history of visual arts does not rush to accept views like that, as they threaten the traditional borders between disciplines as well as those within the history



15. *Bogdin* (Goss/Jukić).

of visual arts itself. Such views may be close to some radical theories of art of the 20th century, as they take into consideration not just a “static” visual phenomenon called “the work of art,” but also a process requiring a study of the role of the observer and his movement throughout the time and space¹³. The observer’s participation means that in addition to the art of creating images, sounds, movements, smells, etc., we must also have an art of experiencing, a stance that seriously questions the position of *the* art as something elevated and elitist, while at the same time underlining the tremendous importance that “art as living environment” has for one’s both physical and spiritual well-being (if it is at all wise to make distinction between the two)¹⁴. Which, next, underlines the importance of understanding and respecting our environment, as being kind to our environment we are being kind to ourselves.

¹³ Hopkins 2000, pp. 161-197; Danto 2003, 103-124.

¹⁴ Dutton 2009, chapter «Art and Human Nature.»

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Jakob, Jelena i Bogdin – tri minijature na zadanu temu

Vladimir Peter Goss, Vesna Mikić

Čovjek nikad nije mogao živjeti u okolišu koji nije osmislio svojim duhom, odnosno gdje se nije spojilo stvarateljstvo ljudskog roda i prirode. U tom okviru «zeleni» - su otišli dalje od «kulturnjaka», no danas se počinje shvaćati da zaštite opće ekologije nema bez zaštite i prirodne i kulturne ekologije. U biti, one su neodvojive. Takvo shvaćanje vodi do shvaćanja stvaralačke suradnje čovjeka i prirode, te se time lome granice između «grana umjetnosti», ali i granice između «visoke» i «niske», «elitne» i «pučke» umjetnosti, itd. Velika je zasluga lingvistike i kulturne antropologije pri vraćanju studija likovnih umjetnosti na pravi put. U svjetlu izrečenog, iznio bih ukratko tri primjera pokušaja sagledavanja nekih kulturno-pejsažnih fenomena s gledišta proučavatelja likovnih umjetnosti.

1. Jakob.

Naš prvi primjer se obraća Zagrebačkom Prigorju. Profesor Belaj je pokazao kako se ključne točke tog pejsaža mogu posložiti u «sveti trkut» - Sv. Jakob na Medvednici (Perun), Sv. Marko na Gradecu (Mokoš) i Županići na Jarunu (Veles). Belaj je primijetio također da tri važna orijentira tog pejsaža nalaze na istoj crti. Crta se preko Save nastavlja u Jakuševac, gdje je u 14. st. a vjerojatno i prije župa Sv. Marka. Preko Medvednice, crta se nastavlja u Jakovlje i Igrišće, toponim koji se u vrlo zanimljivom spomeničkom kontekstu javlja i na Kalniku (mjesto rituala). Dalje nismo išli jer već i ovo zahtijeva intenzivan rad na terenu koji slijedi.

Uz tu os vežu se još neki zanimljivi položaji, prvenstveno na području Remetskog «džepa» moguće najranije jegre slavenskog Zagreba. U skupini Lipa-Rog na istočnom dijelu središnje Medvednice (kako nam je pojasnio Pofesor Pleterski, opet toponimi bogatog sadržaja) locirali smo moguću zanimljivu točku, brijeg po imenu Stari kip.

A povučemo li crtu sa Sv. Jakoba kroz područje Kamenitog stola u Remetama dolazimo do rimskog pretka Zagreba, Andautonije!

Dakle, kulturni pejsaž Zagrebačkog Prigorja ima kao temelj mrežu vrlo starih svetih mjesta, koja uvelike korelira s ljudskim zahvatima u okolišu.

2. Jelena

Može li ovakovo osmišljavanje pejsaža, uzeti u obzir važne spomenike nacionalne povijesti? Na pr., ako je Perun kod Sv. Jurja nad Žrnovnicom, da li su Mokoš i Veles na nekom od važnih predromaničkih lokaliteta splitske okolice. Mokoš bi trebala biti na Otoku u Solinu kod crkve SS. Marije i Stjepana, mauzoleja Kraljice Jelene i hrvatskih kraljeva, a Veles na Poljudu (Paludes-Močvare), možda kod šesterolisne crkvice Sv. Trojstva i Mihočila (koji često sjeda ba Velesove položaje). Profesor Belaj mi je nacrtao, t.z., mali trokut koji odgovara mojoj pretpostavci.

Dakle valja podvrgnuti ključne spomenike ranog hrvatskog kršćanstva sličnim analizama.

3. Bogdin

Ako se naslućuju uzorci u stvaralačkom osmišljavanju pejsaža, da li smo na tragu nekoj ikonografiji pejsaža? Sv. Jakob je lijepa piramidalna glavica, pa tako i Sv. Brdo na

Južnom Velebitu, Pogani vrh na Zapadnom Papuku i Kajles, sveto brdo Himalaja. Da li je razmjerno pravilan piramidalni oblik standardna «slika» Perunovog stana?

Iznad autoceste Zagreb-Rijeka između Oštrovice i Kikovice ima nekoliko vrlo lijepih «piramida» od kojih se jedna zove Bogdin! Mislim da smo zaista na putu prema ikonografiji pejzažnih oblika.