

# BELIEF IN SAINTS. SENSORY REALITY IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

AS PRESENTED IN EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN CROATIA

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*Examples of people's belief in patron saints on the territory of Croatia are used in an attempt to explain the sensation of sanctity through the prism of the senses harnessed in its shaping. In the same context, some practices noticed during a contemporary celebration of Youth Day (the birthday of Josip Broz Tito) in Kumrovec point to the process of consecrating of the person and place that normally, due to their provenance, are marked as absolutely non-religious or even anti-religious.*

Keywords: *saints, Josip Broz Tito, religious experience, senses, Croatia.*

*Številni primeri ljudskih verovanj v svetnike zavetnike na Hrvaškem so uporabljeni v poskusu, da bi razložili občutenje svetosti v prizmi čutnosti. V istem kontekstu so bili opazovani nekateri dogodki med sodobnim praznovanjem dneva mladosti (rojstnega dne Josipa Broza Tita) v Kumrovcu, ki kažejo na proces posvetitve osebe in prostora, ki sta po svoji provenienci označena kot popolnoma nereligiozna ali celo antireligiozna.*

Ključne besede: *svetniki, Josip Broz Tito, religijsko izkustvo, čutila, Hrvaška.*

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My point of departure is the understanding that religious persons are active creators of their religiosity and that this process involves their entire being. As stated by Talal Asad, research on religiosity includes *the entire range of disciplinary activities, of instrumental forms of knowledge and practice, within which selves are formed, and possibilities of 'attaining to faith' are marked out* [Asad 1983: 249].

This paper is based on parts of a broader study of belief in saints that are considered patrons and protectors in various life situations in Croatian religiosity.<sup>1</sup> Certain saints are believed to be protectors against diseases and patrons of health in general, protectors of cattle and against pests and bad weather, as well as patrons of certain trades and professions. Generally speaking, the presence of patron saints in people's lives is twofold. Sometimes

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<sup>1</sup> The data were gathered from collections of published works and manuscripts, as well as during my field research. The collections I used include: the journal *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena* (the first fifty issues, 1896–1986) issued by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (previously the Yugoslav Academy); the journal *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja Sarajevo* (1889–2000); the archives of questionnaires for the *Etnološki atlas Jugoslavije*, archived at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts in Zagreb (collected 1960–1989); and the collection of manuscripts created as a result of the research project *Združivanja i njihovi etnološki pokazatelji*, archived at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts in Zagreb (collected 1983–1989). The field research was conducted from 2001 to 2005 in 12 places in Croatia (in western Croatian Zagorje, central and northern Istria, the region of northern Velebit and Senjsko Bilo, the island of Cres, Čilipi in Konavle, and Zagreb). A detailed presentation of material on the veneration and roles of patron saints in Croatia, as well as a critical analysis of sources and an evaluation of extant material, has already been published [cf. Belaj 2006: 23–211].

patron saints exist in people's minds only as a mere fact (knowing the patron saints and their roles), and sometimes they constitute an element of truly living belief. Which of these two categories unfolds in a specific situation is actually a question of how belief in the saints is expressed.

Naturally, various forms of venerating saints are well known. One should mention various prayers and prayer rituals, such as everyday prayer, vows, pilgrimages, use of blessed items and blessings, and processions and practices aimed at controlling bad weather and other misfortunes, as well as various artistic and architectural expressions: paintings decorating homes or small votive pictures carried at one's side at all times, the erection of chapels, pillars, crosses, and crucifixes; organizations such as fraternities, and so on. Various forms of saint veneration may also include fasting, going around the altar or the church (sometimes barefoot or on one's knees), touching or kissing sacred pictures or objects, lighting candles, offerings (flowers, money, jewellery, wax, wooden or metal votive offerings, hair, parts of clothes, fruits), and so on. Veneration of saints can also be expressed in stories, poems, proverbs, and divination formulas. Generally speaking, many of these forms of behaviour are frequently intertwined in religious practice.

The character of patron saints' presence in people's lives is connected with the ways that people perceive and understand the notion of the term *patron saint*. A religious person will primarily connect the notion of *patron saint* with the patron saint of the local church – who is not, or need not be, present in the person's everyday religiosity. Patron saints (i.e., church titulars) frequently gain a certain profane character in this context. For example, by emphasizing 'our' saint, as compared to 'their saint', members of a community express their identity and assign them the role of a symbol around which one gathers. Furthermore, when patron saints are directly mentioned as church titulars, they are frequently connected with their particular saint's day. On these occasions the informants strongly emphasize the importance of village cohesion and socializing, and it would seem that the religious practice, sometimes even the knowledge of the role and the function of the specific patron, is less important.

I must emphasize that such examples, even though quite numerous, do not represent a unique pattern of behaviour towards patron saints.

The questions of communal identity and village social life in which patron saints can play a significant role in the ethnological sense should not be overlooked. However, when talking about research on religiosity, numerous accounts point to the necessity of clearly separating the *knowledge of* patron saints from the *belief in* patron saints. *Belief* entails a dedicated participation in religiosity and should be reflected in the accompanying expression of religious feelings. In line with these thoughts, research on belief in patron saints at the community level, clearly distinguished from sheer knowledge about saints, requires a specific research context.

Dedicated participation in religiosity is based on activity of the senses; that is, on the presence of experience induced by an event, the goal of which is to achieve sanctity. Recog-

nizing and understanding experiences or sensations leads to the point where it is possible to determine the meanings that believers ascribe to their patron saints.

### THE AVAILABILITY OF SANCTITY

An extremely illustrative reflection of the need to be close to – and have close contact with – the saint is going on pilgrimages. Without doubt, by its very nature this reveals people's need to have direct contact with sanctity. In order to attain the experience of unification with sanctity, the saint – or rather, his or her representation in a form of a statue or a painting – must often be touched, stroked, or kissed. The same thing happens in churches whose titular saints are celebrated on specific days, when major village fairs are organized. In the village of Krivi Put, in a hilly region near the town of Senj, during the celebration of Our Lady of the Snows on August 5th, touching of objects that are considered sacred appears to be an integral part of religious celebration in different segments. In the description of the events that took place on this date in 2004 [Kulišić and Vuković 2004: 256], one reads that people would, upon arriving at the church, go around the altar and touch its left and right corners, either taking a vow or simply expressing deep religious feelings. Next to the altar dedicated to Our Lady of the Snows, to its left, there is also a statue of Mary, in front of which they would also pray while touching and kissing the statue. The statue is carried in a procession, which signals the beginning of the mass. The formation of this procession is emotionally the strongest moment of the entire celebration – it results in a surge of emotions, even tears. Many people start moving towards the central aisle, through which the procession leaves the church, with the intention of touching the statue. Furthermore, during the procession, several women touch the apsidal, posterior part of the church. By doing this, as one of them said, they strengthen their prayer.

This need to be close to a saint seems to imply that the saint has a worldly address. Unconceivable and hidden reality is brought into existence in a form that can be perceived by the human senses.

Another example is found in the Church of the Holy Spirit in the city of Zagreb, where on the feast day of St Anthony of Padua believers wait in a long and slow queue to go around the central altar and touch or kiss the marked spot on the back of the altar, where the saint's relics are stored. In 2004, before the beginning of the noon mass, which was held by an Apostolic delegate, an elderly lady asked to stand in the queue in front of me for five minutes, *just to see him*. She meant St Anthony of Padua. Outside the church there was still a long line of believers waiting in front of the statue of St Anthony placed on a platform to the left side of the church. Everybody would come close to the statue, say something to it, and touch the statue, the cross on its robe, or the little Jesus. Most of them touched St Anthony's face and hands (Fig. 1). Many went around the statue, touching it at the same time.



Fig. 1: Touching of the statue of St. Anthony of Padua. Church of the Holy Spirit, Zagreb, 2004 [Photo by M. Belaj].

Placed within a statue or a painting, the saint can be felt – seen, touched, and directly spoken to. In the same group of beliefs that a supernatural blessing can be obtained by touch, we can include the belief documented in the mid-20th century near the city of Rijeka (in the Kastav region). It is recorded that on the day of St Lucy, the protector of sight, some believers came to the Church of St Lucy to wipe their eyes with the altar covering to ensure the good health of their eyes [Jardas 1957: 23]. In northern Istria it is not enough to pray to St Anthony the Abbot to protect the cattle. In order to make a saint more available and more present, his or her picture is placed in barns [Belaj 2006: 83]. It is this visible presentation that is believed to be the actual saint, the true source of power ascribed to sanctity, the power that protects from misfortunes and guarantees general welfare.

A specific expression of the living dialogue with sanctity is the blessing that is given on this saint's day or at a moment of hardship and insecurity, when a person seeks help and protection from the saint. On this occasion, various objects are used to ensure and strengthen the desired result. These may include holy water, food, or a twig. It is believed that by touching, tasting, or burning these, a person can sanctify himself and his environment. The power of these objects, mediated sanctity, is brought closer to sensory reality through this act – it is materialized in tangibility, taste, smell.

Water, the symbolic source of security and life, an instrument of purification and

the centre of renewal and rebirth, is frequently seen as the materialization of supernatural mercy in Croatian religious practice. This mercy can be obtained through direct contact with water. For example, it is almost a general belief that water has beneficial power on the day of St John the Baptist, so it is believed that people should wash their faces in it or take a bath on this day in order to obtain this blessing. In accounts describing the village of Varoš near Slavonski Brod from the beginning of the 20th century, a spring was mentioned from which water flowed into a pit, and religious people washed their faces in it. People called this spring the “little vow” to St John the Baptist [Lukić 1919: 41].

The belief that the saint’s mercy is present in blessed objects and, in this way, obtainable through our senses, can also be illustrated with examples of practices connected with St Blaise’s Day. In Croatia, St Blaise is commonly accepted as the patron of the throat. In some villages in northwest Croatia, it is believed that by eating apples blessed in the church on this particular day people will ensure that St Blaise’s protective powers are translated onto them [Horvat 1896: 242; Kotarski 1917: 195; Belaj 2006: 46]. In a village in central Istria, this supernatural mercy of St Blaise is materialized in a brandy that is drunk on the occasion [Belaj 2006: 45]. These concrete mediators of St Blaise’s power, by tasting of which you can obtain his protection, also include cookies (in a village in the Dalmatian hinterland) [Ivanišević 1905: 42] and pastry (in a Slavonian village) [Čolić 1917: 145].

In the attempt to eliminate hardships and to ensure the desired order in his everyday life, man has tried to consecrate not only himself, but also his surroundings – fields, cattle, stables, and house. In this context one can find numerous examples of using twigs blessed at church on Palm Sunday or water blessed on the Epiphany. For example, the danger of an approaching storm can be overcome by burning a blessed twig because its scent is believed to be an apparition of sanctity needed in the fight against all evil. In northern Velebit, in addition to praying to Elijah to prevent bad weather and thunderstorms, people burn blessed twigs in front of their houses while directing the smoke towards the approaching storm. An informant said: *We kept them. We used to burn three, four twigs. Evergreen smells nice . . . And it would be as if you removed it [the storm] by hand* [Belaj 2005: 384].

Some also believe that the power contained in a blessed twig can affect the crops, so they tend to put them in direct contact with the soil. Twigs are therefore stuck into fields on St Mark’s Day, for example, in Konavle [Belaj 2006: 136], or on St George’s Day in Croatian Zagorje [Kotarski 1917: 198]. It is believed that the twigs mediate the Lord’s blessing to the fields, and ensure a good crop and protection from hail.

Blessed water as a mediator of sanctity also has widespread use in folk religious practice. In a small village in northern Velebit, people would pray to St Anthony of Padua<sup>2</sup> to heal the cattle and the cattle were simultaneously sprinkled with holy water [Belaj 2006: 85]. In the same region, God’s blessing on the cattle was obtained by sprinkling the barns on the

<sup>2</sup> This transfer of the function of the patron of cattle from St Anthony the Abbot to St Anthony of Padua has also been documented outside Croatia. In his book *Praznično leto Slovencev*, Niko Kuret stated that this has gradually happened in Slovenian religiosity as well [Kuret 1989/1: 377–378].

Epiphany [ibid. 92]. Furthermore, St George's day was celebrated by blessing the cattle. In this case, the prayer for good health was accompanied with whipping the cattle with the blessed twig and sprinkling the cattle with the blessed water, or by sprinkling the cattle and burning the blessed twigs so that their smoke filled the entire barn. Some people would intensify the smell by burning garlic as well. It was believed that this smell would ensure the protection of cattle from snakebites [Belaj 2004: 147–148]. In Istria, on the day of St Anthony the Abbot, the cattle were blessed not only with holy water, but also by tasting blessed salt [Belaj 2006: 83].

From the examples mentioned above, it is evident that the frequent use of blessed twigs, water, or food in folk blessings and, generally, notions about Christian saints that are believed to have a certain influence on the natural world and earthly needs, reflect a specific relationship between man and sanctity. This is a relationship in which sanctity can be easily reached. Water, twigs, and food are materializations of supernatural mercy. In moments of any kind of crisis, this supernatural mercy is readily available and effected through tactile contact with blessed water, the taste of blessed food, or the smell of the blessed twig. The indefinite feelings of holiness here were transformed into something concrete, perceivable, and visible, and a large number of sacred objects and ritual practices enable people to fulfil their wish to consecrate their entire surroundings.

## THE SENSES AND THE PROCESS OF CONSECRATION

The sources mentioned at the beginning of this article present an abundance of data indicating that people sought to transcend the uncertainties of earthly existence by bringing sanctity into the world of senses; that is, through its transformation into some sensory form. Instead of insisting on similar contemporary examples, in the same context I now present the results of my research on an event that, due to its provenance, falls completely outside the religious domain. Within the framework of this event, I also present an instance of worship of a person that has never officially been declared a saint, and never could be, but is made into a saint by the participants in the event, who then visit his statue.<sup>3</sup> In other words, my intention is to show that the senses play an important role in the process of consecrating a person or a place.

The event in question is the celebration of Youth Day (SCr. *Dan mladosti*), which was an official state holiday in the former Yugoslavia, commemorating the birthday of Josip Broz Tito during the communist period. None of the newly formed states in southeast Europe celebrate this day as a state holiday today; however, Youth Day seems to have survived political changes. This is proved by the thousands of people that come from all parts of the former Yugoslavia and still organize and participate in this celebration in Kumrovec,

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<sup>3</sup> The data were collected during the celebration of Youth Day in 2004.

the birthplace of Josip Broz. The statue of Josip Broz<sup>4</sup> beside his birth house has a special place in this celebration. The village itself, thanks to the statue of Josip Broz Tito and the historical inventory connected to it, has received the mark of a sacred place, primarily from those that participate in the celebration, but not exclusively from them.

The statue of Josip Broz in Kumrovec often acts as an intersection point of conflict between different interpretations of history. Some people feel that it should be removed, and have even planted explosive devices under it. In 2004 the statue was damaged in an explosion and had to be sent for restoration. Others are appalled at such incidents and are in favour of the statue remaining where it is.<sup>5</sup>

In this way, the monument to Josip Broz stops being a monument and becomes Josip Broz himself. This is the fact I will focus on.

It would be quite unusual if the dismantling or survival of a statue could solve disputes on the interpretation of history, and therefore it is certain that the meaning and importance attributed to this statue extend far beyond its sheer physical existence. Because we are talking about Josip Broz Tito – a figure about whom public opinion ranges from the extremes of ‘the greatest son and teacher of our peoples’ to ‘butcher, criminal, dictator’ – it becomes evident that, in the disputes already mentioned, all these characteristics belonging to a real person are projected onto the statue that represents him. In this way, the monument to Josip Broz stops being a monument and becomes Josip Broz himself. This is precisely why the destruction or survival of the statue is so important to each of the parties in the conflict.

The opposite attitudes towards the monument to Josip Broz are interesting insofar as they represent, at least to some people, something untouchable, “sacred”, causing them to view its desecration as “sacrilege”. To others, the very existence of the monument is “sacrilege”. In both cases, the statue is perceived as the man himself, and the rest of this paper will address exactly this aspect of the problem. However, a proper understanding of the matter is not possible through a mere sounding and interpretation of conflicting ideas because we would run the risk of taking the life out of something that in reality is very much alive. *Identities are not at first hand a question of ideas but of ordinary practice – the tactile, sensual and practical relationship to the natural and humanly created environment* [Frykman & Gilje 2003: 11]. In this sense, instead of wondering about what Tito’s monument in Kumrovec represents, I was interested in what was happening around it and what its influence was on

<sup>4</sup> The statue was created by the Croatian sculptor Antun Augustinčić. It was placed beside Tito’s house in 1948.

<sup>5</sup> Such phenomena are not endemic to Croatian society. Many monuments to Tito have been removed throughout Bosnia, causing graffiti such as *Tito, come back* to appear as an expression of dissenting political opinion [Ridley 2000: 460]. Contemporary and similar to these events was the spectacular overthrow of the monument of Saddam Hussein in 2003 in Iraq. Destroying statues of former rulers or dictators has long been common in many societies, while sometimes even the very mention of their names was banned. The supporters of the new order not only take vengeance through this act and right past wrongs, but also unequivocally mark the boundary between the past and the present. *To pass judgement on the practices of the old regime is the constitutive act of the new order* [Connerton 1989: 7].

those “using” it. This presents a paradox. Tito and his followers held to Marxist doctrine and publicly denounced religion. Moreover, religion was an issue that was not even mentioned, except as an opiate for the masses. Thus, the big issue is how to experience the statue of Tito as Tito himself, without this experience being religious in a certain way.

Without doubt, the statue of Josip Broz can be viewed as merely a remnant, or as an object. I prefer to view it as one side of a living dialogue, or as a subject. What kind of dialogue takes place between the statue and the visitors to Kumrovec, what effect does the statue have on them, and how do they in turn make it alive? The anthropologist Michael Jackson wrote:

*The meaning of body praxis is not always reducible to cognitive and semantic operations: body movements often make sense without being intentional in the linguistic sense, as communicating, codifying, symbolizing, signifying thoughts or things that lie outside or anterior to speech.* [Jackson 1983: 329]

Understanding the significance of what those attending the Youth Day festivities do, capturing the meaning of their experience, meant inhabiting their world and bodily participating in it by imitating their actions [Jackson 1996: 28–29].

A long queue leads to events around the statue; only in its outside appearance is it a queue to have a photograph taken with the statue. While queuing, the conversations of the people were imbued with that which is commonly ascribed to the domain of religion. A man from Varaždin asked me to pose for a picture with him. While watching the people taking their pictures, he said: *He was too gracious.* When I drew his attention to the people touching the statue, he explained: *Well you see, he was a god. He is a god. And we will touch him.* When our turn came, we laid our palms on the coat of the statue. *Now we're close,* he said. His experience of closeness, of intimacy, is hardly an effect of touching a mere statue. If that were the case, his experience would probably be that of the coolness of the material the statue was made of.

I approached a woman who had just been wiping away tears.<sup>6</sup> When I asked her if she was sad, a smile appeared on her face and she said she was very happy. She told me how in *those days* people had had different values, how Tito deserved credit for this, and how today, pointing to the statue, *his feet should be kissed for it.* There were no great historical facts in her story, no ideological doctrine founded in this history. She told me about her personal experience of the time, the sacrifices that were made in the determination, pride, and desire to move on; of her own emancipation and the founding of her family; of a morality marked by family values and solidarity instead of materialism.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to believe that a statue might induce such memories and almost instructive narrations. I asked her:

– *Have you touched Tito?*

<sup>6</sup> The woman in question was born in 1928 and was living in Križ (northwest Croatia) at the time.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting that such views are inspired by the statue of Josip Broz, who for many reasons (e.g., his automobile collection, his cigars, his private Brijuni Islands, association with Sophia Loren, etc.) was commonly perceived as a *bon-vivant*.



- *[she laughs] Many times!*
- *You said we ought to kiss his feet . . .*
- *Not just the feet, we should kiss the pedestal itself. Because what he did for man . . . You don't forget that. We were all equal. All for one, you understand. I am proud of that. And nothing can change that. Nothing! . . . Pure hearts, pure souls, and no one can take that away. They can take your life away, everything . . . but this . . . no one can ever . . .*

While she looked at the statue, recalled the events of the past, and renewed moral principles adopted long ago, I was sure that she saw a real person in it – Josip Broz himself. She was not looking at the bronze statue in Kumrovec, but at Josip Broz, who was to her the embodiment of the times and the virtues she talked about. This experience was surely stimulated by the nearness of the statue.

The statue of the person – who, for those participating in the celebration, is an epitome of virtue and ideal – provokes in them specific gestures, actions, and emotions that in turn transform this statue into the living person. Many of these actions and gestures are not simply suggestive of the religious, but are in fact taken over from religious practice. The majority of those coming to the statue were individuals that expressed and experienced their meeting with the statue in a lively manner. They talked to the statue, saluted it, cried while looking at it, or touched it.

One woman constantly kissed and touched the statue and the other ecstatically kissed its coat and feet, and then searched for the hand placed at the back of the statue in order to shake it. One woman came running into the garden and shouldered her way to the statue, obviously very excited. She stroked it several times, and at every stroke she would say: *This is for Radenković, this is for Majda . . .* and she continued with different names. After that, she kissed Tito's coat. There were groups of women that circled around the statue touching it, while some would simply touch it and cross themselves. That day, many expressed in similar ways their experiences that were the result of their encounter with the statue (Figures 2–6).

To them, and to all those that talked to the statue or saluted it, this statue had undergone transcendence, becoming the person it represented. The relationship these people had with this statue was a relationship of two entities – a relationship that is very much like that of the one formed between a religious person and his or her patron saint. In this respect, the cult of Josip Broz is similar to religiosity as manifested in the veneration of the saints. I have in mind above all the circling around the statue, saluting and talking to it, lighting candles, laying flowers at its feet, the gesture of crossing oneself in front of the statue, and touching and kissing the statue.

It is worth adding that, apart from events around the statue, one finds other interesting information referring to the presence of the religious sphere either directly or indirectly; for example, in participants' stories:



Fig. 2: Touching of the statue of Josip Broz Tito. Kumrovec, 2004 [Photo by M. Belaj].



Fig. 3: Touching of the statue of Josip Broz Tito. Kumrovec, 2004 [Photo by M. Belaj].



Fig. 4: Touching and circling around the statue of Josip Broz Tito. Kumrovec, 2004 [Photo by M. Belaj].

1. *Look, everything is important. First we went to Tito's monument. I talked to him and kissed him. I do that every time.*
2. *What more can I say: Tito, you were a god, you are a god. What else? . . . Before we couldn't go to church, we were communists. Now you can do anything, even admire Tito.*
3. *I'll tell you why I'm here – Tito is a god! I'm not religious, but Tito is a god.*
4. *I'm sorry I didn't take that big picture of Tito. I have it at home. Just like someone would put God up. And I, I have a crucifix, I have God up, but I also have Tito. He was a god and this one is God. For me, they both live. [Where do you keep the picture?] In the room. No one is allowed to take him down from there. If they do, I'm leaving home.*
5. *[Is there any other day in the year that is so important to you?] Yes, Easter is important, and Christmas too.*



Fig. 5: Lighting of candles in front of the statue of Josip Broz Tito. Kumrovec, 2004 [Photo by M. Belaj].



Fig. 6: Talking to the statue of Josip Broz Tito. Kumrovec, 2004 [Photo by M. Belaj].

Furthermore, on the banners the visitors carried at the celebration, I could see messages such as *Yesterday, today, forever Tito*, or *Tito lived, Tito is alive, Tito will live*, and in the visitors' book in the house Tito was born in there were sentences like *Rise, my comrade, and chase these guys away; In my heart you remain immortal; Peace be with you*, signed by two nuns; or *Blessed is the one that lives forever*. I should also mention the introductory speech on the stage, which started with the following: *Tito, our comrade! I am speaking to you on behalf of . . .* which also shows his actual presence in the experience of the admiring visitors.

The thing that becomes especially interesting in the expressed experiences of the statue is the transition of behavioural practices from one domain to another; that is, the presence of the elements of folk religiosity in the framework of celebrating the profane (even communist!) holiday of Youth Day. It seems that this historical distance of 15 years enabled the people that were pro-communist to drop this anti-religious ideology, and this mixture of different worldviews could be a logical outcome of this, without any consequences. Furthermore, the celebration itself, as a contemporary escape from everyday life, introduces certain emotional and mental excitement that results in changes in physical behaviour. Escape from everyday life and surroundings *lays people open to possibilities of behaviour which they embody but ordinarily are not inclined to express* [Jackson 1983: 334–335]. The celebration of Youth Day

and the living cult of Josip Broz in today's broader social context are not a part of everyday life; indeed, they are often placed at the margins and sometimes even ridiculed.

These events confirm yet another fact. Official institutionalization is not a necessary prerequisite for a place to become sacred. Furthermore, the character of certain places will never allow official consecration to take part. The consecration of such places happens through unrestrained sensory experiences and interpretations that, in their meaning, belong to the religious domain, but transform the place into a real pilgrimage centre through their importance and character. These experiences and interpretations can be so powerful as to result in a complete reversal in the meaning of a place that, in its character, is marked as completely non-religious, even anti-religious – as has happened with the village of Kumrovec.

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## VEROVANJE V SVETNIKE. ČUTNA REALNOST V VERSKI IZKUŠNJI (PRIMERI S HRVAŠKEGA)

*Podlaga za razpravo so nekatere moje raziskave s področja verovanja v svetnike – zavetnike v hrvaški ljudski pobožnosti. Živa vera v svetnike zavetnike pomeni aktivni dialog s svetim, tj., aktivno doživetje svetega. To religiozno izkušnjo opazujem iz perspektive čutov, ki so vključeni v njeno oblikovanje.*

*Izrazi pobožnosti do svetnikov kot zavetnikov so raznovrstni. Za to priložnost sem izbrala posebej tiste, ki jasno kažejo na prepletanje konkretnega in abstraktnega in ki jasno nakazujejo željo, da se tisto, česar ni moč spoznati, pojavi v obliki, ki je dostopna čutom.*

*Najvidnejši odsev potrebe po bližini svetnika in želje, da bi dosegli enost s svetim, je verjetno odhod na romanje. Svetnika, natančneje – njegovo podobo v skulpturi ali na sliki, je treba pogosto videti, se je dotakniti, pobožati, poljubiti, svetnika nagovoriti z besedami in molitvami. Podobno se dogaja ob proščenjih (žegnanjih). V Krivem Putu (nad Senjem) je, npr., ob praznovanju dneva Marije Snežne, 5. avgusta, dotikanje predmetov, ki jih štejejo za svete, neogibna komponenta v več segmentih verskega praznovanja: verniki se dotaknejo levega in desnega vogala oltarja, posvečenega Mariji Snežni, dotikajo se in poljubljajo Marijin kip levo od oltarja, tega kipa se dotikajo tudi ob izhodu procesije iz cerkve, nekatere vernice se dotikajo ob procesiji zadnjega apsidalnega dela cerkve, posvečene Materi Božji Snežni.*

*Poseben izraz živega dialoga s svetim je blagoslov na god določenega svetnika ali pa v primeru negotovosti, ko se svetnika kliče na pomoč ali v zaščito. Ob tem rabijo predmete, ki povzročajo*

zaželjeni učinek. Na Hrvaškem so to npr. blagoslovljena voda, jed, sveča ali blagoslovljena vejica. Vernik želi posvetiti sebe in svojo okolico z dotikom, pokušanjem, sežiganjem teh predmetov. S temi dejanji se milost svetnika, posredovana v blagoslovljeni snovi, konkretizira v dotiku, okusu, vonju. V trenutkih negotovosti in nevarnosti lahko človek nejasen občutek svetosti s takšnimi postopki prevede v konkretno, razumljivo, vidno, ter si tako zavaruje zaželjeni Red.

Prizma čutnosti ponuja možnost odkrivanja religioznosti tudi tam, kjer je ne pričakujemo, vsaj ne nominalno. V tem kontekstu predstavljam rezultate spremljanja sodobnega praznovanja dneva mladosti v Kumrovcu. Gre za dogajanje, ki je po izviru popolnoma zunaj religioznega, tj. državni praznik iz časov bivše Jugoslavije, s katerim so praznovali rojstni dan Josipa Broza Tita. Sodeč po tisočeri udeležencih, ki še danes spremljajo praznovanje v Kumrovcu, je dan mladosti preživel politične spremembe. V tem praznovanju je zelo pomemben kip Josipa Broza, postavljen pred njegovo rojstno hišo v Kumrovcu.

Kip osebe, ki za udeležence praznovanja predstavlja utelešenje vzornosti in ideala, izziva v njih posebne geste, postopke in občutke. Ti, povratno, spreminjajo kip v osebo, ki jo predstavlja. Marsikateri postopek in gib kažejo, da so prevzeti iz verskih ritualnih praks. Tu v prvi vrsti mislim na dotikanje in poljubljanje kipa, obkrožanje in kroženje ob njem, pozdravljanje, nagovarjanje kipa, prižiganje sveč, polaganje cvetja okoli podstavka, celo na gesto križanja pred kipom. Odnos ljudi do kipa je razmerje med dvema entitetama, je razmerje, ki je podobno razmerju med verniki in svetnikom – zavetnikom.

Čeprav sam značaj Kumrovca ne bo nikoli omogočil njegove uradne kanonizacije, dogajanja v njem potekajo skozi nenadzorovana čutna doživetja in interpretacije, ki po svojem značaju sodijo v domeno religioznega, in ga po svoji moči in značilnostih povzdigujejo v pravo »božjepotno« središče. Zdi se, da zmorejo ta doživetja in interpretacije pripeljati do popolnega obrata v dojemalnju mesta, ki je po svoji provenienci označeno kot popolnoma nereligiozno ali celo antireligiozno, kakor je to v Kumrovcu.

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