

---

BETWEEN REVIVAL AND  
ATHEIZATION: STATECRAFT,  
IDENTITY, AND RELIGIOUS  
TRANSFORMATION IN FORMER  
YUGOSLAVIA



P O L I G R A F I

številka/number 117/118 • letnik/volume 30, 2025

---

UREDILA / EDITED BY

GAŠPER MITHANS

URŠKA BRATOŽ

---

---

P O L I G R A F I

Revija *Društva za primerjalno religiologijo* (Koper, Slovenija) /  
A journal of the *Society for Comparative Religion* (Koper, Slovenija)

ISSN 1318-8828, ISSN (spletna izd./online ed.) 2232-5174

Glavna urednika / Editors-in-Chief: Helena Motoh (ZRS Koper), Lenart Škof (ZRS Koper)  
Uredniški odbor / Editorial Board: Nadja Furlan Štante (ZRS Koper), Miha Pintarič (University of Ljubljana),  
Rok Svetlič (ZRS Koper), Igor Škamperle (University of Ljubljana), Mojca Terčelj (University of Primorska),  
Anja Zalta (University of Ljubljana)

Pisarna uredništva / Editorial Office: Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper /  
Science and Research Centre Koper,

Inštitut za filozofske in religijske študije / Institute for Philosophical and Religious Studies, Garibaldijeva 1,  
SI-6000 Koper, Slovenija

Telefon: +386 5 6637 700, Fax: + 386 5 6637 710, e-mail: helena.motoh@zrs-kp.si  
<http://ojs.zrs-kp.si/index.php/poligrafi/index>

številka / number 117/118, letnik / volume 30 (2025)

BETWEEN REVIVAL AND ATHEIZATION: STATECRAFT,  
IDENTITY, AND RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION IN  
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Uredila / Edited by: Gašper Mithans, Urška Bratož

Mednarodni uredniški odbor / International Editorial Board:

Tahir Abbas (Leiden University), Gorazd Andrejč (University of Groningen), Jadranka Rebeka  
Anić (Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar), Purushottama Bilimoria (Graduate Theological  
Union), Martha Frederiks (Utrecht University), Carool Kersten (King's College), David M.  
Kleinberg-Levin (Northwestern University), Esteban Krotz (UADY- Univesrsidad Autónoma  
de Yucartan, Unidad de Ciencias Sociales, Mexico), Ali Mostfa (Université catholique de Lyon),  
Jeffrey Robbins (Lebanon Valley College), Sashinungla (Jadavpur University), Clemens Sedmak  
(University of Notre Dame), Nicolas Standaert (KU Leuven), Klaus von Stosch (Universität  
Paderborn), Marko Uršič (University of Ljubljana), Noëlle Vahanian (Lebanon Valley College),  
Danial Yusof (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization)

Oblikovanje / Design: Peter Skalar

Prelom / Layout: Alenka Obid, Peter Florjančič

Tehnični urednici / Production editors: Alenka Obid, Barbara Bradaš Premrl

Fotografiji na naslovnici / Cover photographs: Shutterstock/Decha Photography, Gašper Mithans

Lektoriranje / Proofreading: Nina Novak Kerbler (sl.), Jezikovna zadruga Soglasnik (an.)

Prevod / Translation: Petra Berlot Kužner (sl/en, en/sl)

Spletna izdaja / Online edition

Dostopno na / Available at: <https://ojs.zrs-kp.si/index.php/poligrafi>

Založnik / Publishing house – Naročila / Orders – Copyright©:

Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper, Annales ZRS,

Garibaldijeva 1, 6000 Koper, Slovenija

Za založnika / For the publisher: Rado Pišot

Telefon: +386 5 663 77 00, Fax: +386 5 663 77 10, E-mail: [zalozba-annales@zrs-kp.si](mailto:zalozba-annales@zrs-kp.si)

Revija je vključena v naslednje mednarodne baze / The journal *Poligrafi* is indexed in:  
*Scopus, The Philosopher's Index, Cobiss*

Dvojna številka / Double issue: € 20,00

*Poligrafi* so izdani s sofinanciranjem

Javne agencije za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije /  
*Poligrafi* is published with the support of the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency

---

BETWEEN REVIVAL AND  
ATHEIZATION: STATECRAFT,  
IDENTITY, AND RELIGIOUS  
TRANSFORMATION IN  
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Gašper Mithans, Urška Bratož: *Introduction: Between Revival and  
Atheization: Statecraft, Identity, and Religious Transformation  
in Former Yugoslavia*

I

Sara Hajdinac: *Religious Identity as the State's Tool in Modification  
of Public Space and Its Identity: The Yugoslavian Concept of the Two  
Squares in Maribor*

7

Aleksandra Zibelnik Badii: *State of Governance of Religious  
Communities in Former Yugoslavia and the Developments of the Bahá'í  
Community and Jehovah's Witnesses*

47

Todor Lakić, Boris Vukićević, Saša Knežević: *The Dynamics of  
Atheization in Postwar Communist Montenegro*

79

Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja: *The Prohibition of Women's Veiling  
in the Region of Gora*

115

---

Jure Ramšak: *The Problem with Courtesy: Wooing the Catholic Church  
in Late Socialist Slovenia*

141

Petar Dragišić: *Serbian Press and Eastern Orthodoxy in Serbia in the  
1980s*

163

Igor Jurekovič: *Charismatic Christianity as Primal Spirituality?  
Some Observations from Slovenia*

181

Abstracts / Povzetki

215

About the Authors / O avtorjih in avtoricah

227

---

INTRODUCTION:  
BETWEEN REVIVAL AND  
ATHEIZATION: STATECRAFT,  
IDENTITY, AND RELIGIOUS  
TRANSFORMATION IN  
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

This interdisciplinary special issue explores the complexities of religious transformation in societies, particularly the revival of both dominant and non-dominant religions – often intertwined with ethnicity and migration – and the attempts of atheization, within the geographical framework of former Yugoslavia throughout the long 20th century. Through historical archival research, social science analysis, and ethnographic fieldwork, the articles offer a comprehensive examination and contextualization of religious change, shedding light on the controversies surrounding freedom of religion and freedom from religion from a comparative and transnational perspective.

The studies address various forms of religious agency that transcend established norms, legal frameworks, and cultural expectations, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms driving religious change. These processes have led to the redefinition and reshaping of religious boundaries through interreligious interactions, political disputes, and national religious policies. State structures, regardless of regime type, have historically sought to control religious diversity and mitigate underlying tensions – a dynamic particularly evident in the formation and reformation of religious minorities.

The multifaceted nature of religious relations in Yugoslavia is examined from different perspectives, highlighting both divisions and shared features among various manifestations of Christianity and Islam across and within borders. Internal migration further influences these dynamics, which are examined within a broader state framework and, especially,

in regional contexts. A focus on these sociopolitical specificities is crucial for understanding religious identification – or the lack thereof – through dimensions of individual and collective choices to change religious or meaning systems, which may be voluntary or coerced, individual or collective, reflecting the fundamental distinction between the perception of religious identity as “born into” or “made.”

The multi-ethnic and multi-confessional context of Yugoslavia, the only country in Europe with significant Orthodox Christian, Catholic, and Muslim communities, serves as an ideal setting to critically analyze religious change, the heterogeneity of atheism, and the complex interplay between state and religion. This includes the politicization of religion and the religionization of politics. Tensions between national groups, rooted in centuries of conflict, become increasingly difficult to resolve when religious and ethnic boundaries overlap, thereby complicating and reinforcing particular identities. Yet, these seemingly fixed religious boundaries have consistently been reshaped and renegotiated through interactions and political interventions.

During the major shifts and social transformations in the 20th century, Yugoslav state structures sought to address a diverse range of differences – ethnic, political, cultural, economic, and religious – aiming to foster an enduring understanding between constitutive nations and ethnicities. The examination of interreligious relations and transformations during the Yugoslav period (1918–1991) and in the post-Yugoslav context reveals new dimensions of freedom of conscience and the conditions necessary for preserving religious identities, which often come into conflict. These inquiries engage with the persistent problem of representing “otherness” and the ongoing challenges related to religious equity that continue to emerge in the region.

The authors examine how state policies and shifting political contexts in the former Yugoslav space have shaped religious landscapes, identities, and practices. In the article “Religious Identity as the State’s Tool in Modification of Public Space and Its Identity: The Yugoslavian Concept of the Two Squares in Maribor,” Sara Hajdinac argues that the state actively reconfigured public space in the city on the Slovenian frontier to assert a unified Yugoslav identity. The study details how, in 1934, the renaming of General Maister Square to Yugoslavia Square

and the construction of the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Lazarus on a site of rich symbolic history served as deliberate instruments to merge imposed religious symbols with a broader (supra)national ideology.

In “State of Governance of Religious Communities in Former Yugoslavia and the Developments of the Bahá’í Community and Jehovah’s Witnesses,” Aleksandra Zibelnik Badii, on the other hand, analyzes the experiences of smaller, unrecognized religious communities such as the Bahá’í community and Jehovah’s Witnesses over a longer time frame. Although the Yugoslav legal framework ostensibly guaranteed religious freedom and the separation of church and state, these communities faced considerable challenges. The study examines how national identity, legal compliance, and ideological alignment with the state influenced the treatment of smaller religious communities within Yugoslavia’s broader framework of religious freedom.

Contrasting the religious context, Todor Lakić, Boris Vukićević, and Saša Knežević discuss secularization and atheization policies in Montenegro after World War II in the study “The Dynamics of Atheization in Postwar Communist Montenegro.” The authors highlight the intense secularization efforts, particularly from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, and examine the state’s relations with religious communities. Montenegro experienced the most intense secularization and atheization among the Yugoslav republics. The research also analyzes the impact of religious policies on Montenegro’s three largest religious communities.

Based on fieldwork, Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, in “The Prohibition of Women’s Veiling in the Region of Gora,” analyzes the ban on veiling women in the Gora region in the Autonomous Region of Kosovo-Metohija, introduced by the People’s Republic of Serbia in 1951. This radical measure, intended to promote the emancipation of women and gender equality, disrupted long-established cultural practices of the Gorani community. The ban on traditional clothing such as headscarves and *terlik*, not only undermined religious customs but also erased symbols of marital status. The article highlights the conflict between state-imposed secular ideologies, religious freedom and indigenous cultural identities.

Presenting religious policy in late socialist Slovenia, Jure Ramšak, in “The Problem with Courtesy: Wooing the Catholic Church in Late Socialist Slovenia,” examines the relatively calm and cooperative relations between the Catholic Church and state authorities. It highlights how Slovenian religious policy was seen as a model for integrating believers into modern socialist society and was positively presented to international audiences. Up until 1990, communication between Party officials and the Church was courteous, and local priests generally received support for initiatives such as building new churches. However, independent intellectuals – Catholics and Marxists alike – who called for genuine dialogue on religion were marginalized, leaving an ambiguous legacy for Slovenia’s late socialist religious policy.

Exploring another dominant religion, “Serbian Press and Eastern Orthodoxy in Serbia in the 1980s,” by Petar Dragišić, analyses Serbian press coverage of the resurgence of Eastern Orthodoxy in Serbia during the 1980s, using influential newspapers and magazines. He reconstructs perceptions of the revival of religiosity and identify its root causes. The research found a close link between the revival of religiosity and the changing political environment in Serbia during the 1980s, suggesting that rising ethnic tensions, particularly in relation to Kosovo, catalyzed a renewed public religiosity, which in turn strengthened the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the late 1980s.

Depicting post-Yugoslav circumstances in the Slovenian religious field, Igor Jurekovič, in “Charismatic Christianity as Primal Spirituality? Some Observations from Slovenia,” considers the global emergence of Charismatic Christianity, noting that social scientists often focus on responses to social modernization, while theologians emphasize theological innovations inherent to Charismatic Christianity. Harvey Cox’s theory is highlighted, attributing the appeal of Charismatic Christianity to its embodiment of primal spirituality through fundamental speech, piety, and hope. The article aims to elucidate Cox’s argument, acknowledging both the strengths and limitations of his approach and providing insights from fieldwork among Charismatics in Slovenia.

The special issue of *Poligrafi* is a result of the research project N6-0173, *Religious change in Slovenia and Yugoslavia: Religious conversions and processes of atheization*; the research programme P6-0272, *The*

*Mediterranean and Slovenia*; and bilateral projects between Slovenia and Serbia, *Religious Policies and Freedom of Conscience in Interwar and Socialist Yugoslavia: The Contexts of Change* (BI-RS/23-25-054), and between Slovenia and Montenegro, *Religious Plurality and Religious Policies of Socialist Yugoslavia: Historical and Legal Aspects in the Case of Slovenia and Montenegro* (BI-ME/23-24-013), all funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

Gašper Mithans and Urška Bratož



---

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY  
AS THE STATE'S TOOL  
IN MODIFICATION OF  
PUBLIC SPACE AND  
ITS IDENTITY: THE  
YUGOSLAVIAN CONCEPT  
OF THE TWO SQUARES  
IN MARIBOR

S a r a H a j d i n a c

Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Designing public spaces is closely connected to the preservation of memory and identity of a place. Psychologist Jane Kroger described identity as the subjective impression of continuity of various places and social positions over time.<sup>2</sup> Sociologist Jean-Paul Codol understood identity mainly in terms of relations between different identities,<sup>3</sup> to which architect Christian Norberg-Schulz added a connection to space, grounding the notion in people's identification, which depends on the

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is the culmination of several years of research on the topic and derived from my BA thesis under the guidance of Assoc. Prof. Franci Lazarini, PhD, whom I thank for his mentorship and support.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Kroger, *Identity Development: Adolescence through Adulthood* (Newbury Park: Sage, 2000), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Paul Codol, "Social differentiation and non – differentiation," in *The Social Dimension, European Developments in Social Psychology, Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 315–323.

place in which they live.<sup>4</sup> It has been pointed out that the word ‘identity’ holds a special meaning in public space, as it indicates a special meaning relation between a place and its contexts,<sup>5</sup> while a place becomes a differentiated space only when people become familiar with it better and give it meaning.<sup>6</sup>

Individual and collective memory were discussed primarily by Maurice Halbwachs,<sup>7</sup> who argued that different collectives are defined by the narratives from their pasts that best suit them. When a collective changes, its *stories* – and with them, its identity – change as well. Nevertheless, Halbwachs did not understand the concept of collective memory as national memory but rather as social (collective) and historical memory that build (social) identity, i.e. memories of different groups of people that build their identities.<sup>8</sup> However, this theory can certainly be applied to the study of public space (as every collective *memory* occurs within a spatial frame) as building blocks of collective memory, or the state as the entity that creates official memory. On a visual level, public space is most easily determined by public sculptures or architecture, which usually serves as an indicator of history of a certain place and the group of people that coexist within it. In his work *The Collective Memory*, Halbwachs does not directly engage with the question of the influence of social change on place, yet his ideas can be used to understand the connection between social changes and place. Given that memories and collective memory seem to be closely tied to social groups, we can presume that social changes are reflected in place

---

<sup>4</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), 21–22.

<sup>5</sup> Joel Goldstein, Cecil Elliot, *Designing America: Creating Urban Identity* (New York: van Nostrand Reinhold, 1994), 29.

<sup>6</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *Kolektivni spomin* (Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Jay Winter, “Foreword: Remembrance as a Human Right,” in *Memory and Political Change*, eds. Aleida Assmann, Linda Shortt (Great Britain: CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne, 2012), IX; notes to Halbwachs’ study were also published by Taja Kramberger, “Maurice Halbwachs: kolektivna memorija ni ne spomin in ne zgodovina,” *Monitor ZSA: revija za zgodovinsko, socialno in druge antropologije* 12, no. 1/2 (2010): 273–322. See also: Kramberger, Taja, Rotar, Drago B., “Za antropološko raziskovanje: (namesto uvoda),” *Monitor ZSA: revija za zgodovinsko, socialno in druge antropologije* 12, no. 1/2 (2010): 9–14.

as well. If, for example, social relations, values, and identity change, the function and perception of place can also change.

Changes in content of public space are conditioned by prominent political and historical shifts. An example of such shift is World War I (1914–1918), which led to the collapse of Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which had included the historical region of Styria. The latter was divided into two parts – Austrian Styria became a part of the new Republic of German Austria (later the Republic of Austria after 1919), while Slovenian Styria<sup>9</sup> became part of the newly formed Yugoslavian state.<sup>10</sup> Because the new (South) Slavic state sought to sever its memories and connection to the German Austrian political entity and its national identity, the latter was to be removed from public spaces,<sup>11</sup> leaving an emptiness that was filled with new content.<sup>12</sup> This was most noticeable in spaces now known as Maister Square and Liberty

<sup>9</sup> Slovenian Styria of today became a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes only after months of conflict in the ethnically varied regions of Carinthia and Styria in 1918 and 1919, in which Franjo Malgaj and Anton Lavrič, in addition to Rudolf Maister, played prominent roles. Distribution of territory was determined by diplomats at Paris Peace Conference (1. 11. 1918–13. 2. 1919). More on this in: Bogo Grafenauer, “Narodno stanje in slovensko-nemška etnična meja na Štajerskem kot dejavnik osvoboditve severovzhodne Slovenije 1918/1919,” *Zgodovinski časopis* 33, no. 3 (1979): 385–405; Janez J. Švajncer, *Slovenska vojska 1918-1919* (Ljubljana: Prešernova družba, 1990); Janko Kuster, ed., *Spominski zbornik ob 60-letnici bojev za severno slovensko mejo 1918-1919* (Maribor-Ljubljana: Klub koroških Slovencev, Sklad Prežihovega Voranca, Zveza prostovoljcev-borcev za severno slovensko mejo 1918-1919, 1979); Lojze Penič, *Boj za slovensko severno mejo 1918-1920: kratek oris bojev za slovensko severno mejo po razpadu Avstro-Ogrske* (Maribor: Muzej narodne osvoboditve Maribor, 1988); Lojze Ude, *Boj za severno slovensko mejo: 1918-1919* (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1977); Valerija Bernik, “General Rudolf Maister v vojaških dogodkih na območju Maribora in slovenskega Štajerskega v letih 1918 in 1919,” *Vojaška zgodovina* 15, no. 2 (2019): 23–54.

<sup>10</sup> Jurij Perovšek, “Ustavna razprava in vprašanje državne ureditve,” in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina 1848–1992: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005), 240–244; Jurij Perovšek, “Značaj kraljeve diktature,” in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina 1848–1992: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005), 321–323.

<sup>11</sup> Memorial monument locations are visible on Maribor city plan of 1893, published in: Jože Curk, Primož Premzl, *Mariborske vedute* (Maribor: Umetniški kabinet Primož Premzl, 2004), 138–139; Jerneja Ferlež, ed., *Deutsche und Maribor. Ein Jahrhundert der Wenden 1846–1946* (Maribor: Umetniški kabinet Primož Premzl, 2012), 22–23.

<sup>12</sup> Between 1918 and 1941, only three memorial monuments were constructed in Maribor, yet many more were demolished or removed from public spaces. The artistic emptiness of public space in Maribor is evident from the content of the *Jutro* newsletter “since the symbols

Square. Accordingly, many memorials of historically important figures of Maribor were removed. Today's General Maister Square (formerly Tegetthoffplatz in the Austro-Hungarian era, Yugoslavia Square after 1918, and later Lenin Square) once contained the memorial of Maribor-born Admiral Wilhelm von Tegethoff (Heinrich Fuss, 1882).<sup>13</sup> The memorial is considered the most important landmark in Maribor's public space during the Austro-Hungarian era.<sup>14</sup>

Liberty Square is located east of the city castle, which once belonged to the Brandis noble family. The space was created in the early 19th century, when the city's defensive ditch was filled in and replaced by a castle garden, which was later bought by the municipality in the 1860s to create a straw and hay market. The square was named *Sophienplatz* after Countess Sophia Brandis until 1918, when it was renamed Liberty Square.<sup>15</sup>

---

of German thought have gone, Maribor has been without memorials." ("Postavimo spomenik našemu Parmi," *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 8. I. 1935, no. 1, 2).

<sup>13</sup> Immediately after his death in 1871, preparations were made to construct a memorial that would be revealed on July 10, 1883. Maribor city mayor, Matthäus Reiser, wished to commission the memorial from the Viennese sculptor Carl Kundmann, the author of Tegetthoff memorial in Vienna. As Kundmann turned down the commission, it went to Kundmann's former student, Heinrich Fuss. The latter created a portrait of Tegetthoff based on photographs of his later years. He also added bronze personifications (full body female figures) of Helgoland and Vis, where the vice admiral ensured his best-known victories against the Kingdom of Italy. The personifications were taken to the city museum (today Maribor Regional Museum) after the collapse of the empire in 1918, and, as *works of lesser importance*, recast into the Memorial of the Fallen in the Struggle for National Liberation in 1947. The portrait of Tegetthoff was removed in 1918 revolution due to regime change, while the tall granite pedestal remained in the square at least until 1934. Sonja Žitko, *Po sledeh časa: Spomeniki v Sloveniji: 1800-1914* (Ljubljana: Debora, 1996), 112; Jože Curk, *Vodnik po Mariboru in bližnji okolici* (Maribor: Umetniški kabinet Primož Premzl, 2000), 72.

<sup>14</sup> Sergej Vrišer, "Znamenja in javni spomeniki v Mariboru do 1941," *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* n. v. 7, no. 2 (1971): 188–189; Žitko, *Po sledeh časa*, 112; Polona Vidmar, "Lokalspatriotismus und Lokalpolitik: die Denkmäler Wilhelms von Tegetthoff, Kaiser Josefs II. sowie Erzherzog Johanns in Maribor und die Familie Reiser," *Acta historiae artis Slovenica* 18, no. 2 (2013): 68–71.

<sup>15</sup> Sašo Radovanović, *Mariborske ulice* (Maribor: Kapital, 2005), 245.



Figure 1: Tegetthoff Memorial in a postcard c. 1908 (PAM/X1702, Razglednica s Tegetthoffovim spomenikom v Mariboru).

## In Search of a Location for a Serbian Orthodox Church

In the new common state of South Slavs, Serbian Orthodoxy was one – but not the only – state religion. This was evident primarily in citizenship ceremonies, where one had to pledge allegiance to God (in addition to the king). The question that arises is: to which god? The census of 1921 recorded the state's population as 46.6% Orthodox, 39.4% Catholic, and 11.2% Muslim.<sup>16</sup> The 1931 census recorded Celje as 4.4% Orthodox and 91.6% Catholic; Ptuj as 2.5% Orthodox, and 94.4% Catholic; Maribor as 3.6% Orthodox, and 93% Catholic; and Ljubljana as 3.5% Orthodox, and 95% Catholic.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the question of which god to pledge allegiance to is redundant. The ruling family was Serbian, and the state's political power was centralised in Serbian politics. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (SCS) and later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were, due to economic, social, and above all political reasons, manifestations of the ideal of Great Serbia.<sup>18</sup> Serbian identity was mainly demonstrated through religion, Serbian national identity had fused with Orthodoxy, which constituted the strongest point of divergence from the Catholic Croats.<sup>19</sup>

Dravska Banovina, which encompassed the entire territory of modern Slovenia with the exception of the Littoral Region, contained three Orthodox parishes (in Ljubljana, Maribor, and Celje, which emerged in 1921) that were quite specific, being set in a predominantly Roman-Catholic environment. The majority of Orthodox population in the country was composed of Serbian soldiers, and the priests were, in

---

<sup>16</sup> Mateja Ratej, "Odenki politizacije Rimskokatoliške in Srbske pravoslavne cerkve pri Slovenski ljudski in Narodni radikalni stranki med svetovnjima vojnama," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 48, no. 2 (2008): 36.

<sup>17</sup> Ratej, *Odenki politizacije*, 37.

<sup>18</sup> The entire period from the creation of the Kingdom of SCS onward was marked by a desire to liberate Serbs outside of the Kingdom of Serbia. Great-Serbian ideas of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić in 1836 and Ilija Garašanin (*Načertanije*, 1844) that represent the foundations of later (Great) Serbian tendencies and are derived from medieval Serbian state must be taken into account. More on Serbian nationalism and its history and development in Miro Hribernik's doctoral dissertation: Miro Hribernik, *Vojna na Hrvaškem 1990–1995* (Maribor: Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Mariboru, 2013), 80–88.

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert In der Maur, *Der Weg zur Nation. Jugoslawiens Innenpolitik 1918–1938* (Berlin-Wien-Zürich: Verlag für Wirtschaft und Kultur Payer & Co, 1938), 96, 100, 140.

fact, army clerics.<sup>20</sup> After multiple years of struggle, all three Orthodox communities secured their own religious buildings, constructed in accordance to designs by the Serbian architect Momir Korunović.<sup>21</sup> The Maribor Orthodox Church of St. Lazarus was the northernmost such construction in the new Yugoslav state and, along with the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Sava in Celje, represented an example of construction in a city that had previously had a strong Germanic appearance.

The Serbian Orthodox religious community in Maribor initially had its religious ceremonial spaces in the building of the military real school. Later, with the help of Commander Pantelij Draškić, a military priest named Petar Trbojević secured the grand hall in King Alexander Barracks. Soon, as the number of worshippers increased, new spaces were required. The first solution involved repurposing the former Minorite church on Vojašniški Square. Subsequently, ideas of a new building were introduced (on Yugoslavia Square, Main Square, Zrinjski Square, and by Union Hall on Alexander Road, somewhat southeast of Yugoslavia Square).

The Serbian Orthodox community had chosen the location on Yugoslavia Square as early as 1926.<sup>22</sup> At first, construction on Yugoslavia Square was prevented by the resolution that prohibited the municipality from building on the area purchased from the Brandis noble family in 1863.<sup>23</sup> Some citizens<sup>24</sup> who thought an Orthodox church in the park was unnecessary also opposed the construction of a building with a strong Yugoslav (Serbian) identity.<sup>25</sup> Contradictions in public opinion on the construction affair culminated in a poll organised by the mayor Alojzij Juvan on April 11, 1930, in the city council chamber.

---

<sup>20</sup> The history of Serbian Orthodox communities in the territories of modern Slovenia was explored in detail by Bojan Cvelfar. Bojan Cvelfar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev na Slovenskem med svetovnim vojnama* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> Cvelfar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev*.

<sup>22</sup> Cvelfar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev*, 479–486.

<sup>23</sup> Radovanović, *Mariborske ulice*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> Cvelfar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev*, 516–517; Marjan Žnidaršič, *Do pekla in nazaj. Nacistična okupacija in narodnoosvobodilni boj v Mariboru 1941-1945* (Maribor: Muzej narodne osvoboditve, 1997), 123.

<sup>25</sup> Maksimiljan Fras, *Mariborski župan dr. Alojzij Juvan in njegov čas* (Maribor: EPOS, 2013), 225.

The invitees included the principal of Maribor Real School, Jakob Zupančič; the vice president of the Orthodox community, Colonel Božo Putniković (who, in principle, represented the War Minister); Vice Mayor Franjo Lipold; artist and real-school professor Viktor Cotič; painter and professor Anton Gvajc; Orthodox priest Petar Trbojević and other members of the Orthodox community; chief councillor of construction Albin Černe; unnamed municipal councillors; unnamed representatives of the Beautification Society and the King Petar Memorial Committee (among them Principal Detela); and news reporters. It was also attended by two of the most prominent cultural authorities of the time in Slovenia: modernist architect Vladimir Šubic, and art historian and conservationist France Stele. Both defended the view that the church's design should be adapted to the square, and the choice of location should be left to the architects. Stele wanted the church to be built in the Byzantine architectural style. According to *Slovenec*, only Cotič opposed the construction of the church. Interestingly, Principal Detela, a member of the King Peter Memorial Committee, supported the construction of the church on the new (i.e., eastern) section of the Main Square.<sup>26</sup>

An orthodox church on Main Square was certainly a grandiose idea, as it is the central and most important square in Maribor. Should any building be planned for construction on Main Square, the design of the square would be disrupted, the Plague Memorial would have to be relocated, and the Jesuit Church of St. Aloysius and the Renaissance city hall would have to surrender their dominant positions to the new building. It would be stranger still if the new building was to be constructed in the Serbian national style and, due to its sheer size, fill nearly the entire square. This would have been unacceptable to any urban planner, as well as to the mayor, no matter how supportive they may have been of the Serbian Orthodox community.

The fifth regular meeting of the municipal council of November 19, 1931 concluded that the construction of the Orthodox church on Yugoslavia Square be held off, as a new location by Union Hall came

---

<sup>26</sup> "Kje bo stala pravoslavna cerkev," *Slovenec*, 12. 4. 1930, no. 1, 5.

into consideration.<sup>27</sup> In 1932, *Mariborski večernik Jutra* reported on the unknown status of the church's construction, which was now planned for Zrinjski Square, which was enlarged for this express purpose, while Yugoslavia Square was to receive the King Petar Memorial.<sup>28</sup> In June of that year, the poll on the church's location was repeated. The argument for constructing on Zrinjski Square was supported by the function of Yugoslavia Square as a park and an aesthetic background to the city castle. Meanwhile, Zrinjski Square was "neglected and in much need of renewal."<sup>29</sup>

The sixth regular meeting of the municipal council of September 1, 1932, concluded that the land for the church in the middle of Yugoslavia Square should be plotted in a way that would not harm (i.e., build on) the park. The church was to face eastward, with the entrance facing Maribor Real School. The Department of Construction approved these guidelines as well. This time, construction at this location was opposed by municipal councillor Štefan Dolček, citing citizens' disapproval. The municipal council voted in favour of constructing the Orthodox church on Yugoslavia Square, with 18 votes for and 5 against, confirming the present plans,<sup>30</sup> while the construction and free allocation of a 900 m<sup>2</sup> plot were not confirmed by the city council until September 11, 1934.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> PAM, fond Mestna občina Maribor, b. 164, Zapisniki sej mestnega občinskega sveta Mestne občine Maribor v letu 1931, V. redna seja, 19. november 1931, 165.

<sup>28</sup> "Razgovor z g. mestnim županom," *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 7. 5. 1932, no. 103, 2.

<sup>29</sup> "Anketa radi pravoslavne cerkve," *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 4. 6. 1932, no. 125, 2.

<sup>30</sup> PAM, fond Mestna občina Maribor, b. 164, Zapisniki sej mestnega občinskega sveta Mestne občine Maribor v letu 1932, IV. seja, 19. november 1931, 128.

<sup>31</sup> PAM, fond Mestna občina Maribor, b. 164, Zapisniki sej mestnega občinskega sveta Mestne občine Maribor v letu 1934, V. IV. seja, 19. november 1931, 11. 9. 1934; Cvelfar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev*, 493, 500.

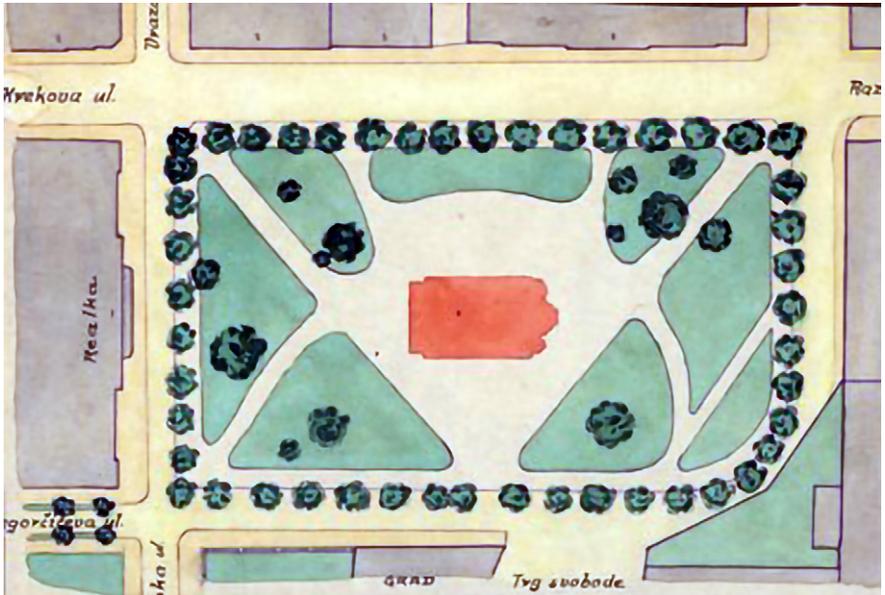


Figure 2: Location of the Orthodox church on Yugoslavia Square (PAM, fond Zavod za urbanizem Maribor, b. 53, Scale 1:1000).

This was followed by an unsuccessful complaint by citizens under the leadership of the Slovenian People's Party leader Franjo Žebot, who filed the complaint with the National Assembly in Belgrade.<sup>32</sup> He would go on to attempt to stop the construction several more times. The complaint stated they do not oppose the construction of an Orthodox church in the city centre, but deemed Yugoslavia Square an inappropriate location. The resolution of November 19, 1931, supposedly nullified all prior resolutions and predicted the construction of the church by the Union Brewery when the latter was abandoned. This resolution was only to permit construction of a small chapel in place of the Tegetthoff Memorial. They also cited all prior complaints filed by the Industrialist Union, Landlords Association, Merchants Guild, Trade Cooperatives

<sup>32</sup> "Zavrjnena pritožba bivšega poslanca Žebota in tovarišev proti odstopu Jugoslovanskega trga za pravoslavno cerkev," *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 30. I. 1934, 2.

Union, Innkeepers and Coffee Shop Owners Cooperative, and the objection of the Museum and History Society of August 18, 1931. The ban of the Dravska Banovina, Drago Marušič, rejected the complaint as early as November 8, 1932, while all complaints by Žebot were collectively rejected in December 1933.<sup>33</sup>

Disagreement with the location can also be found in Ksaver Meško's memoirs.<sup>34</sup> A polar opposite is found in the views of the liberal *Mariborski večernik Jutra* that criticised the new building's Yugoslavia Square location because "the monumental building would be completely blocked out by the trees," causing it to "stand alone like an unwanted child, pushed somewhere aside, without expression, constituting no perfection or wholeness."<sup>35</sup>

How architect Momir Korunović was chosen to construct Slovenian Orthodox churches remains unclear. If the Serbian-Byzantine architectural style was selected in advance, Korunović was likely suggested as one of the most important architects of sacral architecture in this style, or as one of the most important Serbian architects of his time. After successfully designing the first church in Dravska Banovina (Church of St. Sava, Celje, 1929–1932), he may have been requested to plan churches in Ljubljana and Maribor by local Serbian Orthodox communities. Minutes of the Maribor city council meeting of March 27, 1930, show that a resolution was made to publicly list a contest for the construction commission.<sup>36</sup> However, there are no other records of a public contest or of any alternative plans.

The foundations of the Maribor Lazarus Church were laid during *Maribor Week*,<sup>37</sup> and the foundations were blessed on August 12, 1934, at 9.30a.m., in the presence of Korunović.<sup>38</sup> The construction officially

<sup>33</sup> Cvelfar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev*, 494–497.

<sup>34</sup> Ksaver Meško, *Izbrana dela, IV. del* (Celje: Družba sv. Mohorja, 1959), 333.

<sup>35</sup> "Pravoslavni božji hram v Mariboru," *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 2. 12. 1932, no. 174, 3.

<sup>36</sup> "Mariborska obč. seja," *Slovenec*, 27. 3. 1930, no. 72, 2.

<sup>37</sup> "Mariborske vesti. Za pravoslavno cerkev," *Slovenec*, 21. julij 1934, no. 163a, 4; Cvelfar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev*, 499–500.

<sup>38</sup> "Blagoslovitev temeljnega kamna za pravoslavno cerkev na Jugoslovanskem trgu," *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 9. 8. 1934, 2; "Pravoslavna cerkev v Mariboru," *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 11. 8. 1934, no. 181, 3; "Slovesna blagoslovitev temeljnega kamna srbske pravoslavne cerkve," *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 13. 8. 1934, 3.

began on August 27, 1935, on the exact location of the Wilhelm von Tegetthoff Memorial. By December, the church had been built up to the roof, followed by slower progression due to financial difficulties. In 1936, 800,000 dinars were needed to complete the construction, with the funds still being collected in 1940.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 3: View from Liberty Square, 1938 (PAM, fond Zavod za urbanizem Maribor, b. 53, Trg svobode 1938).

### Serbian National Style in Architecture and Its Historical and Political Contexts

Serbian architecture between the end of the 19th century and World War I can be divided into three main movements: classicism, secession, and the Serbian-Byzantine style. The first Western-style buildings in

---

<sup>39</sup> Cvelfar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev*, 516.

Serbia appeared in the 1830s.<sup>40</sup> The generation of architects born in the last quarter of the 19th century, which included Momir Korunović, had a strong impact on later Serbian architecture. It was at the turn of the 19th century that Serbian architects sought their own national style in architecture,<sup>41</sup> which was part of a broader European trend of searching for a distinctive national architectural identity.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Examples of classic architecture in Serbia are Saboma Church (Franz Jancke, 1837–1845) and the House of Cvetko Rajović (Franz Jancke, 1837–1838), Hotel Jelen (unknown architect, 1841) and the Military Academy (Jan Nevola, 1851). Classicist architects were often commissioned because they were mostly Serbs (e.g., Aleksander Bolgarski, Svetozar Ivanović, Konstantin Jovanović, Vladimir Nikolić). The first building built in the spirit of historicism was the Villa of Captain Miša (Jan Nevola, 1858–1863) where the antique-era inspiration was replaced by medieval Middle-Eastern art, which was entirely new. The most notable Byzantine-style architect was Jovan Ilkić (House of St. Sava, Belgrade, 1890), whose designs were later aided by Momir Korunović. Dimitrije T. Leko is considered the most prominent representative of Art-Nouveau forms, with the style also represented by the Serbian Pavillion (Milan Kapetanović and Milodrag Ruvidić) on the Paris World Exhibition of 1900. Zoran Manević, *Srpska arhitektura 1900–1970* (Beograd: Muzej savremene umjetnosti, 1972), 7–20; Zoran Manević, *Jučerašnje graditeljstvo* (Beograd: Zavod za planiranje grada Beograda, 1979); Zoran Manević, *Jugoslovenska arhitektura XX veka* (Beograd: Muzej savremene umjetnosti, 1986).

<sup>41</sup> Aleksandar Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi 1904–1941* (Beograd: Gradjevinska knjiga, 2007); Aleksandar Ignjatović, “National Unity through Regional Diversity: Architecture as Political Reform in Yugoslavia, 1929–1941,” in *European Architectural History Network*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Janina Gosseye (Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten & Contactforum, 2012), 320–325; Aleksandar Kadrijević, “Between unitarism and regionalisms Architecture in Yugoslavia (1918–1941),” in *Architecture of independence in Central Europe/Arhitektura nepodleglosti w Europie Środkowej* (Krakow: International cultural centre, 2018), 248–274; Aleksandar Kadrijević, “Између уметничке носталгије и цивилизацијске утопије: византијске реминисценције у српској архитектури 20. века,” *Српска уметност III. Замишљање прошлости и перцепција средњег века у српској умјетности XVIII–XXI века* (Београд: САНУ, 2016), 169–177; Александар Кадријевић, *Југословенска архитектура између два светска рата (1918–1941): контексти тумачења* (Београд: Универзитет у Београду – Филозофски факултет, 2023), 20–30.

<sup>42</sup> Gothic style, for example, was considered a German style (despite originating in France). Later, Jugendstil was said to be a Deutsche Volkskunst. National style was more-or-less successfully employed by the Poles (Zdzislaw Maczenski, Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, Josef Dziekonski, Edgar Karats) and the nations of the multinational Austro-Hungarian monarchy - Hungarians (Ödön Lechner, Károly Kós, István Medgyaszay), Slovaks (Dušan Jurkovič) and Czechs (Jan Kotěra). Marvin Trachtenberg, *The Modern Architecture, Architecture. From prehistory to post-modernism. The Western Traditions* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1986), 522; Ákos Moravanszky, *Die Architektur der Donaumonarchie* (Berlin: W. Ernst & Sohn, 1988), 139, 149, 140–164; Małgorzata Omilanowska, “Searching for a National Style in Polish Architecture at the End of the 19th and Beginning of the 20th Century,” in *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*, ed. Nicola Gordon Bowe (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), 101–115; Ákos Moravanszky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Inven-*

The main inspiration for the Serbian national style was found in two architectural styles from the Medieval era of what was then Serbia – the Raška<sup>43</sup> and Morava Schools.<sup>44</sup> The history of Serbian statehood begins

---

*tion and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867–1918* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 230–234, 249–261; Jindřich Vybíral, “Modernism or the National Movement in Prague,” in *Art Around 1900 in Central Europe: Art Centers and Provinces*, ed. Jacek Purchla (Kraków: International Cultural Centre, 1999), 206–209; Elisabeth Clegg, *Art, Design and Architecture in Central Europe 1890–1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 129; Jindřich Vybíral, “National style as a construction of art history,” in *The Plurality of Europe: Identities and Spaces*, ed. Winfried Eberhard and Christian Lübke (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2010), 465–474; Vendula Hnídková, ed., *Národní styl: Kultura a politika/National style: Arts and politics*, (Prague: Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design, 2013); Dániel Veress, “Architecture as Nation-Building: The Search for National Styles in Habsburg Central Europe Before and After World War I,” in *Empires, Nations and Private Lives: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the Great War*, ed. Nari Shelekpayev (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), 8–39.

<sup>43</sup> The term *Raška School* was first used by Gabriel Millet as *L'École de Rascie*, which was intended to denote the high-medieval art of the first half of the 14th century in the Raška region. The term is somewhat unfortunate, as the style is in fact of Macedonian origin, derived from the Byzantine style. The Byzantine influence is most evident studying the dome of the Church of The Mother of God in Studenica, which resembles the dome of the Pammakaristos in Constantinople. Byzantine architecture is also reflected in the symmetrical segmentation of the ribs inside the dome. The restless rule of King Milutin (Stefan Uroš II. Milutin Nemanjić) saw the mixing of Macedonian styles (central plan, drawn-in crossing, polychrome façade of brick and stone) into the Byzantine style due to southwards expansion. Under his commission, numerous sacral buildings were constructed, e.g., Hilandar, The Mother of God of Ljevic in Prizren, and churches of Studenica and Gračanica monasteries. Vojeslav Mole, *Umetnost južnih Slovanov* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1965), 71.

<sup>44</sup> The Morava School was equally clumsily named by Gabriel Millet, seen as it still contained Byzantine and Thessalonica styles. The term sought to demonstrate the first general unity in the style of sacral architecture in the area of Morava Serbia in the 14th century, i.e., the time of Dušan the Mighty and Prince Lazar (also the time of Serbian defeat at Kosovo Polje in 1389). This encompasses properties such as unity in ground plans of churches, side chapel function, symmetrical construction, balanced composition, and multiple domes (e.g., five) where the main one is always the largest. While there were some stylistic deviations, we could talk of typical plans (or blueprints). Important buildings of Morava School include: Gradac Monastery (commissioned by Queen Jelena, the wife of Uroš I, c. 1276), church of St. Štefan/Lazarus Church in Kruševac (court church of Prince Lazar with a tri-conchal plan, influencing later construction, c. 1377), church of Mary's Ascension in Ravanica Monastery, church of Birth of The Mother of God in Naupara Monastery (1382, influenced by the Lazarus Church), church of Mary Appearing in Veluč Monastery (c. 1370), the church of Rudenica Monastery (early 15th century) and the church of Mary Appearing in Kalenić Monastery (1407–1413). The monastery church at Gradac shows the qualities of the Raška School (archivolts around the portal and windows, lesenes with an arched frieze, biforas) as well as innovations (multi-coloured bricks, most evident at the Lazarus Church in Kruševac and the Ravanica Monastery church). It is these two churches that are, out of all those mentioned, the richest both in decoration and exterior segmentation. It is important that the locations of conchs have changed. With the

in the 9th century with the foundation of Raška. Near the Adriatic Sea, several smaller states emerged (Zahumlje, Trebinjska, and Duklja) and united as the Zeta state, or Littoral Serbia, in the 11th century. The history of the independent Serbian state begins in the second half of the 12th century, when the Great Mayor Štefan Nemanja united Raška and Zeta.<sup>45</sup>

The Raška School in Serbian architecture developed between the final third of the 12th century and the first half of the 14th century. Under the commission of the first Serbian king, Štefan Nemanjić (Prvovenčani: The First-Crowned), several churches were constructed, including the Church of St. George within the monastery complex in Djurdjevi Stupovi near Novi Pazar (between 1160 and 1170) and the Church of The Mother of God within the Studenica Monastery (c. 1183–1186).<sup>46</sup> Štefan's grandson Miroslav commissioned the Church of St. Peter at Bijelo Polje (second half of the 12th century), his nephew Štefan Prvoslav commissioned the Church of St. George in Ivangrad (final quarter of the 12th century), and another grandson, King Radoslav, commissioned the Church of Ascension in Žiča Monastery (the Serbian church became independent in 1219, making Žiča the seat of the first archbishop; 1206–1217).<sup>47</sup>

---

Raška School we noted all three semicircular finishes on the eastern part of the façade, while the Morava school is known for the aforementioned "typical plans" wherein the conchs are distributed on the southern, eastern and northern face of the church. Although the churches of the Morava School are more-or-less alike, there is evident distinction between their building segments. Archivolts are the most expressive in the case of Lazarus Church, where they first encompass the portal with the lunette, followed by the rose window above the portal. Rose windows were an essential part of Morava School architecture, while they are not found within Raška School. Biforas appear in both architectural schools, becoming simpler as early as the Rudenica church. Slobodan Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans. From Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 671–682.

<sup>45</sup> Mole, *Umetnost južnih Slovanov*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 409.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 491–494.



Figure 4: Church in Gračanica Monastery near Prizren ([https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/2e/Gračanica\\_1.jpg/1280px-Gračanica\\_1.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/2e/Gračanica_1.jpg/1280px-Gračanica_1.jpg)).



Figure 5: Church in Ravanica Monastery ([https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/0c/Monastery\\_Ravanica.JPG/1024px-Monastery\\_Ravanica.JPG](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/0c/Monastery_Ravanica.JPG/1024px-Monastery_Ravanica.JPG)).

Out of all periods in Serbian national history, Serbians were most drawn to the medieval era of Serbian statehood, when their country was at its largest and strongest. In light of the political instability of the 19th and 20th centuries, the desire for a strong (and, in memory, politically stable) state became ever stronger. The memory of Great Serbia also represents the living memory of then “events of semi-modern history”: independence struggles in the beginning of the 19th century and other contemporary struggles – both Balkan Wars and the World War I, understood as one continuous conflict (1912–1918) from which Serbia emerged victorious and realised its Great Serbian aspirations within the new Yugoslav state.

Architects developed this essentially Byzantine style, or a revival of the Raška and Morava Schools, in the 19th and 20th centuries in a variety of ways, which led to different nomenclatures: Byzantine style, Neo-Byzantine style, Semi-Byzantine style, Modern-Byzantine style, Roman-Byzantine style, Dušan’s style,<sup>48</sup> and National style or Serbian-Byzantine style in national architecture.<sup>49</sup> During the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the style became the *de facto* national style,<sup>50</sup> reflecting the Serbian desire for their national style’s dominance throughout the Kingdom, derived from the drive for unitarism due to the unsolved national question.<sup>51</sup>

Korunović remains the most prominent representative of this style. The rise of his career began immediately after completing his degree in 1906 when he worked at the Ministry of Construction of the Kingdom of Serbia, which mainly oversaw construction of state buildings,<sup>52</sup> as well as reconstructions of demolished buildings after World War I. The

---

<sup>48</sup> Aleksandar Kadijević, *Vizantijsko graditeljstvo kao inspiracija srpskih neimara novijeg doba* (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 2016), 49–50.

<sup>49</sup> Aleksandar Kadijević, *Srpski arhitekti novijeg doba: Momir Korunović* (Beograd: Muzej nauke i tehnike, 1996), 26, 70, 72.

<sup>50</sup> Manević, *Srpska arhitektura 1900–1970*, 14–20.

<sup>51</sup> Kadijević, *Srpski arhitekti novijeg doba*, 41.

<sup>52</sup> He projected the Belgrade Sokolski Dom; in 1912 he created plans for Belgrade Post Office (today the location of Yugoslav Army House); in 1913 he was part of the working committee of Meštrović’s Vidovdan Temple and the establishment of Yugoslav Modern Gallery in Belgrade, which significantly improved his reputation. He was strongly marked by World War I, which prompted him to design the never constructed memorial of “undead giants.” Kadijević, *Srpski arhitekti novijeg doba*, 34–38; Aleksandar Kadijević, Tadija Stefanović, “Expressionism and Serbian Architecture Between Two World Wars,” in *On the Very Edge. Modernism and Mo-*

inter-war period was, for both Korunović and overall Serbian national style, the golden age of creativity (e.g., Ministry of Post, Belgrade, 1926; Post Office 2, Belgrade, 1928–1929). He became an essential figure in overseeing construction projects and received by far the largest number of commissions. This remained so until the 1930s, when modernist architects gained popularity. Korunović remained faithful to traditionalism, ignoring modern architecture, which he considered soulless construction. Up until World War II, he primarily designed sacral buildings, which had previously constituted only a minority of his commissions.<sup>53</sup>

Korunović drew inspiration from both the Raška-Littoral and Morava Schools. He commonly used stone (for example in Krupnje church, 1928; Kalamegdan church, 1937), and much more commonly, reinforced concrete (Church of St. Cyril and Methodius, Ljubljana, 1930–1936), as well as brick, which he then plastered (Church of St. Sava in Celje, planned 1929, built 1932, demolished 1941; Church of St. Cyril and Methodius, Vis, 1932, demolished in the 1960s). His churches are characterised by a Greek-cross-shaped floor plan. From this type of floor plan, the architect gradually continued construction towards the top, which the literature calls pyramidal composition or gradient-based increase of architectural mass.<sup>54</sup> Such increase of architectural mass towards the top is the most evident in the Church of St. Lazarus in Maribor (1934–1939), St. Sava in Celje (1929–1932), Church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Ljubljana (1930–1933), and Church of St. John the Baptist in Grdelić (1935–1937, 1940). The latter was highly appreciated by Korunović himself, but Aleksandar Kadijević, a Korunović scholar, evaluates the churches in Maribor and Celje as constructions of superior quality.<sup>55</sup>

The architect's works are also recognisable by their distinct portals. Two narrow columns support a semicircular arch that functions as a small gatehouse. The portal also has its own roof. Such portals are repeated on all of his churches, since the aforementioned church of St. Elias in Bržan. Other notable cases are the Church of Christ's Assumption in

---

*dernity in the Arts and Architecture of Interwar Serbia (1918-1941)* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014), 184.

<sup>53</sup> Kadijević, *Srpski arhitekti novijeg doba*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 47, 56, 47.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

Krupnje (1928), Church of St. Sava in Celje, and Church of the Birth of St. John the Baptist in Negbina (1936–1939). In some places, the portals are somewhat less massive: Church of Archangel Michael in Deligrad (1930–1933), Church of St. Lazarus in Bulbuder, Belgrade, (1927), and Church of St. John the Baptist in Grdelić (1935–1940). Some church buildings designed by Korunović do not feature his characteristic portal style, such as the Church in Glagovac (planned 1934–1935, constructed 1934–1935) and the Church of The Mother of God in Belgrade (1933). In the first building, the façade is emphasised by a length of an arm of the Greek cross, a gate, and a tympanum. The side façades, like the main one, include a rose window, a horizontal cornice, and semicircular arches. The other church also has a bell tower, which is not very typical of Korunović. A bell tower is also included in the Church of St. Lazarus in Belgrade and the Church of St. Cyril and Methodius on the island Vis. At the Church of The Mother of God, the bell tower emerges from the main façade. Another Belgrade church (St. Lazarus) has the bell tower added to the back of the church. The church on Vis is an exception, as the bell tower is added to the right side of the main façade. That is where Korunović adhered to Dalmatian architectural tradition, which he very successfully fused with his characteristic architectural elements – shallow archivolt, narrow and long semicircular windows and an octagonal dome above the *naos* (cella).

Korunović's architecture is characterised by octagonal domes. Some churches have but one, while many more have three or five. One of his preserved sketches shows a church with seven domes, among which the main dome has a hexagonal plan (Monumental Temple, 1937).<sup>56</sup> This project, though it remained forever on paper, allowed the architect to design the building as he wished, which is why unrealised plans and sketches are just as important as realised projects for understanding his personal style.

Along with the Greek cross, the three-conch finish must be noted in considering floor plans. The inspiration for this was yet again drawn from medieval Serbian architecture that inspired the architect since

---

<sup>56</sup> The plan is family-owned, published on: Kadrijević, *Srpski arhitekti novijeg doba*, 98.

his formative years.<sup>57</sup> Along the main polygonally enclosed apse, these churches boasted two additional such apses on side façades. Churches without a three-conch finish nonetheless had an emphasised design of a Greek cross (Church of St. George in Sušak, 1937).

The Serbian-Byzantine style dominated Serbian architecture until modernism prevailed.<sup>58</sup> Though it eventually lost its dominant position, it nonetheless continued and again became very popular in the last decade of the 20th century, i.e. during the Milošević regime (Church of St. Basil Ostroški in Belgrade (Mihajlo Mitrović, 1995–2000), Church of St. Luke the Evangelist in Belgrade (Aleksandar M. Lukić, 1995–1999), Church of St. Dimitri of Thessaloniki in Belgrade (N. Popović, 1998–2001) and church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Jajinca (Branislav Mitrović, Boris Podrecca 1996–2002)).<sup>59</sup> For Serbian society, the church represented additional ideological foundations for nationalism (e.g., Serbs as a holy nation of martyrs, the Kosovo Myth, St. Lazarus as Christ and Miloš Obilić as St. Paul), while for the Church, this meant a dominant role in social life.<sup>60</sup>

Throughout history, the Serbian Orthodox Church has considered itself the vessel of Serbian national identity. There was even a deep-rooted notion that a non-Orthodox person cannot be a Serb.<sup>61</sup> Christoforus Mylonas<sup>62</sup> defined Serbian Orthodoxy as an attribute of collective subjectivity, a response to the need of coherent identity in Serbia throughout history. When collectivity is understood as an emotional community, manifestations of identity are intended to promote national emotions.<sup>63</sup> Serbian Orthodoxy is a union of religion and nationality. Mylonas proposes a hypothesis that the Catholicism of Serbian Orthodoxy should be understood as a united religious entity. The Orthodox religion became a fundamental determiner of the nation

---

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>58</sup> Kadijević, *Srpski arhitekti novijeg doba*, 24; Manević, *Srpska arhitektura 1900–1970*, 19–21.

<sup>59</sup> More on churches: Kadijević, *Srpski arhitekti novijeg doba*, 69–77.

<sup>60</sup> Marko Velikonja, "Religizirani narod vs. nacionalizirana religija: verski vidiki kosovske krize," *Časopis za kritiko znanosti* 27, no. 195/196 (1999): 97–98.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>62</sup> Christos Mylonas, *Serbian Orthodox Fundamentals: The Quest for an Eternal Identity* (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2003).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

mainly because of the Serbian Orthodox Church's autocephaly that was later transferred to the national level, aided by national myth<sup>64</sup> (e.g., The Kosovo Myth and Vidovdan) and Serbian saints, (e.g., St. Sava) who were at the same time members of Serbian ruling families. By connecting past and present, as well as the sacral and the profane, Serbian religious identity provides a "map" of its existence and promotes the preservation of national ethos. Thus, a sacralised identity, based on an expanded awareness of the mythical/historical lore of a nation (a vision of a "thinking" diachronic community), is created.<sup>65</sup>

### Church of St. Lazarus on Yugoslavia Square

The Orthodox Church of St. Lazarus was built in the middle of the park on today's square, on the exact location of the memorial to Vice Admiral Wilhelm von Tegetthoff. It is known that it was properly oriented (eastwards) and measured 32 by 22 by 30 metres. It was stylistically very similar to the churches in Celje and in Ljubljana, from which it differed in number of domes, façade details, and floor plan. The Maribor church featured five domes, all of which were fully visible (reminiscent of the medieval Gračanica Monastery). However, it was not inspired only by Gračanica, but also other medieval buildings in the territory of medieval Serbia, such as the Lazarus Church in Kruševac and Ravanica Monastery.

---

<sup>64</sup> "A myth is typically a tale concerned with past events, giving them a special meaning and significance for the present and thereby reinforcing the authority of those who are wielding power in a particular community." Carl Joachim Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York-Washington-London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), 99.

<sup>65</sup> Mylonas, *Serbian Orthodox Fundamentals*, 47–52.



Figure 6: The church during construction (MNOMb, Fototeka MNOMb, inv. no. 15.308).

The external appearance of the church had been little known until now.<sup>66</sup> It is known that it had five octagonal domes, making it Korunović's largest (and northernmost) church in Dravska Banovina. The church had a Greek cross floor plan, extended westward by a gatehouse. The building functioned extremely plastically, gradually increasing the mass towards the top using numerous construction elements.

<sup>66</sup> The church has been mentioned in the literature already. E.g.: Anton Ožinger, "Cerkvena zgodovina Maribora od konca 18. stoletja," in *Maribor skozi stoletja* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1991), 508; Kadijević, *Srpski arhitekti novijeg doba*; Fras, *Mariborski župan dr. Alojzij Juwan*, 225; Franci Lazarini, "Cerkve, samostani, redovne hiše in sinagoge," in Igor Sapač, Franci Lazarini, *Arhitektura 19. stoletja na Slovenskem* (Ljubljana: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, 2015), 117; Nina Gostenčnik, *Delovanje mariborskega mestnega sveta med letoma 1929 in 1935* (Maribor: Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Mariboru, 2016), 139–143; Cvefcar, *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev*, 427, 479; Nina Gostenčnik, *Maribor v času mestnega načelnika dr. Franja Lipolda (1931–1935)* (Maribor: Založba Pivec, 2019).



Figure 7: The view of the Orthodox Church of St. Lazarus from the direction of Maribor Real School, 1936 (PAM, fond Zavod za urbanizem Maribor, b. 53, Pogled s strehe realke 1936).

This is typical of many of his churches (e.g., St. Sava in Celje, the Church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Ljubljana, and the Church of John the Baptist in Grdelić).

The western façade was divided into three axes. Attached to it was a five-arched gatehouse with a gabled roof that was not originally planned.<sup>67</sup> The semicircular arches rested on slender concrete towers with capitals. The eastern façade included three portals. The oaken gates had a geometrical pattern and chamfered upper corners. Above them was an empty lunette, framed by encircled Greek crosses. This lunette was bordered by simple walling, all finished with a rectangle and another lunette with a trifora. Inside the trifora, there were two small columns with simple capitals with a Greek cross.<sup>68</sup>

A similar segmentation solution can be found on the frontal façade of the Lazarus Church in Kruševac (1375–1378), where lesenes frame both the portal and the rose window above it. The motif of the lunette with windows appears again on the Maribor Lazarus Church, but positioned somewhat higher, under the main dome. This larger lunette had five windows of varying height, framed by lesenes. The Order Form for artificial rock parts shows that the space between windows was occupied by columns with simple capitals with no crosses.<sup>69</sup> There were four columns – grouped in equal pairs, following the size of the windows.<sup>70</sup> The main one was the tallest, the rest gradually decreased in height.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup> PAM/18, fond Posamezne nerazvrščene fotografije Maribor, b. 1, Osnovna skica pogled na glavni vhod pravoslavne cerkve Maribor in Nacrt crkve u Mariboru.

<sup>68</sup> PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], P-S.C. Portal; PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], P-S.C. Portal z prerezom in tlorisom.

<sup>69</sup> PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor- Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” - investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra].

<sup>70</sup> PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], P-S.C. Detajl I. z visokimi ozkimi okni.

<sup>71</sup> PAM/18, fond Posamezne nerazvrščene fotografije Maribor, b. 1, Projekt crkve Lazarice u Mariboru; PAM/18, fond Posamezne nerazvrščene fotografije Maribor, b. 1, Fotografija s pogledom na glavno pročelje med gradnjo.

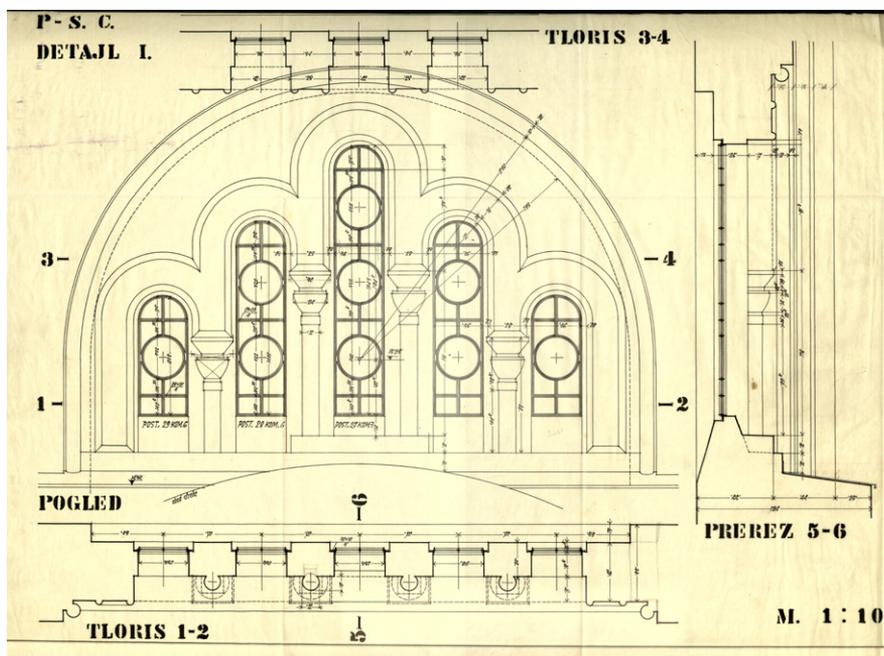


Figure 8: Plan of pentafora on the central axis of the western façade of the Church of St. Lazarus in Maribor (PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], P-S.C. Detajl I. z visokimi ozkimi okni).

The main dome was wider and a story higher than the others.<sup>72</sup> Due to its size, it required additional wooden construction. The sizes of the domes have also been preserved – the diameter of the large dome measured 240 cm, while the diameter of the smaller ones measured 163 cm.

<sup>72</sup> PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], P-S.C. Mala kupola M. 1:20; PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], P-S.C. Lesena konstrukcija glavne kupole M. 1:20.

One layer of the wooden construction consisted of a cross-section of two Greek crosses, with each section supported by tongs.<sup>73</sup>

The eastern and northern sides of the church were never fully documented. All we know is that the church finished with a polygonal (5/8) apse, which is visible on the original floor plan of the church.<sup>74</sup> This solution is characteristic of Korunović's churches as well as the medieval Serbian buildings of the Morava and Raška Schools that inspired the architect.

Reviewing the drafts from the 1939 public contest for the urban redesign of Liberty Square and the memorial to King Aleksandar I Karađorđević, we find three images with the Church of St. Lazarus in the background. Two of these are sketches<sup>75</sup> and the other is a half-photograph/half-sketch,<sup>76</sup> where a competition participant aimed to realistically integrate the memorial into the urban landscape. The lower section of the draft depicts a sketch of Liberty Square, while the upper section shows a photograph of Yugoslavia Square with the municipal palace and surrounding buildings. The discovery of the sketch confirms the polygonal apse conclusion of the eastern section of the church.

The three-conch floor plan is typical for Serbian medieval construction, which Korunović also incorporated in his churches in Ljubljana and Celje. The southern façade of the Maribor church is the most notable. While the architect used semicircular finishes on the western façade, the southern one involves a new approach that Korunović only used in Maribor. The closest stylistic parallels can be found in the fronts of the Church of St. George in Smedrevo (Aleksandar Damjanov, 1851–1855).

<sup>73</sup> PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], P-S.C. Mala kupola M. 1:20.

<sup>74</sup> PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], Lega cerkve na Jugoslovanskem trgu, situacija 1:1000.

<sup>75</sup> PAM, fond Zbirka gradbenih načrtov (1796–1994), b. 2, “12 B – 1, 12b”; PAM, fond Zbirka gradbenih načrtov (1796–1994), b. 2, “Tehnični popis idejnega osnutka za spomenik blagopokojnemu kralju Aleksandru U. Uedinitelju v Mariboru.”

<sup>76</sup> PAM, fond Zbirka gradbenih načrtov (1796–1994), b. “Tehnični popis idejnega osnutka za spomenik blagopokojnemu kralju Aleksandru U. Uedinitelju v Mariboru,” karton 1; PAM, fond Zbirka gradbenih načrtov (1796–1994), b. 2, “Idejni osnutek spomenika kralju Aleksandru I.”

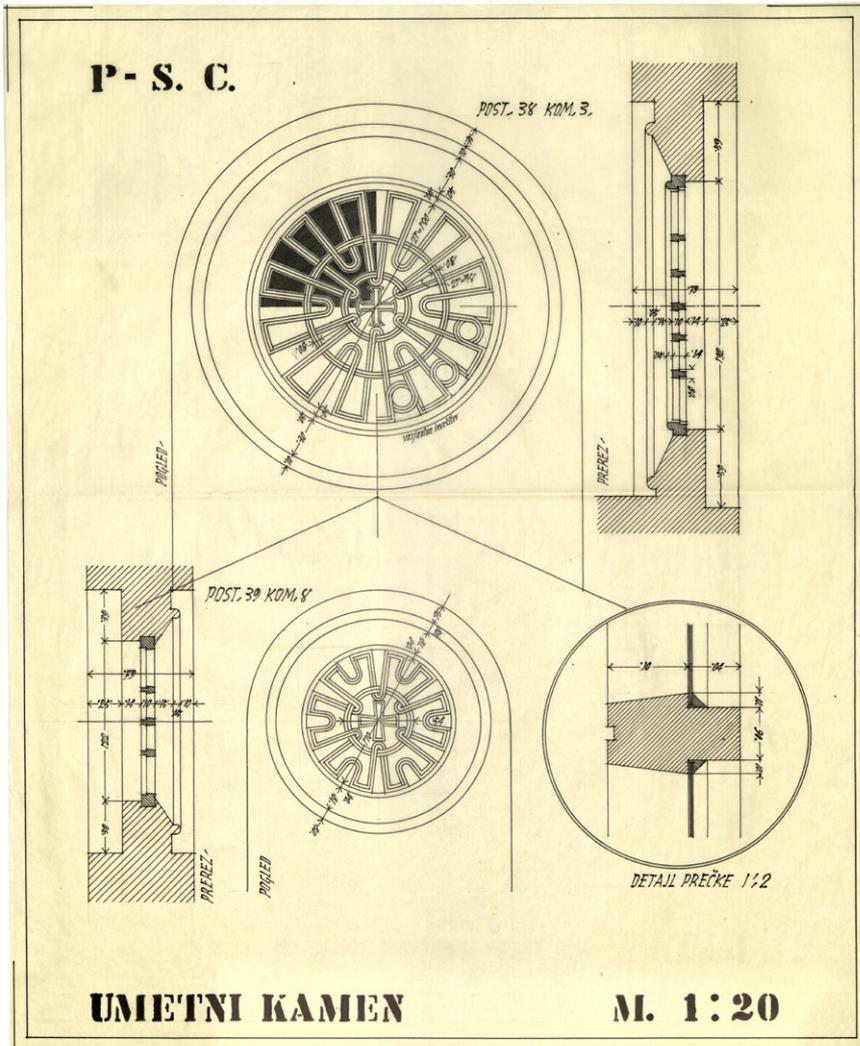


Figure 9: Round window plan on the western or lateral façades (PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], Načrt okroglega okna s prečnim prerezom).

The photograph clearly shows that the Lazarus Church dominated the Maribor skyline, both in terms of height and architectural prominence.

Beneath the front, a round window is visible, similar to those on the western façade. The Order Form for artificial rock parts<sup>77</sup> notes three different round windows. Item 38 shows the order of six pieces of round windows, each with a diameter of 1.80 m, with an inserted iron band, designed for glazing. The first three of these windows match the plan for a round window with a cross-section from the section plans folder, where the iron bands are interwoven with the Greek cross in the middle in a braided pattern.<sup>78</sup> The second group of three windows has the same diameter, with circles added to the pattern. Item 39 lists the order of 8 round windows with the same pattern as those in Item 38, but smaller, with a diameter of 1.10 m. These smaller windows were meant for bell towers, two for the outer sides of each one. A similar architectural approach was used in Korunović's church in Sušak. The question remains, which three windows from Item 38 were used for the western façade and which were installed on the lateral façades.

Two groups of six piers and three columns, measuring 2.85 m in height and resting on 45 cm tall bases, were also ordered. The first six piers had Greek crosses chiselled into both the bases and capitals, while different ornamentation was planned for the other group.

Two groups of the same piers decorated the exterior and interior of the building's three entrances. The presence of three decorated entrances into the church is further confirmed by Item 50, which details an order for three smoothly cut brick frames with chamfered corners for church entrances.

Three steps led into the gatehouse, with two steps leading from the gatehouse to each entrance. An order was placed for four 7.5 m wide and 80 cm tall pillars to support the main dome, and for two 2.5 m

---

<sup>77</sup> PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor- Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra].

<sup>78</sup> PAM/1758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942), b. 8, Maribor – Srbska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Lazarja – “Nova Lazarica” – investitorja srbske pravoslavne cerkvene občine na Jugoslovanskem trgu [Trg generala Maistra], Načrt okroglega okna s prečnim prerezom.



Figure 10: View from Liberty Square, April 1941 (PAM, fond Zavod za urbanizem Maribor, b. 53, Zborovanje na Trgu svobode).

wide and 30 cm wide pillars to support the quire. Both sets of pillars were concrete-cast and overlaid with terrazzo.

The floor was paved with terrazzo tiles, with the order amounting to 355 m<sup>2</sup>. 3–4-centimetre-wide stones formed a diamond pattern, surrounded by a 25 cm wide strip of darker, smaller stones. The sacristy, baptism chapel and the staircase to the quire were also tiled in terrazzo, but without the diamond-pattern segmentation.



Figure 11: Demolition of the Orthodox church following German occupation of 1941 (MNOMb, Fototeka MNOMb, inv. no. 7.049).

## The King Aleksandar Memorial on Liberty Square

The church, designed in Serbian national architectural style, was to be ideologically connected to the Memorial of King Aleksandar the Unifier (Karadžorđević), located on what is now Liberty Square. Even though Slomšek Square and Main Square were the areas most in need of renewal during the 1930s, the Department of Conservation of Cultural Heritage and the city of Maribor decided to work on Liberty Square instead. They planned to construct an equestrian memorial to King Aleksandar Karadžorđević, who had been assassinated in 1934.<sup>79</sup>

A public contest for the design of the memorial was announced in 1938 and remained open until March 1939. On March 3, 1939, the Royal Office of Dravska Banovina sent a letter to Belgrade, requesting the approval of selected drafts. This letter also mentions the winners of the competition – architect Jaroslav Černigoj and sculptor Boris Kalin – under the project title “New Axis.”<sup>80</sup>

According to their draft, the new layout of the square, featuring rectangular tiles, was to direct attention northwards towards the park (the Lazarus Church). This alignment strategy is also reflected in some other proposals, such as the project titled “III” (submitted by architects Joško Jež and Ljubo Humek, with sculptor Josip Sarnitz) and an unsigned proposal titled “Perspective.”<sup>81</sup>

The primary focus of these designs was the memorial itself, which was positioned in the northern section of the southern half of Liberty Square. The proposed memorial consisted of two columns with capitals and an equestrian statue, oriented eastwards. The construction was to stand on a platform with an elliptical floor plan. It was to be marked

<sup>79</sup> More in: Damir Globočnik, “Spomenik kralju Aleksandru I. v Mariboru,” *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* 90=n. v. 55, no. 3-4 (2019): 133-163.

<sup>80</sup> PAM, fond Mestna občina Maribor [1532-1849], b. 464, spis 3667/39, Za počastitev spomina blagopokojnega Viteškega kralja Aleksandra I. Ujedinitelja v Mariboru; PAM, fond Zbirka gradbenih načrtov (1796-1994), b. 2, Idejni osnutki za ureditev Trga svobode v Mariboru in spomenik kralju Aleksandru I. Karadžorđeviću, osnutek načrta 12 B – 1, 12d.

<sup>81</sup> PAM, fond Zbirka gradbenih načrtov (1796-1994), b. 2, “Tehnični popis idejnega osnutka za spomenik blagopokojnemu kralju Aleksandru I. Ujedinitelju v Mariboru,” geslo 1.

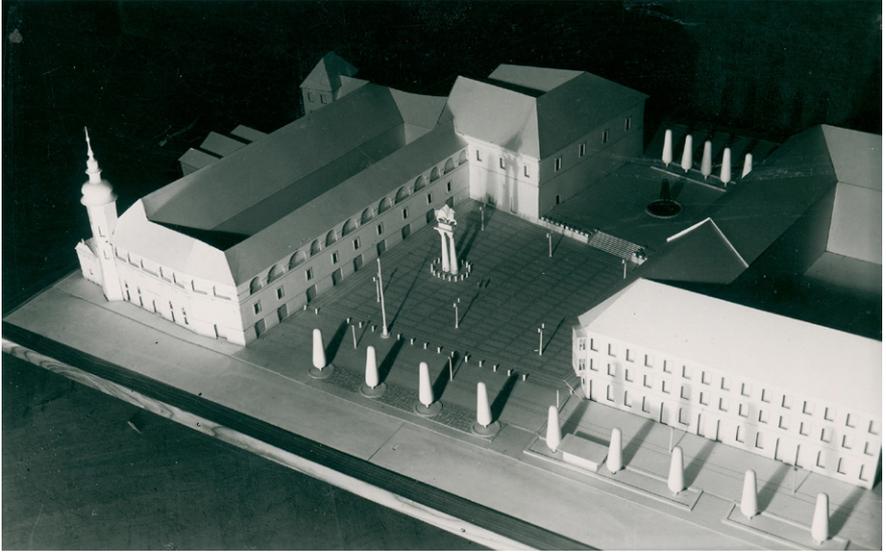


Figure 12: Model of Liberty Square with the “New Axis”  
King Aleksandar Memorial (PAM, fond Zavod za urbanizem Maribor, b. 4).

with columns, approximately a metre and a half in height.<sup>82</sup> The unveiling of the unfinished memorial was originally planned for Vidovdan of 1941 – a date of symbolic and political relevance. However, the outbreak of World War II in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia prevented the project from being completed.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> PAM, fond Zbirka gradbenih načrtov (1796–1994), b. 2, “12 B – 1, 12d,” PAM, fond Zbirka gradbenih načrtov (1796–1994), b. 2, “12 B – 1, 12d.”

<sup>83</sup> Špelca Čopič, *Javni spomeniki v slovenskem kiparstvu prve polovice 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 2000), 148, 359; and: Globočnik, *Spomenik kralju Aleksandru*, 133–163; Damir Globočnik, *Spomeniki* (Ljubljana: Revija SRP, 2022), 480.

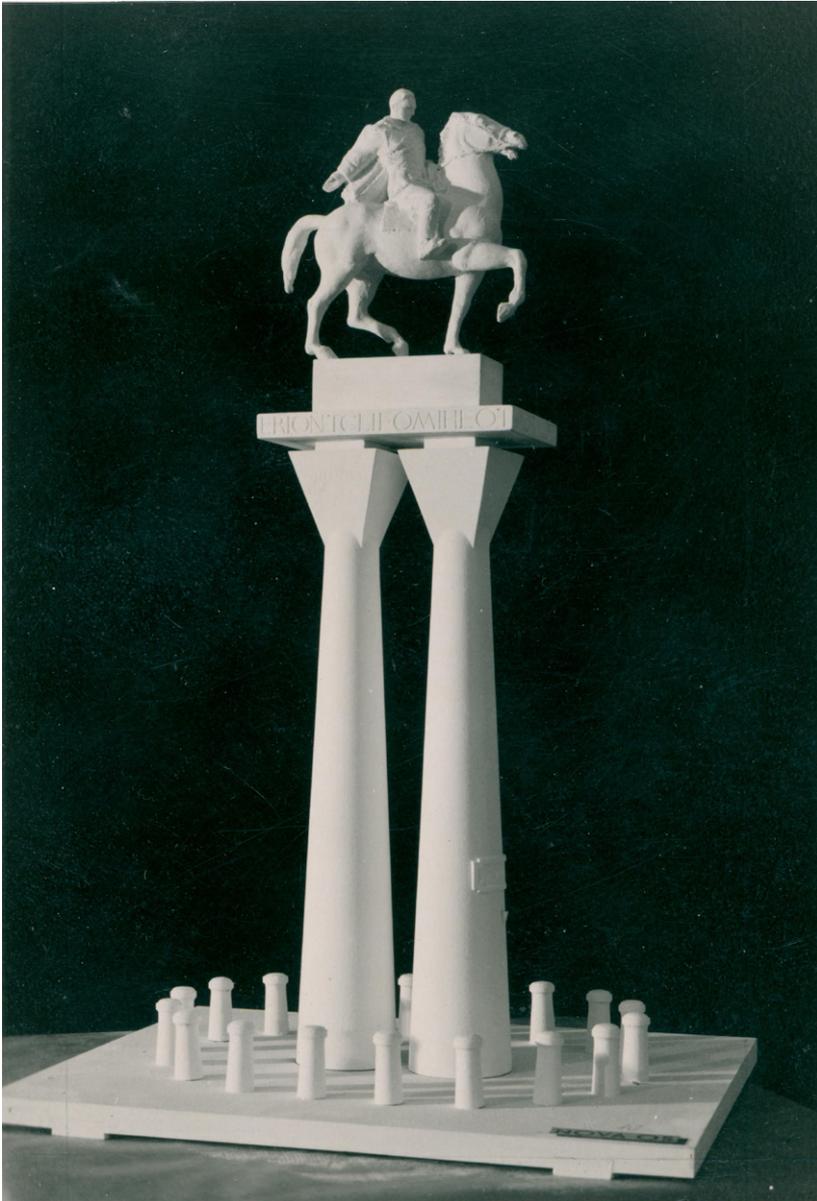


Figure 13: Model of the “New Axis” King Aleksandar Memorial (PAM, fond Zavod za urbanizem Maribor, b. 4).

## Conclusion

Yugoslavia Square functioned as a park set between representative city buildings (Maribor Castle, the Municipal Palace, and the Maribor Real School), until 1918 centred around the Wilhelm von Tegetthoff Memorial. After the memorial's removal, the park remained empty, creating an opportunity for construction of the Orthodox Church of St. Lazarus in that very spot. Unlike Yugoslavia Square, Liberty Square had already been empty. Because the city had been expanding eastwards – with the important Aleksandar Road, today known as Partizan Road, leading to the railway station – the space created by the filling of the city's defensive ditch started gaining the function of a more relevant square, requiring a central memorial. The construction of the church, however, faced frequent protests from the citizens of Maribor, as it was planned for a park area near Maribor Castle, just behind the former city wall.

Yugoslavia Square was both physically and symbolically dominated by the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Lazarus, built in 1936 (though never fully completed) in the Serbian national architectural style, which drew inspiration from the Raška and Morava Schools of medieval Serbian architecture. Because the state was at its largest in this very period, the connection can be understood in the context of the Great-Serbian ideal, which was still popular during the era of the "First Yugoslavia." The Church of St. Lazarus was meant to be ideologically connected to the uncompleted King Aleksandar Karađorđević Memorial on today's Liberty Square, which was to give the whole city district a clear Yugoslavian identity. It was to be one of the most modern parts of the city, with a clear aspiration to become the most monumental one.

The ideological message embedded in the architecture was echoed by political discourse at the time. The liberal and former Maribor city mayor Franjo Lipold, also the president of the Beautification Society, defended the construction of the Aleksandar Memorial, saying "the centre of our border territory must show a clear sign of liberation, for which we must be thankful to King Petar I. the Great Liberator, may he rest in peace, and the knight-king Aleksandar I. the Unifier who

crowned this work,” and that “we wish to clearly show our Maribor in its national light,” as well as that “Maribor will, with utmost dignity, manifest the great national ideals of the late king.”<sup>84</sup>

Ban Marko Natlačen indicated the role of equestrian memorials in Dravska Banovina in his 1940 statement that the Aleksandar Memorial represented “lasting evidence of the strong will of Slovenes to live in a common country with Croats and Serbs.”<sup>85</sup> Maribor’s military (Orthodox) priest Petar Trbojević, attending a gathering of the Orthodox community in Maribor National House in November of 1932 to discuss the renewal of Yugoslavia Square and Liberty Square (already predicted to host a memorial of King Petar), outspokenly committed to Serbian medieval identity and the Great-Serbian ideal by stating that “there would be no Kosovo without Dečani and Gračanica.” Božo Putniković, the vice-president of the Serbian Orthodox community, also spoke of the meaning of tradition and national conscience at the same event.<sup>86</sup>

The realisation of the Alexander Memorial was ultimately thwarted by the outbreak of World War II in Yugoslavia in April of 1941. Meanwhile, the Lazarus Church was demolished by the Nazis immediately following their occupation of Styria in a bid to erase Yugoslavian elements from Maribor. The grandiose and monumental plan for Yugoslavian appearance of both squares remained unrealised and, due to a new world war that represented a greater historical shift, gave away its space to content created by a different political system.

---

<sup>84</sup> Summarised from: Globočnik, *Spomenik kralju Aleksandru*, 136.

<sup>85</sup> Renata Komić Marn, “Možje na konjih. Vloga in recepcija konjeniškega spomenika na Slovenskem,” *Acta Historica Artis Slovenica* 18, no. 2 (2013): 113–114.

<sup>86</sup> “Pravoslavni božji hram v Mariboru,” *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 2. 12. 1932, no. 174, 3.

## B i b l i o g r a p h y

Pokrajinski arhiv Maribor [Maribor Regional Archive] (PAM):

- PAM/I758, fond Dev Saša (1908–1942) [Dev Saša (1908–1942) personal fonds].
- PAM/I8, fond Posamezne nerazvrščene fotografije Maribor [fonds of Single unclassified photos Maribor].
- PAM/XI702, fond Digitalizati arhivskega gradiva iz Zbirke albumov fotografij in razglednic v Pokrajinskem arhivu Maribor [fonds Digitisation of archival material from the Collection of Photograph Albums and Postcards in the Maribor Regional Archives].
- PAM, fond Mestna občina Maribor [fonds of Municipality of Maribor].
- PAM, fond Zavod za urbanizem Maribor [fonds of Maribor Urban Planning Institute].
- PAM, fond Zbirka gradbenih načrtov (1796–1994) [fonds Collection of building plans].

Muzej narodne osvoboditve Maribor [Museum of National Liberation Maribor] (MNOMb):

- Fototeka MNOMb [Photo library of MNOMb].

Bernik, Valerija. "General Rudolf Maister v vojaških dogodkih na območju Maribora in slovenskega Štajerskega v letih 1918 in 1919." *Vojaška zgodovina* 15, no. 2 (2019): 23–54.

Clegg, Elisabeth. *Art, Design and Architecture in Central Europe 1890-1920*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Codol, Jean-Paul. »Social differentiation and non-differentiation." In *The Social Dimension, European Developments in Social Psychology, Volume 2*, edited by Henri Tajfel, 314–337. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Curk, Jože. *Vodnik po Mariboru in bližnji okolici*. Maribor: Umetniški kabinet Primož Premzl, 2000.

Curk, Jože, and Premzl, Primož. *Mariborske vedute*. Maribor: Umetniški kabinet Primož Premzl, 2004.

Cvelfar, Bojan. *Srbska pravoslavna cerkev na Slovenskem med svetovnima vojnama*. Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2017.

Čopič, Špelca. *Javni spomeniki v slovenskem kiparstvu prve polovice 20. stoletja*. Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 2000.

Čurčić, Slobodan. *Architecture in the Balkans. From Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Ferlež, Jerneja, ed. *Deutsche und Maribor. Ein Jahrhundert der Wenden 1846–1946*. Maribor: Umetniški kabinet Primož Premzl, 2012.

Fras, Maksimiljan. *Mariborski župan dr. Alojzij Juhan in njegov čas*. Maribor: EPOS, 2013.

Friedrich, Carl Joachim, and Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961.

Goldsteen Joel, and Elliot Cecil. *Designing America: Creating Urban Identity*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1994.

Gostenčnik, Nina. *Delovanje mariborskega mestnega sveta med letoma 1929 in 1935*. Maribor: Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Mariboru, 2016.

Gostenčnik, Nina. *Maribor v času mestnega načelnika dr. Franja Lipolda (1931-1935)*. Maribor: Založba Pivec, 2019.

Globočnik, Damir. »Spomenik kralju Aleksandru I. v Mariboru.« *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* 90=n. v. 55, no. 3-4 (2019): 133–163.

Globočnik, Damir. *Spomeniki*. Ljubljana: Revija SRP, 2022.

Grafenauer, Bogo. "Narodnostno stanje in slovensko-nemška etnična meja na Štajerskem kot dejavnik osvoboditve severovzhodne Slovenije 1918/1919." *Zgodovinski časopis* 33 (1979): 385–405.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *Kolektivni spomin*. Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis, 2001.

Hnídková, Vendula. *Národní styl: Kultura a politika/National style: Arts and politics*. Prague: Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design, 2013.

Hribernik Miro. *Vojna na Hrvaškem 1990-1995*. Maribor: Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Mariboru, 2013.

Ignjatović, Aleksandar. *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi 1904-1941*. Beograd: Građevinska knjiga, 2007.

Ignjatović, Aleksandar. "National Unity through Regional Diversity: Architecture as Political Reform in Yugoslavia, 1929-1941." In *European Architectural History Network*, edited by Hilde Heynen and Janina Gosseye, 320-325. Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten & Contactforum, 2012.

In Der Maur, Gilbert. *Der Weg zur Nation. Jugoslawiens Innenpolitik 1918-1938*. Berlin-Wien-Zürich: Verlag für Wirtschaft und Kultur Payer & Co, 1938.

Kadijević, Aleksandar. *Srpski arhitekti novijeg doba: Momir Korunović*. Beograd: Muzej nauke i tehnike, 1996.

Kadijević, Aleksandar, and Stefanović, Tadija. "Expressionism and Serbian Architecture Between Two World Wars". In *On the Very Edge. Modernism and Modernity in the Arts and Architecture of Interwar Serbia (1918-1941)*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014.

Kadijević, Aleksandar. *Vizantijsko graditeljstvo kao inspiracija srpskih neimara novijeg doba*. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 2016.

Kadijević, Aleksandar. "Between unitarism and regionalisms Architecture in Yugoslavia (1918–1941)." In *Architecture of independence in Central Europe/ Architektura niepodległości w Europie Środkowej*, 248–274. Krakow: International cultural centre, 2018.

Kadijević, Aleksandar. "Између уметничке носталгије и цивилизацијске утопије: византијске реминисценције у српској архитектури 20. века," *Српска уметност III. Замишљање прошлости и перцепција средњег века у српској умјетности XVIII–XXI века*. Београд: САНУ, 2016, 169–177.

Komić Marn, Renata. "Možje na konjih. Vloga in recepcija konjeniškega spomenika na Slovenskem," *Acta Historica Aris Slovenica* 18, no. 2 (2013): 113–114.

Kramberger, Taja. "Maurice Halbwachs: kolektivna memorija ni ne spomin in ne zgodovina". *Monitor ZSA: revija za zgodovinsko, socialno in druge antropologije* 12, no. 1/2 (2010): 273–322.

Kramberger, Taja, Rotar, Drago B. "Za antropološko raziskovanje: (namesto uvoda)." *Monitor ZSA: revija za zgodovinsko, socialno in druge antropologije* 12, no. 1/2 (2010): 9–14.

Kroger, Jane. *Identity Development: Adolescence through Adulthood*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Sage, 2000.

Kuster, Janko, ed. *Spominski zbornik ob 60-letnici bojev za severno slovensko mejo 1918–1919*. Maribor, Ljubljana: Klub koroških Slovencev, Sklad Prežihovega Voranca, Zveza prostovoljcev-borcev za severno slovensko mejo 1918–1919, 1979.

Lazarini, Franci. "Cerkve, samostani, redovne hiše in sinagoge. In Igor Sapač, Franci Lazarini, *Arhitektura 19. stoletja na Slovenskem*. Ljubljana: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, 2015.

Maneвиć, Zoran. *Srpska arhitektura 1900–1970*. Београд: Музеј савремене уметности, 1972.

Maneвиć, Zoran. *Jučerašnje graditeljstvo*. Београд: Завод за планирање града Београда, 1979.

Maneвиć, Zoran. *Jugoslovenska arhitektura XX veka*. Београд: Музеј савремене умјетности, 1986.

Meško, Ksaver. *Izbrana dela, IV. del*. Celje: Družba sv. Mohorja, 1959.

Mole, Vojeslav. *Umetnost južnih Slovanov*. Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1965.

Moravánszky, Ákos. *Die Architektur der Donaumonarchie*. Berlin: W. Ernst & Sohn, 1988.

Moravánszky, Ákos. *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867–1918*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998.

Mylonas, Christos. *Serbian Orthodox Fundamentals: The Quest for an Eternal Identity*. Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2003.

Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli, 1980.

Omilanowska, Małgorzata. "Searching for a National Style in Polish Architecture at the End of the 19th and Beginning of the 20th Century." In *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*, edited by Nicola Gordon Bowe, 99–116. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993.

Ožinger, Anton. "Cerkvena zgodovina Maribora od konca 18. stoletja." In *Maribor skozi stoletja*. Maribor: Obzorja, 1991.

Penič, Lojze. *Boj za slovensko severno mejo 1918–1920: kratek oris bojev za slovensko severno mejo po razpadu Avstro-Ogrske*. Maribor: Muzej narodne osvoboditve Maribor, 1988.

Perovšek, Jurij. "Ustavna razprava in vprašanje državne ureditve." In *Slovenska novejša zgodovina 1848–1992: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije*, 240–244. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005.

Perovšek, Jurij. "Značaj kraljeve diktature." In *Slovenska novejša zgodovina 1848–1992: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije*, 321–323. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005.

Radovanović, Sašo. *Mariborske ulice*. Maribor: Kapital, 2005.

Ratej, Mateja. "Odenki politizacije Rimskokatoliške in Srbske pravoslavne cerkve pri Slovenski ljudski in Narodni radikalni stranki med svetovnima vojnama." *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 48, no. 2 (2008): 35–52.

Švajncer, Janez J. *Slovenska vojska 1918–1919*. Ljubljana: Prešernova družba, 1990.

Trachtenberg, Marvin. *The Modern Architecture, Architecture. From prehistory to post-modernism. The Western Traditions*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1986.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Ude, Lojze. *Boj za severno slovensko mejo: 1918–1919*. Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1977.

Unknown Author. "Mariborska obč. Seja." *Slovenec*, 27. 3. 1930.

Unknown Author. "Kje bo stala pravoslavna cerkev." *Slovenec*, 12. 4. 1930.

Unknown Author. "Razgovor z g. mestnim županom." *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 7. 5. 1932.

Unknown Author. "Anketa radi pravoslavne cerkve." *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 4. 6. 1932.

Unknown Author. "Pravoslavni božji hram v Mariboru." *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 2. 12. 1932.

Unknown Author. "Zavrjnena pritožba bivšega poslanca Žebota in tovarišev proti odstopu Jugoslovanskega trga za pravoslavno cerkev." *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 30. 1. 1934.

Unknown Author. "Mariborske vesti. Za pravoslavno cerkev." *Slovenec*, 21. 7. 1934.

Unknown Author. "Blagoslovitev temeljnega kamna za pravoslavno cerkev na Jugoslovanskem trgu." *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 9. 8. 1934.

Unknown Author. "Pravoslavna cerkev v Mariboru." *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 11. 8. 1934.

Unknown Author. "Slovesna blagoslovitev temeljnega kamna srbske pravoslavne cerkve." *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 13. 8. 1934.

Unknown author. "Postavimo spomenik našemu Parmi." *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, 8. 1. 1935.

Velikonja, Marko. "Religizirani narod vs. nacionalizirana religija: verski vidiki kosovske krize." *Časopis za kritiko znanosti* 27, no. 195/196 (1999): 97–98.

Veress, Dániel. "Architecture as Nation-Building: The Search for National Styles in Habsburg Central Europe Before and After World War I." In *Empires, Nations and Private Lives: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the Great War*, edited by Nari Shelekpayev, 1–39. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2016.

Vidmar, Polona. "Lokalpatriotismus und Lokalpolitik: die Denkmäler Wilhelms von Tegetthoff, Kaiser Josefs II. sowie Erzherzog Johanns in Maribor und die Familie Reiser." *Acta historiae Artis Slovenica* 18 (2013): 68–71.

Vrišer, Sergej. "Znamenja in javni spomeniki v Mariboru do 1941." *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* n. v. 7, no. 2 (1971): 175–195.

Vybíral, Jindřich. "National style as a construction of art history." In *The Plurality of Europe: Identities and Spaces*, edited by Winfried Eberhard and Christian Lübke, 465–474. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2010.

Vybíral, Jindřich. "Modernism or the National Movement in Prague." In *Art Around 1900 in Central Europe: Art Centers and Provinces*, edited by Jacek Purchla, 203–209. Kraków: International Cultural Centre, 1999.

Žitko, Sonja. *Po sledeh časa: Spomeniki v Sloveniji: 1800-1914*. Ljubljana: Debora, 1996.

Žnidaršič, Marjan. *Do pekla in nazaj. Nacistična okupacija in narodnoosvobodilni boj v Mariboru 1941-1945*. Maribor: Muzej narodne osvoboditve, 1997.

Winter, Jay. "Foreword: Remembrance as a Human Right." In *Memory and Political Change*, edited by Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt. Great Britain: CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne, 2012.

---

# STATE OF GOVERNANCE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Aleksandra Zibelnik Badii

## Introduction

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (SHS), established after World War I, and socialist Yugoslavia, formed following World War II, were both characterized as multinational and multi-religious states, encompassing diverse historical and cultural traditions. These differences led to tensions, which were often exploited by secular and religious leaders for their own ends. The state system, religious communities, and representatives of various nations of both countries were finding it hard to adjust to this situation,<sup>1</sup> which led to constant political, cultural and interreligious arguments. Religion has historically played a significant role in the region, and it remains a particularly compelling aspect due to its deep ties to the country's diverse national identities, making it a crucial subject of study.<sup>2</sup>

The complex national and religious composition of SHS and Yugoslavia included the following majority religions: Orthodox Serbs

---

<sup>1</sup> Gašper Mithans, *Jugoslovanski konkordat: Pacem in discordia ali jugoslovanski "kulturkampf"* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2017), 340.

<sup>2</sup> Stella Alexander, "Religion in Yugoslavia Today," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 10, no. 5 (1990), 7, [https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1511&context=ree&httpsredir=1&referer=.](https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1511&context=ree&httpsredir=1&referer=)

and Montenegrins, Roman Catholic Slavonians, Dalmatians and Slovenes, an Albanian Muslim minority in southern Serbia, Hungarians, Germans and a few Slavic groups, mainly Serbs, lived in Vojvodina. Macedonia was divided between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria in 1912. Macedonian Slavs were Orthodox, and the Albanians were Muslim. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) had an autochthonous Muslim population, having belonged to the Ottoman Empire for centuries until its annexation by Austria-Hungary in 1908. Serbs in BiH were Orthodox and Croats were Catholic.<sup>3</sup>

Covering the era of the first and second Yugoslavia – the period from 1918 to approximately 1990 – this paper explores state policies, legal recognition, and the attitude of the political leadership, towards the legally recognized religious communities. As case studies, this research examines two unrecognized religious communities, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Bahá'ís, across Yugoslavia. They serve as representative examples of small religious groups within the country's broader religious landscape, but they are also distinct in key ways, making them particularly valuable for research because of their:

- Legal and Social Marginalization: Both communities were unrecognized by the state for much of Yugoslavia's history, placing them in a similar category as other minority faiths that lacked institutional support.
- Missionary Focus: Unlike some ethnic-based religious groups, Jehovah's Witnesses and Bahá'ís actively sought converts, making them subject to state scrutiny.
- State Perception of Foreign Influence: Both were viewed as being linked to international religious movements, which made them susceptible to suspicion in a socialist state wary of external ideological influences.

However, they are also uniquely non-typical as minority religions as they exhibit atypical characteristics, which make them particularly valuable for comparative research.

---

<sup>3</sup> Stella Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2.

Jehovah's Witnesses were subject to state persecution because of their political neutrality. Their refusal to participate in military service and state rituals made them a direct target for persecution, leading to imprisonment and surveillance.

- The socialist Yugoslav state promoted patriotism, while Jehovah's Witnesses rejected nationalism, making them highly visible dissenters.
- Jehovah's Witnesses adapted to repression through underground printing and secret religious gatherings, illustrating state–church dynamics in a restrictive environment.

As for the Bahá'í Community:

- The Bahá'í Faith did not align itself with a single national or ethnic identity, unlike most religious groups in Yugoslavia.
- Bahá'ís were less politically conspicuous and did not openly reject state policies, making their interactions with the authorities different.
- The community was relatively small and tended to attract individuals in urban and intellectual circles rather than the working class, differentiating them from other alternative religious movements.

We examine how these communities faced contrasting levels of acceptance and persecution. Through this comparative lens, the paper sheds light on the broader dynamics of religion and governance in a complex and evolving political landscape.

The paper begins with a brief overview of the general characteristics of the Bahá'í community and Jehovah's witnesses. The subsequent chapters are organized chronologically, each focusing on key aspects of the relationship between the state and these religious communities during specific time periods. At the conclusion of each chapter, an analysis is provided to examine the events and developments affecting either the Bahá'í community or Jehovah's Witnesses during that particular timeframe.

## The Bahá'í Community and Jehovah's Witnesses – Short Overview

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* the Bahá'í Faith is, one of the world's youngest independent religions. It originated in 1844 in Persia and spread around the world, including to Europe, in the first decades after its creation. Bahá'ís believe its founder Bahá'u'lláh, and his predecessor, the Báb, to be manifestations of one God, who is essentially unknown. The central teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the fundamental unity of all religions and the unity of mankind. Bahá'ís believe that all the founders of the world's major religions were manifestations of God and executors of a progressive divine plan for the education of the human race. There are no priests, every believer must teach their faith.<sup>4</sup> It has been present in Yugoslavia since the 1920s. As a young, non-nationalistic religion, the Bahá'í community emphasized principles of peace, equality, and collaboration, which resonated across social, economic, and educational boundaries. The Bahá'ís adhered to the laws of the country and fostered a harmonious relationship with the state, thus avoiding persecution.

Jehovah's Witnesses originated in the 1870s when Charles Taze Russell founded a Bible study group in Pennsylvania that critically examined Christian teachings. Initially predicting Christ's return in 1874, Russell later established the Watchtower Society, a Bible study association, which became the movement's organizational core, publishing *The Watchtower*. By 1931, the group formally adopted the name Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses believe in Jehovah as the one true God, rejecting the Trinity and viewing Jesus as God's first creation. They see the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force and consider the Bible, particularly the 1961 translation, their ultimate authority. They believe humanity is in its last days and that God's Kingdom will soon establish a paradise on earth after Armageddon. Only 144,000 anointed ones will enjoy heaven, while the rest of humanity will cease to exist. They reject the concept of Hell and emphasize strict moral conduct, including disfellowshipping unrepentant members. Jehovah's Witnesses

---

<sup>4</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of The Year* (Chicago, London Etc., 1996).

distinguish themselves by rejecting traditional holidays, birthdays, and nationalistic practices like saluting the flag or military service, which they see as unbiblical. Their faith centres on evangelism, with a strong focus on door-to-door preaching and Bible study. They avoid secular politics and interfaith movements, believing only God's Kingdom can bring true peace. Over the years, they have repeatedly predicted Christ's return, with key dates including 1874, 1914, and 1975. Their beliefs – particularly opposition to military service and blood transfusions – have led to legal and social challenges worldwide. Jehovah's Witnesses have existed in Yugoslavia since the 1920s.<sup>5</sup>

The Relationship between the Newly Established  
Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918–1929),  
Later Renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929–1941),  
and (Predominant) Religious Communities

In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later renamed into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) the 1921 and 1931 constitutions did not establish a state religion, nor was there a separation of church and state,<sup>6</sup> but the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church were established religions. Catholic Slovenes and Croats came from the religiously more homogeneous Austro-Hungarian Empire, to a religiously diverse country where their religion was no longer prevalent; the Serbian Orthodox Church was no longer a state religion, although as the religion of the ruling dynasty and with the largest number of adherents, it remained the leading religion legally and politically especially in Serbia and Montenegro.<sup>7</sup> The Roman Catholic Church was prominent in areas with Croatian and Slovene majorities and was a dominant force in its regions and a key cultural and political player. Islam was practiced by a significant portion of the population, particularly by Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia. All

---

<sup>5</sup> Aleš Črnič, *Na vodnarjevem valu: nova religijska in duhovna gibanja* (Ljubljana: FDV, 2012), 134–36.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 209.

<sup>7</sup> Mithans, *Jugoslovanski konkordat*, 38.

religious communities sought to expand their influence and strengthen their respective communities, which led to competition and tension.<sup>8</sup> Neither community took the opportunity to move beyond past disagreements; instead, both contributed to the new state's instability.<sup>9</sup>

In 1918, a Ministry of Religion was established and all religious communities previously recognised in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were given equal status.<sup>10</sup> However, laws pertaining to religious communities were specific to particular regions,<sup>11</sup> and freedom of religion only applied to legally recognised religions: the Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed Churches, the Orthodox Church, Islam and the Greek Orthodox Church.<sup>12</sup> The 1921<sup>13</sup> and 1931 constitutions declared that both historic and adopted religions were legitimate: the Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Old Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Methodist, Muslim, and Jewish religions. Other religions were not permitted.<sup>14</sup>

But not all religions enjoyed the same legal rights: Islamic, Jewish, Lutheran, and the Reformed Church were protected by law and were allowed to perform religious rites, including weddings, funerals, and birth registration. According to the 1921 census, 46.6% of the population declared themselves members of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 39.4% members of the Catholic Church and 11.2% members of the Islamic Community.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1992), 341.

<sup>9</sup> Mithans, *Jugoslavanski konkordat*, 36.

<sup>10</sup> Aleksandra Đurić-Milovanović, "'On the Road to Religious Freedom': A Study of the Nazarene Emigration from Southeastern Europe to the United States," *Journal of Ethnography and Folklore*, no. 1-2 (2017): 11, [https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/13960/On\\_the\\_Road\\_to\\_Religious\\_Freedom\\_a\\_Stud.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/13960/On_the_Road_to_Religious_Freedom_a_Stud.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>11</sup> Gašper Mithans, "Religious Conversions and Religious Diversification in Interwar Yugoslavia and Slovenia," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 40, no. 2 (2020): 50, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol40/iss2/6/>.

<sup>12</sup> Milivoja Šircelj, *Verska, jezikovna in narodna sestava prebivalstva Slovenije: Popisi 1921-2002* (Ljubljana: Statistični urad Republike Slovenije, 2003), <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-oTNJoXB4>.

<sup>13</sup> Marie-Janine Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019), 100.

<sup>14</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 341.

<sup>15</sup> Mithans, *Jugoslavanski konkordat*, 34.

Religious communities had different views on their roles in society and politics, as well as on interreligious and interethnic coexistence. Relations between religious communities were also not regulated legally.<sup>16</sup> Typical of dominant religions,<sup>17</sup> the Catholic Church generally resisted the emergence of new religious communities, despite occasional efforts at ecumenism.<sup>18</sup>

When speaking about new religious communities one of the basic rights of a religiously pluralistic society must be mentioned – religious conversion, which has been a relatively unexplored topic. In Slovenia for example, religious conversions were quite rare at that time. Migrants mostly kept their religion and ethnic character, which made it more difficult for them to adapt to their new environment.<sup>19</sup> Conversions took place out of convenience, such as religiously mixed marriages, to legalise illegitimate children, for political and career opportunism, to seek protection, or as a political statement.<sup>20</sup> Sometimes the numbers kept in state archives, for example, differ from those recorded by churches.<sup>21</sup> The number of members and believers in religious<sup>22</sup> communities and voluntary associations is often unclear, as it depends on the framework used to define membership. Factors such as who is recognized as a member, a believer, a visitor, a sympathizer, or someone who identifies as a believer but is not acknowledged as such by the institution all shape how membership in a religious community is determined.<sup>23</sup>

Conversions during the 1930s were indirectly influenced by the Concordat between the state and the Roman Catholic Church. The Concordat was never ratified due to complaints from the Yugoslav

---

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> The principle or aim of promoting unity among the world's Christian Churches.

<sup>19</sup> Mithans, "Religious Conversions," 74–75.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>22</sup> After World War I, the Serbian Orthodox Church established parishes in major Slovenian cities, initially attended by immigrants, and later Slovene converts. The Serbian Orthodox Church attracted new believers through publications in the national media and through the Sokol Gymnastics Club. Russian immigrants brought their Orthodox faith. The number of Muslims was minimal but growing – the first Slovenian imamate opened in 1931.

<sup>23</sup> Aleš Črnič, *V imenu Krišne: družboslovna študija gibanja Hare Krišna* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2005), 98–100.

Episcopate, alleged opposition of Italy, indifference of the Croatian Peasant Party and lack of interest of the Slovenian People's Party. Public pressure on the government led King Alexander to decide to keep the negotiations secret. The public, the political parties, the Roman Catholic Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church did not react well to this decision, and as a result, protests erupted.<sup>24</sup> After 1929, authorities intervened in all areas of social life, also banning political parties and associations of an ethnic and religious nature.<sup>25</sup> Protests only subsided when the Concordat was denounced, in 1938.<sup>26</sup> At the time of the adoption of the Concordat, there was a well-organised state-sponsored propaganda for conversion to the Serbian Orthodox Church. During the first Yugoslavia, around 200,000 people, mostly in Croatia, are believed to have converted to the Orthodox faith. At that time, it was socially unacceptable to be a non-believer, so it is possible that people claimed to be members of a particular religion, even if they were not active in it. The official number of believers of the different communities in Slovenia for instance, didn't change much.<sup>27</sup>

### The First Mention of The Bahá'í Community and Jehovah's Witnesses in The Kingdom of Yugoslavia

Although a small and unknown religious community, the Bahá'í religion had adherents in Yugoslavia<sup>28</sup> and by 1926, there was a group of Bahá'ís in Petrinja, Croatia, who sent reports of their activities to the head institution of their religion, in the Bahá'í World Centre.<sup>29</sup> The American travelling teacher, writer, and public speaker Martha Root

---

<sup>24</sup> Mithans, *Jugoslavanski konkordat*, 341.

<sup>25</sup> Mithans, "Religious Conversions," 50.

<sup>26</sup> Mithans, *Jugoslavanski konkordat*, 343-44.

<sup>27</sup> Mithans, "Religious Conversions," 57.

<sup>28</sup> Nemanja Radulović, "Esotericism Among the Serbian and Yugoslav Freemasonry in the Interwar Period," *Freemasonry in Southeast Europe from the 19th to the 21st Centuries*, 2020, 194, [https://www.academia.edu/45027955/Esoteric\\_Current\\_in\\_Serbian\\_and\\_Yugoslav\\_Interwar\\_Freemasonry](https://www.academia.edu/45027955/Esoteric_Current_in_Serbian_and_Yugoslav_Interwar_Freemasonry).

<sup>29</sup> *The Bahá'í World, Vol. 2, 1926-1928* (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1928), 186.

visited Yugoslavia in 1926 and in 1928 sparking a genuine interest in the Bahá'í teachings.<sup>30</sup>

After the great interest in the Bahá'í Faith shown by Queen Mary of Romania, whom Martha Root met in the spring of 1926,<sup>31</sup> they met again in the beginning of 1928 in Belgrade, at the Karađorđević Royal Palace. Later, Martha Root was invited back to the Royal Palace, where she spoke to Prince Paul and his wife Olga. Together they arranged for Professor Bogdan Popović, literary critic and academic at the University of Belgrade, to translate a booklet on the Bahá'í Faith into Serbian entitled *The World Religion: A Brief Overview of its Goals, Teachings and History* (*Religija sveta: Kratak pregled njenih ciljeva, učenja i istorije*),<sup>32</sup> of which four thousand copies were handed out in the first ten days. A second book 'Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era' was translated into Serbian by the Serbian poet and translator Draga Ilić and a representative of the Bahá'í community in Yugoslavia,<sup>33</sup> with a foreword by Prof. Popović, published in 1933,<sup>34</sup> followed by a successful presentation on the Bahá'í Faith at Belgrade University.

After several lectures in Belgrade, Martha Root travelled to Zagreb to address the Croatian Women's Club with more than 2,000 members. She had a long conversation with Stjepan Radić, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, and presented him with the book 'Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era.' On 29 February 1928, on her way from Zagreb to Czechoslovakia by train, Martha Root stopped in Maribor, Slovenia, and met with members of the Slovenian Esperantist Association.<sup>35</sup> She regularly visited Yugoslavia until 1935.

<sup>30</sup> *The Bahá'í World*, 31.

<sup>31</sup> M. R. Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Treshold* (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), 242.

<sup>32</sup> National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Austria, Vienna [Der Nationale Geistige Rat der Bahá'í in Österreich, Wien], Effendi, Shoghi, *Religija sveta: Kratak pregled njenih ciljeva, učenja i istorije / World Religion: A Brief Overview of its Goals, Teachings and History*, 1st ed. (Belgrade, Serbia: Jugoslovenska Baha'i grupa, 1928).

<sup>33</sup> Nemanja Radulović, *Gde ruža i lotos cveta: slika Indije u srpskoj književnosti i kulturi 19. i 20. veka* (Beograd: Fedon, 2023), 162.

<sup>34</sup> National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Austria, Vienna, Esselmont, John E., *Bahá'u'lláh i Novo Doba / Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, 1st ed. (Belgrade, Serbia, 1933).

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous, "Martha Root En Zagrebo," *Konkordo*, 3 ed. (March 1928): 6–8.

From 1926 on there are reports of continued activities of individual Bahá'ís and micro-communities, that consisted of 4 members or more in Petrinja and Zagreb, Croatia and Belgrade, Serbia. These reports are crucial for the research on the community. In one report to the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa it is written:

The analysis of the religious situation in the Balkan countries made by all the Bahá'ís who have first-hand knowledge of that region, indicate clearly that the intolerable burden of economic, political and social oppression, which for so many centuries has stunted the collective life of those peoples, is now being lifted by an ever-increasing demand among the people themselves for a more dynamic and useful spiritual experience. From some perspectives, it would appear that no part of the world offers better possibilities for universal religious quickening than the Balkan States.<sup>36</sup>

Concerning the attitude of the state: the Yugoslav state archive, archives of the Police, and archives of the Ministry of the Interior and Religious Communities, do not contain names of Bahá'ís in Yugoslavia of that period, or references to the Bahá'í community, because it was not registered then. With no information recorded, it can be concluded that the authorities did not consider the Bahá'í community and its activities to be dangerous to the state.<sup>37</sup>

In 1925, Franz Brand from Vojvodina heard of Jehovah's Witness teachings in Austria. He returned home and joined a small Bible study group. With his help two booklets explaining Bible teachings were translated into Serbian. Franz then moved to Maribor, Slovenia, where he was teaching, and formed a micro-community. They established the Lighthouse Society of Bible Students in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This legal entity enabled them to preach and hold meetings freely.

In 1931, two "brothers"<sup>38</sup> from Switzerland held presentations of the faith in Maribor, Zagreb, Mostar, and other cities. *The Watchtower* was translated into Slovenian and Croatian. They used the magazines to travel around Yugoslavia and share their religion. They were supported

---

<sup>36</sup> The Bahá'í World, Vol. 2, 1926-1928 (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1928), 31.

<sup>37</sup> Helen Basset Hornby, *Lights of Guidance* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust of India, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> Worldwide Brotherhood – A term used by Jehovah's Witnesses to emphasize unity among members who are also called brothers.

by German brothers and sisters, as the religion was being banned in Germany. They travelled through the countryside on foot or by bicycle with a backpack full of literature, preaching to all who would listen. A micro-community grew in Macedonia through the efforts of two brothers travelling to Bulgaria. In 1935, the “brothers” moved the branch office from Maribor, Slovenia, to Belgrade, Serbia.

There was significant religious opposition, and the pioneers faced considerable persecution. In smaller villages, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests exerted strong influence over their followers and, at times, encouraged schoolchildren to throw stones at the pioneers. Additionally, the clergy urged local authorities to harass them, leading to the confiscation of their literature and their arrests. Sometimes the pioneers were attacked and their booklets burnt. The pioneers were mindful of local customs, for instance when preaching in predominantly Muslim villages in Bosnia.

In 1933, the Catholic Church issued a brochure explaining Jehovah’s Witnesses and they predicted that they would stop existing in Yugoslavia soon. They also tried to block their preaching activities through courts, which wasn’t successful. In August 1936, *The Lighthouse* was banned, Kingdom Halls were sealed, and literature was confiscated. Forewarned congregations hid most materials. To continue their work, *Kula Stražara (The Watchtower)* was established in Belgrade, and meetings moved to private homes. With the ban in place, the government increased pressure to stop preaching, targeting full-time ministers, especially German-speaking brothers. Many had come to Yugoslavia after bans in other countries, only to face restrictions again. The booklet *Judge Rutherford Uncovers Fifth Column*, exposing Catholic support for the Nazi agenda, was translated into Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian, with 20,000 copies each printed. Though banned immediately, it led to foreign pioneers’ expulsion and legal charges, seeking 10–15 years’ imprisonment for its publishers. Despite the risk, 60,000 copies were swiftly distributed.<sup>39</sup> Sociologist of religion Aleš Črnič observed that Jehovah’s Witnesses represent “the most obvious example of a religious

---

<sup>39</sup> 2009 *Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 2009, Lands of the Former Yugoslavia, 145–64, <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2009-Yearbook-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses/>.

group that has been subjected to many years of severe direct repression and has never reacted violently.”<sup>40</sup>

(Dominant) Religious Communities  
During World War II (1941–1945)

On 6 April 1941, Germany invaded Yugoslavia, which capitulated. It was divided between Germany (North Slovenia, Banat, and Serbia south of the Danube), Italy (South of Slovenia, Dalmatia, Ljubljana, Kosovo, and west Macedonia and Montenegro), Hungary (Prekmurje and Medžimurje, a part of Vojvodina) and Bulgaria took over the rest of Macedonia. The Independent State of Croatia was established (NDH).<sup>41</sup> It united Slavonia and parts of Dalmatia. Also, Bosnia and Hercegovina was established.<sup>42</sup>

In May 1941, a new law was passed rendering it easier to change religion.<sup>43</sup> People could fill in a form and simply submit it to the authorities, which then issued a certificate of religion. Many people who had previously converted to Orthodoxy now returned to Catholicism.<sup>44</sup> In the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), an ally of Germany, the Ustaše<sup>45</sup> regime implemented brutal policies targeting the Serbian Orthodox population. To avoid persecution, massacres, and expulsions, an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 Orthodox Serbs converted to Catholicism. There was a broad effort to suppress and eliminate Orthodox identity in the region.<sup>46</sup> Cyrillic was banned together with the name Serbian Orthodox religion, and Orthodox supported kindergartens, primary and secondary schools were closed. Financial support

---

<sup>40</sup> Črnič, *Na vodnarjevem valu*, 128.

<sup>41</sup> NDH – Nezavisna država Hrvatska.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 9–11.

<sup>43</sup> Zakonska odredba o prijelazu od jedne vjere na drugu – A legal decree about changing religion.

<sup>44</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 26.

<sup>45</sup> The Ustaše were a Croatian fascist and ultranationalist movement that ruled the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) during World War II. Allied with Germany and Italy, they sought to create an ethnically “pure” Croatian state, implementing policies of genocide, forced conversions, and expulsions against Serbs, Jews, and Roma.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 30.

for the Orthodox Church was withdrawn. Serbs had to wear coloured armbands and began to be deported from the NDH, many were sent to concentration camps.<sup>47</sup> Thousands of Serbs were killed by the Ustashe, and there are records that certain Catholic priests also joined in the killings, some of whom were excommunicated, but not all. The estimated number of Orthodox believers killed ranges from 300,000 to 750,000.<sup>48</sup>

In the NDH, the Catholic Church was led by the Archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Stepinac, who did not protest the new state.<sup>49</sup> However, from 1942 he spoke out publicly against injustices such as forced Catholicisation and the persecution of Jews,<sup>50</sup> Serbs and Roma, and he publicly criticised the authorities. Stepinac was arrested and convicted in September 1946, as he was considered at least partly responsible for the Ustashe violence against the Serb population.<sup>51</sup> In 1951, the government released Archbishop Stepinac from prison and sent him to his home village, where he was confined to the village and people could visit him.<sup>52</sup> He remained under house arrest for the rest of his life.<sup>53</sup> Stepinac died in February 1960 and was buried in the Zagreb Cathedral.<sup>54</sup>

In Slovenia, Bishop Gregorij Rožman of Ljubljana and his diocese condemned the communist-led Liberation Front of Slovenia (OF) and collaborated with the occupying forces.<sup>55</sup> Early in the war, Rožman established ties first with Italian and later German authorities, expressing his opposition to the Partisan resistance movement. After Italy's surrender in September 1943, the German occupiers took control of the region. With the support of General Leon Rupnik – who sought to secure Slovenia's place in Hitler's envisioned "New Europe" – and with the blessing of Bishop Rožman, the Slovene Home Guard (*Domobranci*)

<sup>47</sup> Among the most notorious was Jasenovac.

<sup>48</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 28–29.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>51</sup> Josip Jurij Strossmayer, Croatian diplomat, politician, priest, Catholic bishop, who worked for the rapprochement of the South Slavs and the unification of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

<sup>52</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 102–20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>55</sup> Dušan Nećak and Božo Repe, *Oris sodobne obče in slovenske zgodovine: Učbenik za študente 4. letnika* (Ljubljana: Oddelek za zgodovino Filozofske fakultete, 2003), 157–59.

was formed. This auxiliary force, operating under German command, grew to approximately 17,500 men and was actively involved in anti-partisan operations.<sup>56</sup> Rožman's collaboration, particularly his endorsement of the *Domobranci*, drew criticism even from within the Catholic Church. A petition signed by 283 clergy members called for his dismissal and replacement.<sup>57</sup> As the war neared its end, Rožman and his associates fled from Slovenia to Austria and found refuge in Swiss monasteries.<sup>58</sup> In 1946, Rožman was tried *in absentia* by a Yugoslav court.<sup>59</sup>

In Serbia, by 1942 the situation had calmed down to the point where they were able to hold masses, and in an Easter message their Metropolitan called for unity among Serbs, united by language, blood, and religion. The clergy were pressured by the occupiers to declare their obedience to them. Some of them began to resist, others waited to see how the situation would turn. In 1944, the Partisans gained strength in Serbia, and Tito accepted an agreement with Russia for Red Army troops to join the Partisans.<sup>60</sup>

During World War II, communism gained strength in Yugoslavia, with its leaders critical of all religions for dividing people and rivalling their goal of a unified state.<sup>61</sup> The Orthodox and Catholic Churches were hostile to unrecognized or pacifist Protestant communities, encouraging local governments to restrict and harass smaller groups. Tensions were particularly severe between Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim communities. Despite their criticisms of religion, the Communist-led Partisans sought to prevent alienating the largely religious peasant population, which is why they allowed priests to hold masses for soldiers and permitted conscientious objectors to serve in non-combat roles.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia*, 129.

<sup>57</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 130.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 12–18.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Mojzes, "Religious Liberty in Yugoslavia: A Study in Ambiguity," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 6, no. 2 (1986): 24, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol6/iss2/2>.

<sup>62</sup> Aleksandra Đurić-Milovanović, "Alternative Religiosity in Communist Yugoslavia: Migration as a Survival Strategy of the Nazarene Community," *Open Theology*, 3 (2017): 450, <https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2017-0035>.

Resolutions passed at Partisan meetings in Bihać (1942) and Jajce (1943) extended an inclusive call to all Yugoslavs, irrespective of their religion or nationality, promoting equality and firmly denouncing any violations of religious and national rights.<sup>63</sup> The first Commission for Religious Affairs was established on 19 February 1944, on Slovenian territory, because of Boris Kidrič's<sup>64</sup> initiative. It aimed to guarantee religious freedom, resolve conflicts between the state and the church, and ensure that religion was not tied to political parties or nationality.<sup>65</sup>

The war period inflicted great material and human losses suffered by the various churches and it also damaged the reputation of religion in society, as the occupying forces (German, Italian, Hungarian, and Bulgarian) did not exhibit widespread hostility toward the churches, which is why they were accused of collaborationism.<sup>66</sup>

During World War II, communication between Jehovah's Witnesses in Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia was severely disrupted. The branch office in Belgrade was shut down, and the repression intensified. Fines and imprisonments escalated into concentration camps and death sentences, making discretion and secrecy essential for survival. In Serbia, Nazi forces established labour and concentration camps, where Jehovah's Witnesses faced persecution due to their refusal to serve in the military. More than 150 Hungarian Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned in the Bor labour camp in Serbia because of their neutral stance. In Yugoslavia, Jehovah's Witnesses became direct targets of the Nazi regime, yet their preaching continued informally. Since importing literature was too dangerous, underground networks reproduced religious materials. Believers worked overnight at various secret locations to print and assemble magazines and booklets, ensuring the continuation of their faith. Due the severe repression, Jehovah's Witnesses in

---

<sup>63</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 48–52.

<sup>64</sup> Boris Kidrič (10 April 1912 – 11 April 1953) was a Slovene and Yugoslav politician and revolutionary who was one of the chief organizers of the Slovene Partisans. After World War II he was, together with Edvard Kardelj, a leading Slovenian politician in communist Yugoslavia.

<sup>65</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 46–47.

<sup>66</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 343.

Yugoslavia adapted their activities to the dangerous wartime conditions while maintaining their religious convictions.<sup>67</sup>

### Early Post-World War II Period: Restriction of Religious Freedom (1945–1952)

Yugoslav laws on religious communities were among the most open in Socialist Eastern Europe yet still restrictive.<sup>68</sup> Local officials often applied laws arbitrarily, leading to the intimidation of communities.<sup>69</sup> The Communist Party persecuted larger religious institutions while allowing smaller ones to operate, to create competition and diminish the influence of the major religions. Many trials of Slovene and Istrian priests for wartime collaboration or anti-state activities took place, with harsh punishments, intended to frighten people. However, many were pardoned and released before serving their sentences.<sup>70</sup> By 1945, religious education became optional in schools and by 1952 it was removed, shifting instruction to parishes.<sup>71</sup> Religious publications were banned, despite the 1946 Constitution guaranteeing freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state.<sup>72</sup>

In 1946, the first constitution of the new Yugoslavia separated church and state, guaranteed freedom of worship, forbade the abuse of religion for political purposes or for spreading religious hatred and intolerance, and declared all citizens equal regardless of ethnicity, race, gender or religion. Despite this some of the most well-organised persecutions of religion took place between 1950 and the first half of 1953.<sup>73</sup> The government attacked religious communities and wanted to control

---

<sup>67</sup> 2009 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 164–70.

<sup>68</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 354.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

<sup>70</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 91–93. Immediately after the war, the most opportunities to attend mass were in prisons: in the prison at Ig, priests were woken up an hour before other prisoners on Sundays so that they could attend mass, while lay people were not allowed to attend. The prison even provided them with wine and bread.

<sup>71</sup> Mateja Režek, *Med resničnostjo in iluzijo: 1948–1958: Slovenska in jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2005), 95–97.

<sup>72</sup> Đurić-Milovanović, "Alternative Religiosity," 451.

<sup>73</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 210–11.

the clergy by encouraging the organisation of priests' associations, which was resisted by both Roman Catholic and Protestant bishops, not wanting their priests to be controlled by the secret police.<sup>74</sup> Only members of the associations could obtain official permission to teach religious education in schools.<sup>75</sup> Publishing houses were forced to refuse printing religious publications.<sup>76</sup> Church taxes were abolished, church buildings were expropriated, and some demolished. Church property was frozen, monasteries and religious schools were closed, religious processions and public ceremonies were banned, and priests could not visit members of their congregation. Many religious leaders were murdered or imprisoned based on executive orders or arbitrary local initiative.<sup>77</sup>

In its letter to Tito, the Catholic Church listed its problems, including 243 dead priests, 169 imprisoned, 89 missing.<sup>78</sup> He rejected the accusation that religious leaders were being persecuted, saying that only guilty individuals were being punished.<sup>79</sup> The press both attacked and defended the clergy, especially Borba and Politika<sup>80</sup> attacked the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>81</sup>

Interreligious conversions that took place during the war were abolished in Croatia by decree of ZAVNOH.<sup>82</sup> Priests were told to accept all notifications from believers wishing to return to their original religion. In May 1946, the government took over the recording of births, marriages and deaths, which had previously been done by churches and divorce proceedings were transferred to civil courts.<sup>83</sup> Religious classes were available to children whose parents requested them, provided the children also consented to attend. After 1952, these classes were

---

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>76</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 345.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>78</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 70.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>80</sup> Serbian newspapers.

<sup>81</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 170–72.

<sup>82</sup> *Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske*, National Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia.

<sup>83</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 78.

permitted on church property; however, local party officials, particularly in smaller towns, often obstructed their organization.<sup>84</sup>

Theological faculties were separated from universities, thus excluding the Catholic Church from education in 1952.<sup>85</sup> Pressure on religious people was exerted from time to time. At the end of 1951, it increased sharply, and in Slovenia for instance, the church was accused of interfering in civil affairs. Priests were attacked and arrested. Tito publicly condemned the violence against priests. Miha Marinko, the Slovenian Prime Minister, accused the Vatican of interfering in Yugoslav internal affairs. Thirty secondary school pupils were expelled from school for going to mass. Despite this, the 1953 Yugoslav census showed that only 12.4% of the population said they did not belong to any religious community.<sup>86</sup>

The treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses in socialist Yugoslavia exemplified the state's broader approach to religious minorities. While the 1946 Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FLRJ) guaranteed religious freedom, this right was conditional upon religious teachings aligning with constitutional principles. Jehovah's Witnesses, known for their conscientious objection to military service and their eschatological beliefs, were viewed as a subversive threat to the state. The government explicitly sought to dismantle the community, branding it as reactionary and anti-state, and employed systematic repression to curtail its influence. One notable case was that of Janez Robas, a retired railway worker from Ljubljana, who became an active Jehovah's Witness in 1947. He and his wife translated, reproduced, and disseminated religious literature while hosting weekly meetings in their home. The secret police (Udba) repeatedly arrested and interrogated Robas and his associates, confiscating religious materials, including the Bible. In April 1948, a raid on his home led to the arrest of eleven Jehovah's Witnesses, who were later prosecuted for allegedly organizing an anti-state group and inciting resistance to the socialist system. Robas was sentenced to four years and four months in prison, alongside a

---

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 159–63.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 135–36.

three-year suspension of his civil and political rights, including the loss of voting rights, public office eligibility, and pension benefits. Another significant case was that of Cecilija Koradej from Zagorje, who, along with several others, was convicted in 1949 on similar charges. She received a five-year sentence with forced labour, two years of revoked civil rights, and the confiscation of her property. Despite multiple appeals for clemency based on health concerns, all were rejected, and she died in prison in 1952.

The broader state policy towards Jehovah's Witnesses mirrored methods previously employed by the Nazi regime during World War II, with Yugoslav authorities preventing official registration, imposing surveillance, and utilizing psychological tactics to instil distrust among members. Udba orchestrated targeted arrests, often detaining Jehovah's Witnesses for three days on minimal sustenance to intimidate them, while economic measures such as job dismissals, withdrawal of food rations, and housing evictions further destabilized the community. Testimonies from secret police documents reveal calculated efforts to fabricate confessions, manipulate interrogations, and coerce members into signing contradictory statements, fostering suspicion within the group. Show trials played a crucial role in portraying the movement as a foreign-backed threat, and the combination of legal, economic, and psychological pressure ultimately forced many members into clandestine religious practice. Despite these measures, Jehovah's Witnesses remained steadfast in their beliefs, demonstrating the state's determination to suppress religious dissent while maintaining an illusion of religious freedom.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Neža Strajnar, "Zaprti zaradi verskega prepričanja: primeri krivično obsojenih pripadnikov različnih veroizpovedi v obdobju 1945–1955," in *V senci Beethovnov 3* (Ljubljana: Študijski center za narodno spravo, 2022), 224–28.

## The Easing of Persecution of (Non-Dominant) Religious Communities (1953–1965)

State-religion relations in Yugoslavia focused on the Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholic religions, whilst religious minorities remained under state control.<sup>88</sup> However in 1953, the Yugoslav government recognized the Jehovah's Witnesses<sup>89</sup> and in 1953 it introduced the Law on the Legal Status of Religious Communities. This law established comprehensive guidelines to regulate religious practices and interactions between religious organizations and the state. It affirmed freedom of conscience, designating religious worship as a private matter, and ensured that citizens had the right to belong to any religious community or none, with all communities being treated equally. It allowed for the publishing and dissemination of religious publications, prohibited the use of religious functions for political purposes, and strictly banned incitement to religious intolerance. It also forbade the prevention of religious meetings or instruction and ensured that no individual could be forced to participate in religious activities or denied religious freedom. It also declared that no one's rights would be restricted or enhanced based on their religious affiliation. Religious communities were permitted to receive financial support from the state and to perform rituals in churches, churchyards, and cemeteries, provided local authorities granted permission. Baptisms and circumcisions were allowed at the request of parents, though children over the age of 10 had to give their consent. The law also ensured that individuals in hospitals, nursing homes, or similar institutions could freely practice their religion and be visited by clergy. Additionally, religious communities were allowed to organize their own religious education, provided both parents consented, and the children had completed primary education. Children attending church schools were granted the same rights

---

<sup>88</sup> Đurić-Milovanović, "Alternative Religiosity," 451.

<sup>89</sup> Mirča Maran, *Rumunske verske zajednice u Banatu: Prilog proučavanju multikonfesionalnosti Vojvodine* (Vršac: Visoka škola strukovnih studija za obrazovanje vaspitača "Mihailo Pavlov", 2011), 40.

as those in secular schools, ensuring equality in education. Various Yugoslav Republics adopted the law at different times.<sup>90</sup>

Notwithstanding this law, torture, imprisonment on false charges, and even murder was still occasionally carried out by the secret police. Regional differences in the treatment of religion became even more obvious.<sup>91</sup> But attempts at interreligious cooperation also continued. The 1959 Conference of European Churches gave new impetus to ecumenism. A breakthrough came in 1965 at the Second Vatican Council, where Pope Paul VI presented the idea that every sincere believer, whatever his or her religious affiliation, can attain salvation.<sup>92</sup> By 1965, there was a gradual easing of pressure on religious communities and on religious individuals<sup>93</sup> which was also felt by the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Baha'i community that continued to spread after World War II.<sup>94</sup>

As for Jehovah's Witnesses the political shift in 1952 resulted in the release of all imprisoned Witnesses, but media stigmatization persisted, portraying them as "mentally ill" and "fanatics." Despite legal registration as a religious community in 1953, authorities continued to view their activities as propaganda. The secret police closely monitored them, particularly in Slovenia, where strong Catholic influence led to frequent arrests and fines for engaging in Bible study.

Due to restrictions on house-to-house preaching, Jehovah's Witnesses adopted discreet methods, such as selling eggs, to engage in religious discussions. Small gatherings were held in private homes despite the risk of arrest. A meeting place for 160 people was later established in Zagreb, alongside an office for printing literature. In 1957, the first convention for Witnesses across Yugoslavia took place. Over the following years, they acquired properties in Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana, and Sarajevo, solidifying their presence despite ongoing challenges.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 221.

<sup>91</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 348.

<sup>92</sup> Gašper Mithans, "Religious Communities and the Change of Worldviews in Slovenia (1918-1991): Historical and Political Perspectives," *Annales: Anali za istrske in mediteranske študije = Annali di studi istriani e mediterranei = Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies, Series Historia et Sociologia* 30, no. 3 (2020): 421, <https://doi.org/10.19233/ASHS.2020.27>.

<sup>93</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 348.

<sup>94</sup> Maran, *Rumunske verske zajednice u Banatu*, 55.

<sup>95</sup> 2009 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 170-80.

The Era of Liberalization: Improved Relations  
between the State and Religious Communities  
(1965–1971)

The Law on the Legal Status of Religious Communities brought greater security for religious communities.<sup>96</sup> Churches were once again able to publish magazines and books, theological schools could expand, priests could travel freely in and out of the country, and religious education on church premises was once again allowed. The new problem was the politicisation of the major religions: Catholic, Islamic and Serbian Orthodox.

Importantly for religious communities, in 1971 The People's Assembly ratified the UN 1966 Convention on Human Rights and the 1962 UNESCO Conventions against Discrimination. In 1977, it incorporated into its national legislation all the provisions of the Helsinki Accords and the United Nations Human Rights Declarations.<sup>97</sup> The ideas of the Second Vatican Council contributed to the signing of the Yugoslav Protocol in 1966. It made Yugoslavia the first socialist country to be recognised by the Vatican.<sup>98</sup>

Although Jehovah's Witnesses in Yugoslavia were less isolated than those in other Communist countries, they wished to connect with the global brotherhood. When the 1969 "Peace on Earth" International Assembly was announced, they sought and received permission from the Government to attend. The faith later also spread to Prishtina and Montenegro, with literature initially smuggled into Yugoslavia from Germany in cargo vans. Those involved risked imprisonment and the confiscation of their vehicles if caught.<sup>99</sup>

As for the Bahá'í community, the 1960s reflect a remarkable commitment by a small but determined community of Austrian Bahá'ís. From 1964, the Austrian Bahá'í community undertook a significant initiative to support the re-emerging Bahá'í community in Yugoslavia.

---

<sup>96</sup> Mojzes, "Religious Liberty in Yugoslavia," 28.

<sup>97</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 350.

<sup>98</sup> Mithans, "Religious Communities," 426.

<sup>99</sup> 2009 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 180–89.

Their work exemplified a broader aspiration to contribute to the betterment of society, transcending cultural and ideological boundaries.

Over a decade of dedicated efforts, Austrian Bahá'ís regularly visited Yugoslavia, fostering relationships with individuals interested in the unity of mankind, cooperation and connecting with those eager for sustained contact, establishing a network of over 500 addresses across Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia, including prominent Slovenians.

Visits were carefully planned to reconnect with existing contacts, establish new relationships, maintain ongoing communication, and distribute Bahá'í literature to local libraries. They sought translators to make Bahá'í literature accessible in local languages and encouraged Bahá'ís from other countries to visit Yugoslavia, equipping them with literature and contact information of interested individuals. By 1968, Dr. Dušan Nendl, a Slovenian Bahá'í living in Germany, had become an important contributor to these efforts. His translations of Bahá'í literature into Slovene marked a significant step in making the teachings of the religion accessible to a broader audience in the region.<sup>100</sup>

#### Selective Restrictions on Religious Life (1972–1982)

The 1974 Yugoslav Constitution marked a significant shift in the country's governance. Article 174 reaffirmed that the practice of religion was a free and private matter for each citizen. It emphasized the separation of religious communities from the state, granting them autonomy to conduct their religious affairs and observances. While religious communities were permitted to establish schools for the training of clergy, the abuse of religious activities for political purposes was deemed unconstitutional. Members of religious communities could provide material support, and within legal limits, these communities had the right to own property.<sup>101</sup>

Despite these constitutional guarantees, restrictions on religious life were re-imposed. Authorities increased their control over church

---

<sup>100</sup> Dr. Nendl was a respected friend of the author who lived in Maribor for many years and together they studied many Bahá'í translations into Slovene.

<sup>101</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 351.

activities, and the previously promoted Christian-Marxist dialogue, which had been a platform for ideological exchange, was suspended.<sup>102</sup> Despite this, the same period witnessed a remarkable growth in religious publishing, from negligible levels in the 1950s, religious magazines and newspapers expanded to approximately 40 titles by 1977 and nearly 200 by the 1980s,<sup>103</sup> thus enabling believers to express their views more openly, marking a shift in the state's approach from violent repression to verbal critiques by government officials.<sup>104</sup>

In the Bahá'í community in the early 1970s an American Bahá'í, Stanislav O'Jack from California, relocated to Rijeka, Croatia, where he established a small yet vibrant Bahá'í community, gathering over 100 Bahá'í sympathizers. His efforts marked a significant step in expanding the Bahá'í community in the region, though his activities did not go unnoticed by local authorities. After two years in Rijeka, in a letter to Austrian Bahá'ís, O'Jack wrote of being under surveillance,<sup>105</sup> noting that his telephone conversations with Bahá'ís in Belgrade were monitored, his home had been searched and items moved during these inspections. Additionally, he was required to file reports with the police detailing his movements and associations whenever he left his residence. Despite these challenges, he experienced no difficulties crossing international borders, which allowed him to continue fostering connections and supporting the growth of the Bahá'í community in Yugoslavia.

Concerns among some local sympathizers about potential repercussions from authorities led to discussions about formally registering the Bahá'í Faith. However, after consultation among the local and foreign believers, registration was never pursued, as it was feared that it could result in the persecution of the community, like it happened in Czechoslovakia, where a local believer was imprisoned for two years because of the activities of some visiting Bahá'ís. The Yugoslav community thus continued to operate informally. Meanwhile, in Maribor and Ljubljana, the Bahá'í communities had matured to a level where they were self-sufficient and no longer required assistance from neighbouring

---

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>105</sup> Highest Bahá'í body in a country.

Austria, with local believers taking responsibility for community activities and growth.<sup>106</sup>

### The 1980s: Navigating Autonomy, National Conflict and Religious Freedom (1982–1989)

After President Tito's death the country began to disintegrate, with confusion among federal and republican leadership and a worsening economic situation. Rising national conflicts, often linked to religion due to the close ties between ethnicity and faith, occasionally escalated into violence. Religious institutions failed to mitigate these tensions, and the communists tried to distract from economic issues by targeting churches.<sup>107</sup> Despite this, a trend toward greater autonomy and religious freedom emerged,<sup>108</sup> including the publication of religious literature<sup>109</sup> and clergy visits to hospitals and nursing homes but not prisons or the military. Social, economic, and non-religious activities for children and youth remained prohibited for religious communities.<sup>110</sup>

During this period, the number of religious prisoners in Yugoslavia declined, and sentences for mixed religious-political cases, such as the misuse of religion for political purposes, were shorter than before.<sup>111</sup> Both religious and secular press reported on abuses against religious followers, with few restrictions on the size, number, or nature of publications. Holy books, including the Bible, Quran, and Talmud, were newly translated, published locally, or imported and sold in bookstores. While some secular media criticized religion, such attacks were not widespread, and many journalists and officials advocated for more moderate policies toward religion.<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Austria, Vienna, Various, "Baha'i Activities in Yugoslavia in 1973," JUTA [Jugoslawischer und Tschechoslowakischer Ausschuss], 1973.

<sup>107</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 353.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>112</sup> Mojzes, "Religious Liberty in Yugoslavia," 36.

Pilgrimages to Rome, Jerusalem, Mecca, Padua, and in Yugoslavia Marija Bistrica, Medjugorje and medieval Serbian monasteries took place in large numbers with the help of travel agencies. Masses and liturgies were provided in local and foreign languages and were publicised in prominent places.<sup>113</sup>

Priests were permitted to preach, visit colleagues, and occasionally meet with government officials. An annual international seminar on religion was held in Dubrovnik, and international societies and foreign missionaries were allowed to discuss, preach, or teach in Yugoslavia. The Christian-Marxist dialogue occurred publicly and in publications, fostering a more favourable climate for church–state negotiations, though they did not directly influence government-clergy relations. Religious construction projects were supported, including the St. Sava Cathedral in Belgrade, a church at the Jasenovac concentration camp area, and the Roman Catholic cathedral in Split. The government funded the restoration of historic religious monuments and allocated land for new church construction, particularly after the Skopje earthquake.<sup>114</sup>

Foreign financial aid was permitted for religious construction, and governments recognized the economic benefits of activities like pilgrimages to Medjugorje, particularly during economic crises. Theological schools could admit all applicants, with curricula managed entirely by the churches. Priests were allowed to form professional associations and received social security and health insurance.<sup>115</sup> The government ensured legal equality among religious groups, and several Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim theologians joined the Yugoslav Commission for the Protection of Human Rights.<sup>116</sup>

Regarding the role of religious communities in the nationalist processes of the 1980s it must be said that dominant religious communities played an important role, which contributed to the break-up of Yugoslavia. In the 1980s, religious communities often supported reinterpretations of history to legitimise the demands of their peoples. The Serbian Orthodox Church was a powerful symbol of Serbian identity,

---

<sup>113</sup> Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, 365.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

often emphasising the idea of “Holy Serbianism.”<sup>117</sup> In the 1980s, the Serbian Orthodox Church was actively involved in promoting the narrative that Serbs were victims of historical injustices, especially in Kosovo, it propagated the idea of genocide against Serbs during the World War II, which often included emphasising the role of the Ustashe (Croats) and Muslims. The Catholic Church in Croatia played a similar role in consolidating Croatian national identity. The church supported ideas about the historical uniqueness of Croats, often in opposition to Serbs. For Islamic theologians and politicians, the end of the 1980s also brought opportunities to establish closer ties between religion and national identity. The Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina stressed the importance of preserving Muslim identity in Bosnia as a separate and equal community. In the late 1980s, all groups used religious symbols effectively to rally support from their ethnic communities for nationalist goals. As the economic and political crisis weakened Yugoslavia, the revival of faith offered a new way to understand history, simplify a complex reality, and envision a future tied to the unity of their ethnic group.<sup>118</sup>

A telling example of how individual members of the Baha’i community adapted to the circumstances in Yugoslavia over time, particularly during the 1980s, is the Capari family. In the 1930s, Refo (Rifat) Capari returned to his native Albania from the United States to share his newfound faith. Known for his hard work and integrity, he became a respected member of the local community and maintained correspondence with Shoghi Effendi,<sup>119</sup> who provided him with guidance. Before World War II, Refo Capari passed away, leaving behind his wife Fiqrije and three children.

By the 1980s, the Austrian Baha’i community discovered that Refo Capari’s family had settled in Prizren, Kosovo, Fiqrije’s hometown. A Baha’i couple, travelled to Kosovo and met Fiqrije and two of her children. During their visit, the family shared that they had remained

---

<sup>117</sup> The term “Holy Serbianism” is associated with Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, who used it in his 1935 speech to describe the intertwining of Serbian nationalism with Orthodox Christian values, emphasizing the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in shaping national identity.

<sup>118</sup> Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia*, 269–72.

<sup>119</sup> Appointed Guardian and leader of the Baha’i Faith from 1921–1957.

steadfast in their faith, recounting how Shoghi Effendi had supported them during the war and later arranged for an American family to assist them materially.<sup>120</sup> Today, their descendants continue to live in Kosovo, carrying forward the legacy of their ancestors.<sup>121</sup>

This case study is interesting as it shows that the community was not really persecuted if an ordinary family managed to stay Bahá'ís for so long, on the other hand it shows the resilience of this family, that kept its traditions for so long despite all the political changes.

## Conclusion

This paper explores the role of major religious communities in Yugoslavia, examining the state's relationship with these communities, as well as their interactions with one another and with the state from the interwar years, through World War II, and until 1989. It highlights how the actions and influences of these prominent religious communities often contributed to challenges within the country. The Communist Party's approach to religion is also analysed, particularly its persecution of larger religious institutions while allowing smaller ones to operate. This analysis also highlights the conflicts and ambiguities surrounding religious freedom in Yugoslavia, attributing responsibility to both the government and religious communities. Religious groups often prioritized demands for their own religious freedom and human rights while refraining from advocating for others when necessary.<sup>122</sup>

The development of the Bahá'í community and Jehovah's Witnesses offers a unique case study of state–religion dynamics and demonstrates how factors such as national identity, legal compliance, and ideological compatibility with the state influenced their treatment within the broader context of religious freedom. By examining their interactions with the state, we can observe how these communities navigated evolving demands, laws, and restrictions. Contrary to assumptions that such

---

<sup>120</sup> Alex A. Käfer, *Die Geschichte Der Österreichischen Bahá'i-Gemeinde*, 2nd ed. (Wien: Es-selmont Verlag, 2020), 418–422.

<sup>121</sup> The author's friends now live in Prishtina and are neighbours of Refo and Fiqrije Capari's grandchildren, and they participate in some of the activities together.

<sup>122</sup> Mojzes, "Religious Liberty in Yugoslavia," 40–41.

groups might have disappeared under the pressures of an authoritarian regime, both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Bahá'ís demonstrated resilience and adaptability, maintaining their presence and even fostering growth amidst challenging circumstances and they both still exist and function today.

As for further research: Numerous smaller religious communities existed in Yugoslavia, whose study would be both significant and intriguing. However, such research presents considerable challenges due to the limited accessibility or non-existence of archival materials and official documentation. Many of these communities operated on the margins of society, often avoiding formal registration or recognition to evade state scrutiny, leaving little trace in state records or their communities' archives. The absence of systematic documentation hinders efforts to understand their organizational structures, membership dynamics, and interactions with the state. In this context, oral histories and personal narratives offer an invaluable resource for reconstructing their experiences.

To continue the research of the Bahá'í community, collecting testimonies from members and their descendants would provide nuanced insights into how these communities navigated a restrictive legal and social environment, preserved their beliefs, and maintained cohesion under pressure. The legacy of these communities in the post-socialist era also remains an underexplored avenue of research. Understanding how their experiences during the Yugoslav period shaped their identity, resilience, and integration into the religious landscape of the successor states could provide critical perspectives on their long-term development. The transition from suppression or marginalization to varying degrees of recognition and freedom in the post-socialist context presents an opportunity to examine how historical challenges informed their strategies for survival and growth in a radically altered sociopolitical environment.

## B i b l i o g r a p h y

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Austria, Vienna [Der Nationale Geistige Rat der Bahá'í in Österreich, Wien]:

- Effendi, Shoghi. *Religija sveta: Kratak pregled njenih ciljeva, učenja i istorije - World Religion: A Brief Overview of its Goals, Teachings and History*, 1st ed. Belgrade, Serbia: Jugoslovenska Baha'i grupa, 1928.
- Esselmont, John E. *Bahá'u'lláh i Novo Doba - Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. 1st ed. Belgrade, Serbia, 1933.
- Various. "Bahá'í Activities in Yugoslavia in 1973," 1973. JUTA [Jugoslawischer und Tschechoslowakischer Ausschuss].

*2009 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 2009. Lands of the Former Yugoslavia. Accessed March 11, 2025. <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2009-Yearbook-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses/>.

Alexander, Stella. "Religion in Yugoslavia Today." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 10, no. 5 (1990): 7–13. Accessed March 10, 2025. <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1511&context=ree&httpsredir=1&referer=>.

Alexander, Stella. *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Anonymous. "Martha Root En Zagrebo." *Konkordo*, 3. ed. (March 1928): 7-8. DEC - dokumentacijski esperanto centar.

*The Bahá'í World. Vol. 2. 1926-1928*. New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1928. Accessed March 11, 2025. <http://dl.bahai.org/bahai-world/the-bahai-world-vol2-1926-1928.pdf>.

Basset Hornby, Helen. *Lights of Guidance*. New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust of India, 1996.

Calic, Marie-Janine. *A History of Yugoslavia*. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019.

Črnič, Aleš. *V imenu Krišne: družboslovna študija gibanja Hare Krišna*. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2005.

Črnič, Aleš. *Na vodnarjevem valu: nova religijska in duhovna gibanja*. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2012.

Đurić-Milovanović, Aleksandra. "Alternative Religiosity in Communist Yugoslavia: Migration as a Survival Strategy of the Nazarene Community." *Open Theology*, 3 (2017): 447–57. <https://doi.org/10.1515/oph-2017-0035>.

Đurić-Milovanović, Aleksandra. "'On The Road to Religious Freedom': A Study of the Nazarene Emigration from Southeastern Europe to the United States." *Journal of Ethnography and Folklore* 1-2 (2017): 5–27. <https://dais>.

sanu.ac.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/13960/On\_the\_Road\_to\_Religious\_Freedom\_a\_Stud.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

*Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year*. Chicago, London Etc., 1996.

Garis, M. R. *Martha Root: Lioness at the Treshold*. Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983.

Käfer, Alex A. *Die Geschichte Der Österreichischen Bahá'í-Gemeinde*, 2nd ed. Wien: Esselmont Verlag, 2020.

Maran, Mirča. *Rumunske verske zajednice u Banatu: Prilog proučavanju multi-konfesionalnosti Vojvodine*. Vršac: Visoka škola strukovnih studija za obrazovanje vaspitača "Mihailo Pavlov", 2011.

Mithans, Gašper. *Jugoslavanski konkordat: Pacem in discordia ali jugoslavanski "kulturkampf"*. Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2017.

Mithans, Gašper. "Religious Communities and the Change of Worldviews in Slovenia (1918-1991): Historical and Political Perspectives." *Annales: Anali za istrske in mediteranske študije = Annali di studi istriani e mediterranee = Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies, Series Historia et Sociologia* 30, no. 3 (2020): 415-34. <https://doi.org/10.19233/ASHS.2020.27>.

Mithans, Gašper. "Religious Conversions and Religious Diversification in Interwar Yugoslavia and Slovenia." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 40, 2 (2020): 48-76. Accessed March 11, 2025. <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol40/iss2/6/>.

Mojzes, Paul. "Religious Liberty in Yugoslavia: A Study in Ambiguity." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 6, no. 2 (1986): 23-41. <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol6/iss2/2/>.

Mojzes, Paul. *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1992.

Nečak, Dušan, and Božo Repe. *Oris sodobne občine in slovenske zgodovine: Učbenik za študente 4. letnika*. Ljubljana: Oddelek za zgodovino Filozofske fakultete, 2003.

Radulović, Nemanja. "Esotericism Among the Serbian and Yugoslav Freemasonry in the Interwar Period." In *Freemasonry in Southeast Europe from the 19th to the 21st Centuries*, edited by Slobodan G. Markovich, 191-218. Belgrade, 2020. Accessed March 10, 2025. [https://www.academia.edu/45027955/Esoteric\\_Current\\_in\\_Serbian\\_and\\_Yugoslav\\_Interwar\\_Freemasonry](https://www.academia.edu/45027955/Esoteric_Current_in_Serbian_and_Yugoslav_Interwar_Freemasonry).

Radulović, Nemanja. *Gde ruža i lotos cveta: slika Indije u srpskoj književnosti i kulturi 19. i 20. veka*. Beograd: Fedon, 2023.

Režek, Mateja. *Med resničnostjo in iluzijo: 1948-1958: Slovenska in jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem*. Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2005. <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-LDWW2MCB>.

Strajnar, Neža. "Zaprti zaradi verskega prepričanja: primeri krivično obsojenih pripadnikov različnih veroizpovedi v obdobju 1945–1955." In *V senci Beethovnov* 3, 209–30. Ljubljana: Študijski center za narodno spravo, 2022.

Šircelj, Milivoja. *Verska, jezikovna in narodna sestava prebivalstva Slovenije: Popisi 1921–2002*. Ljubljana: Statistični urad Republike Slovenije, 2003. <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-oTNJoXB4>.

---

# THE DYNAMICS OF ATHEIZATION IN POSTWAR COMMUNIST MONTENEGRO

T o d o r L a k i ć ,  
B o r i s V u k i ć e v i ć ,  
S a š a K n e ž e v i ć

## Introduction

The purpose of this article<sup>1</sup> is to present the process of atheization of Montenegrin society under communist rule from the immediate aftermath of World War II to the mid-1950s. We argue that the atheization of Montenegrin society was primarily the result of a planned policy implemented by the new communist authorities, which rested on several pillars, i.e. policies imposed towards religious organizations by the state, legal framework of religious practices, and practical measures of communist authorities. These measures, which we organized into several groups, included the removal of *zar* and *fredza*, the secularization of education, and the celebration of religious holidays. It is important to point out that Montenegro was the Yugoslav republic that was the most atheized, i.e. the state in which the share of atheists in the population grew the fastest and presented the highest percentage of the total population, of all Yugoslav republics. The atheization of Montenegrin society in the postwar period goes beyond, to a certain extent, the relationship of state authorities towards religious communities, and also includes the organized penetration of secularism into the everyday life of Montenegrin society.

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is a result of a bilateral project between Slovenia and Montenegro (BI-ME/23-24-013).

Existing scientific research on this topic predominantly analyzes the relationship between the new authorities and religious communities in other, larger republics of Socialist Yugoslavia. Research concerning the secularization of Montenegrin society is limited to a narrow circle of authors who have dealt with this topic, though they have made valuable contributions. Adnan Prekić<sup>2</sup> concisely analyzed the relationship of the communist regime towards religious communities from 1945 to 1955, and in a separate review<sup>3</sup> he gave an overview of a special policy of secularization of the new regime towards Muslim women, concerning their clothing. Zvezdan Folić was the first – and, to our knowledge, remains the only scholar – to holistically present the relationship of the state authorities of communist Montenegro towards the three most protected religious communities in the state (Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim). His research spans two periods: 1945–1953<sup>4</sup> and 1945–1965<sup>5</sup> and, and in the second research in the period 1945–1965. A valuable secondary contribution to the study of the process of atheization of Montenegrin society are studies on religious communities in Montenegro, whose life, among other things, is followed during the communist rule. These studies include the works used in the research, especially the works of Aleksandar Stamatović,<sup>6</sup> and a special study<sup>7</sup> by Zvezdan Folić, Veseljko Koprivica, and Avdul Kurpejović. Equally valuable are the studies of Dragutin Papović, which can be useful for insights into the participation of intellectuals in the promotion of communist rule in the public

---

<sup>2</sup> Adnan Prekić, “The Religious Community and the Communist Regime in the Case of Montenegro 1945–1955,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 15, no. 44 (2016): 111–136.

<sup>3</sup> Adnan Prekić, “Kampanja skidanja zara i feredže na sjeveru Crne Gore tokom 1947. godine,” *Glas Bitora*, no. 3 (2018).

<sup>4</sup> Zvezdan Folić, *Vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori 1918–1953* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore: Društvo istoričara Crne Gore, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Zvezdan Folić, *Vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori 1918–1953* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore: Društvo istoričara Crne Gore, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Aleksandar Stamatović, *Istorija Mitropolije Crnogorsko-Primorske 1918–2009* (Podgorica: Unireks, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Zvezdan Folić, Veseljko Koprivica and Avdul Kurpejović, *Istorija muslimana Crne Gore 1918–2007, II* (Podgorica: Matica Muslimanska Crne Gore, 2015).

sphere of life in postwar Montenegro,<sup>8</sup> the relationship of religious communities towards nationalisms in Montenegro,<sup>9</sup> and a special work on the relationship of religious leaders with communist authorities from 1965 to 1990.<sup>10</sup>

However, there remains a lack of research that would concisely link, on the one hand, the planned policies of atheization of the communist authorities in Montenegro and the relationship of the authorities with religious communities, and on the other hand, the reception of these policies by the population. Most of the scientific research on the atheization of Yugoslav society, as we have mentioned, is dedicated to the larger Yugoslav republics.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, Montenegro is not viewed as a separate unit of analysis, and the Christian religious communities operating on its territory – the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church – are investigated within the framework of their activities at the Yugoslav level. Some studies<sup>12</sup> concerning the communist treatment of religion in Montenegro are related to the experiences of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro during communist rule. However, a more detailed comparative analysis of the communist attitude towards all three dominant religions in Montenegro is lacking.

Finally, Montenegro is a unique research example because it is a state that until the mid-19th century had integrated spiritual and secular government – Montenegro was ruled by Orthodox metropolitans, and a century later it became a state in which the process of atheism took place most strongly compared to the rest of Yugoslavia. Most scientific studies<sup>13</sup> on this topic, which concern Montenegro, are focused

<sup>8</sup> Dragutin Papović, *Intelektualci i vlast u Crnoj Gori 1945–1990* (Podgorica: Matica crnogorska, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Dragutin Papović, *Vjerske zajednice i nacionalizmi u Crnoj Gori (1965–1991)* (Podgorica: Matica crnogorska, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Dragutin Papović, “Vjerski poglavari u SR Crnoj Gori,” *Matica crnogorska* 20, no. 79 (2019): 133–160.

<sup>11</sup> See: Radmila Radić, *Država i verske zajednice 1945.–1970. Vols. I & II* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> See: Amfilohije Radović and Pavle Kondić, *Ljetopis raspete Mitropolije crnogorsko-primorske: vremena mitropolita Danila Dajkovića: 1961–1990* (Cetinje: Svetigora, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> See: Vladimir Bakrač and Mirko Blagojević, “Religious Changes in Montenegro: From the Socialist Atheization to Post-Socialist Revitalization,” *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 40, no. 7 (2020): 30–43, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol40/iss7/3/>.

on religious conversion in the post-communist period, as Montenegro once again became a statistical outlier after the 1980s, with the number of re-religious people growing rapidly. Other studies<sup>14</sup> are focused on the largest religious community in Montenegro and its relations with the state in the 21st century. The aim of this study is to take a step back to re-examine the process of atheization in this small but unique Montenegrin society of three religious communities in the postwar period.

In this paper, the terms secularization and atheization are used interchangeably. The case of Montenegro and the communist attitude towards religion and faith after World War II implied both the secularization of society and the atheization of Montenegrin society. The secularization of society, education and the state, and the annulment of the privileged role that religious communities enjoyed in Montenegro until World War II, were formally present and implemented. However, further measures, which we will present in the paper, also led to the atheization of society, meaning the annulment of religiosity and the rejection of any theism itself. Therefore, along with the measures of secularization, the removal of the social significance of religious communities and religion, the atheization of society in Montenegro was also carried out by further means.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the central research question of our work is therefore as follows: By what means did the Communist Party of Montenegro implement the policies of secularization and atheization of Montenegrin society in the postwar years, and to what extent were they successful?

---

<sup>14</sup> See: Vladimir Bakrač, "Church and State in Montenegro: From the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Church of Serbia," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 42, no. 9 (2022): 37–52, <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2394>; Danijela Vuković-Čalasan, Rajka Đoković, "Politics and Religion in Montenegro—From 'Theocracy' to a Civic State," *Religions* 14, no. 2, 251 (2023): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020251>.

<sup>15</sup> Secularization and atheism in a two-way relationship with communism are the subject of extensive scholarly debate. For more information, see: David Herbert, "Christianity, Democratization and Secularisation in Central and Eastern Europe," *Religion, State and Society* 27, no. 3–4 (1999): 277–293, <https://doi.org/10.1080/096374999106485>; Vernon Pratt, *Religion and Secularisation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970). For more detailed findings in relation between Christian modernity and Marxist secularism in East-Central Europe see: Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, eds., *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022).

## Historical background

Until the mid-19th century, the Montenegrin state system was endemic compared to nearly all of Europe. From the 16th century until 1852, Montenegro was governed by church rulers – Orthodox bishops.<sup>16</sup> Beginning in 1697, the title of prince-bishop became hereditary in the Petrović-Njegoš family. In the same period, until the second half of the 19th century, Montenegro fought a series of wars of liberation from Ottoman rule. Ultimately, this process resulted in the strong presence of the Christian-Orthodox determinant in creating national identity and the process of national liberation struggle. Additionally, until 1878, when it was internationally recognized at the Congress of Berlin, Montenegro was essentially a mono-religious society, with an absolute majority of Orthodox Christians.<sup>17</sup> Orthodox Christians remain a majority of the Montenegrin population until today – see Table 1.

---

<sup>16</sup> Gligor Stanojević and Milan Vasić, *Istorija Crne Gore. Knj. 3, Od početka XVI do kraja XVIII vijeka* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, Pobjeda, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> See: Živko M. Andrijašević and Šerbo Rastoder, *Istorija Crne Gore: od najstarijih vremena do 2003* (Podgorica: Centar za iseljenike Crne Gore, 2006); Jagoš Jovanović, *Istorija Crne Gore* (Podgorica: CID, 2001).

Table 1: Percentage of believers in Montenegro from 1931 to 2011

Religion	1931 <sup>18</sup>	1953 <sup>19</sup>	1991 <sup>20</sup>	2003 <sup>21</sup>	2011 <sup>22</sup>	2023 <sup>23</sup>
Orthodox Christians	75.4%	45.8%	69.1%	74.2%	72.1%	71.1%
Catholics	7.2%	4.8%	4.4%	3.5%	3.4%	3.3%
Muslims	17.2%	17.7%	19.2%	17.7%	19.1%	20%
Others (Atheists and Minor Groups, Combined)	0.2%	31.7%	7.23%	4.6%	5.4%	5.6%

Even after the separation of ecclesiastical and secular power in Montenegro after 1852, the Orthodox Church maintained a strong influence in Montenegrin society. However, until 1918 it was subordinated to secular power, under the monarchy. The church was also the largest landowner in Montenegro,<sup>24</sup> from where it drew its economic and political strength. The position of religious communities in Montenegrin politics is evidenced by the fact that the Orthodox metropolitan, Catholic archbishop and the mufti were automatically members of Montenegrin Parliament according to the 1905 Constitution. In addition, the hilly and mountainous terrain of Montenegro, and the underdevelopment and infrastructural isolation from the rest of the Balkans and Europe contributed to a Montenegrin society and political culture that were characterized by patriarchy, a strong identification with religion and religious leaders, and a prominent role of religious organizations in social and political life of Montenegro.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 113.

<sup>19</sup> Vladimir Bakrač, *Religija i mladi: Religioznost mladih u Crnoj Gori* (Podgorica: Narodna knjiga, 2013), 155. In subsequent population censuses in 1961, 1971, and 1981, there was no section on religious affiliation.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova u 2023. godini, MONSTAT, 2024, <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=2282&pageid=1992>.

<sup>24</sup> For more see: Branislav Marović, *Ekonomska istorija Crne Gore* (Podgorica: CID, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> More on this.: Branko Pavičević, *Istorija Crne Gore, Sazdanje crnogorske nacionalne države: 1796–1878* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, Pobjeda, 2006).

After becoming part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes<sup>26</sup> (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), religious organizations retained a dominant role in the social and then the spiritual sphere of the individual, with all the economic privileges, and society remained highly religious with insignificant cases of atheism.

Originally, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) was an ideological follower of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in both political ideas and strategies. Two Leninist approaches dominated its stance on religion: first, the legal separation of church and state, declaring religion to be a private matter for each individual. Religious freedom was consequently understood as the freedom to worship or not to worship. The second principle was that the task of the Marxist party was to help the working class turn away from religion,<sup>27</sup> which was considered superstitious and exploitative – a relic of the past.<sup>28</sup>

Since its founding congress in 1919 in Belgrade, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia had supported full secularization of society. This meant the separation of church and state, the abolition of public functions of the church, the confiscation of property belonging to churches and monasteries, and endowments, and the consequent agrarian reform on the properties of religious communities. During the local election campaigns of the Montenegrin communists in the interwar era, the clergy were equated with the bourgeoisie.<sup>29</sup>

With the beginning of World War II and the subsequent occupation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia by Axis powers, Yugoslavia was shaken by a parallel civil war that also had key elements of an inter-religious war

---

<sup>26</sup> Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije: 1918–1988, knj. 1, Kraljevina Jugoslavija: 1914–1941* (Beograd: Nolit, 1988).

<sup>27</sup> Josip Broz Tito specifically declared himself an atheist. During the war, however, he tried to give the impression that his partisan movement belonged to the religious tradition of the people; therefore, in a series of orders, he invoked the saints, such as on Saints Sava, Blaž, and George, and allowed the veneration of Cyril and Methodius. (Katrin Boeckh, “Vjerski progoni u Jugoslaviji 1944. – 1953.: staljinizam u titoizmu,” *Osteuropa Institut* 38, no. 2 (2006): 409.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Mojzes, “Religious Liberty in Yugoslavia: A Study in Ambiguity,” *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 6, no. 2 (1986): 25, <https://digitalcommons.georgefoxf.edu/ree/vol6/iss2/2>.

<sup>29</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 90.

and resulted in massive civilian deaths.<sup>30</sup> After the end of World War II, after which the Communist Party emerged as the victor, it got the opportunity to lead the policy of “brotherhood and unity“ and suppression of the influence of religious organizations from the position of power.<sup>31</sup>

The peculiarity of the Montenegrin climate in the study of the tripartite relationship between the state, Communist Party and religious communities lies in the peculiar phenomenon that communist ideas managed to penetrate even within the church itself before World War II. These ideas were particularly expressed among the students of the seminary in Cetinje, the only school for Orthodox priests in Montenegro.<sup>32</sup>

Secularization during the period of communist rule rested on several pillars, among which the relationship between the state and religious communities, the normative regulation of the position of religious communities, and the cultural and educational policies of the Communist Party should be emphasized.

#### Clergy, party, and war

Apart from Marxist-Leninist doctrinal views on religion and the relationship between state and religious organizations as promoters of the interests of the bourgeoisie, the religious policy of the new communist authorities was also determined by the fact that among both Christian and Islamic clergy there were collaborators of the occupying authorities. However, the attitude of the local and central clergy towards the occupier was not uniform. It ranged from a complete rejection of cooperation with the occupier, to tacit agreement, all the way to active

---

<sup>30</sup> For more on Yugoslav civil war during World War II see: Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije: 1918–1988, knj. 2, Narodnooslobodilački rat i revolucija: 1941–1945* (Beograd: Nolit, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> Pero Morača, *Istorija Saveza komunista Jugoslavije: kratak pregled* (Beograd: Rad, 1977).

<sup>32</sup> Atheistic tendencies were also present in the seminaries in Prizren and Sarajevo, but they were most strongly expressed in the seminary in Cetinje. The reason was that most of the children entered the seminary because of scholarships, and most of the children came from extremely poor families. Groups of seminary students were even arrested for spreading communist propaganda (Folić, *Vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 83; Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 93).

collaboration and helping the occupier in the fight against anti-fascist forces in all parts of Yugoslavia. Examples of this range of behavior can be found among the clergy of all religions in Montenegro throughout the war.<sup>33</sup> The most discussed topic during and after the war was the position of the clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in Montenegro during the war, that is, the priests of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral (MCP). On March 27, 1941, a majority of 198 priests and 33 monks of the MCP took an openly anti-fascist stance.<sup>34</sup>

The organized resistance of the anti-fascist forces in Montenegro began on July 13, 1941, marking the first organized uprising against the occupiers in Europe. During the uprising and practically until the end of 1941, MCP clergy collaborated with partisans – insurgents. The first national liberation movements formed on the liberated territory of Montenegro were inclusive. Some committees were even headed by clergy, such as the People's Liberation Committee in Berane.<sup>35</sup> Among the insurgents, there were 55 clergymen (theologians, theology students, and seminary students), including 25 Orthodox priests of the MCP.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Folić et al., *Istorija muslimana Crne Gore 1918–2007*, 140–142. Thus, the imam from Podgorica, Sulejman Begović, was among the first Islamic priests to openly side with the Italian occupier. He was also the president of the Muslim-Catholic fascist organization. His conception of cooperation with the occupier was also supported by the local leadership of the Islamic religious community in Podgorica. On the other hand, the majority of Muslim youth from Podgorica thwarted their plans, siding with the Communist Party. *Ibid.*

Part of the Catholic clergy in Montenegro also got involved in the war, alongside the occupier or collaborating with him, which resulted in the murder of some of them, sentencing to death or long-term imprisonment or simply fleeing from Montenegro just before the end of the war. Nevertheless, some Catholic priests, including the Archbishop of Bar, Nikola Dobrečić, and the canon of the Cathedral Chapter in Kotor, Don Niko Luković, worked to help the people and prisoners of war along the coast of Montenegro. See: Šerbo Rastoder and Novak Adžić, *Moderna istorija Crne Gore 1988–2017.: od prevrata do Nato pakta* (Podgorica: Daily Press - Vijesti, 2020), 33. In the reports of the occupation authorities, such as that of Franko Scasellati, the Italian prefect in Boca dated September 8, 1941, it can be seen that both the Catholic and Orthodox clergy had an anti-occupation influence on the citizens (Folić, *Vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 73).

<sup>34</sup> Folić, *Vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 68.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 79–80.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 72.

The first central government body for the territory liberated after the 1941 uprising was the Assembly of Montenegrin and Boka patriots held in the Orthodox monastery Ostrog, in February 1942. Of the 65 delegates of the anti-fascist movement, five were priests.<sup>37</sup> The meeting, where the majority of delegates were communists, was blessed by a priest in front of an Orthodox icon and lighted candles.<sup>38</sup> At its conclusion, the so-called Ostrog Oath was adopted, which called for loyalty to the fight against the occupiers, with a spiritual undertone reminiscent of the oaths that marked centuries of struggle against various occupiers.

Even the partisan-communist units included clergy in their organizational structure. From the summer of 1942, there was a so-called religious officer in all partisan eateries, with medical staff.<sup>39</sup> All Christian priests wore a cross on their left hand and the Islamic crescent if they were Muslims, and below that the insignia of a brigade or battalion. In addition to religious ceremonies, they also had the obligation to keep a register of the dead.<sup>40</sup>

In the winter of 1941, a higher stage of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) struggle began, including the fight against the counter-revolutionaries. Up until April 1942, 14 priests of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral (MCP) had been killed in Montenegro. This change in the KPJ's attitude towards the clergy, particularly the Orthodox, was also related to the arrival and emergence of the Chetnik movement in Montenegro, which, as a royalist and anti-communist force, was supported by the Metropolitan of MCP Joanikije (Lipovac).

Since July 1944, the governing institution of communists in Montenegro was the Montenegrin Anti-Fascist Assembly of People's Liberation.<sup>41</sup> The Religious Commission was established under it, which took over the jurisdiction of religious communities in managing religious issues in the last stage of the war and immediately after it.

---

<sup>37</sup> Dimo Vujović, "Ostroška skupština," *Istorijski zapisi*, no. 1 (1967): 115–146.

<sup>38</sup> Folić, *Vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 80.

<sup>39</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: Politics, Culture and Religion in Yugoslavia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1992), 83.

<sup>40</sup> Folić, *Vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 83.

<sup>41</sup> It is important to mention that, as the war was coming to an end, the communist authorities in the liberated territory of Montenegro began to dispose of monastery lands, by leasing uncultivated land to poor families. (Stamatović, *Istorija Mitropolije Crnogorsko-Primorske*, 186).

This activity was necessary for the MCP, as many Orthodox priests had died during the war, while others – along with Metropolitan Joanikije – left Montenegro with a large part of the population. They went to Western Europe to try to escape from the expected repression of communist units whose victory in the war was likely. However, the authorities managed to prevent their escapes. Communist forces stopped them in Slovenia, carrying out numerous executions, including the killing of Metropolitan Joanikije (Lipovac).

During the war, the MCP lost its metropolitan and 96 priests.<sup>42</sup> The Archdiocese of Bar, i.e. the Catholic clergy in Montenegro, had suffered severe losses, with one-third of its clergy gone. This decline in personnel was largely due to the fact that in September 1945, the Roman Catholic Church in Yugoslavia, through the Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Episcopate, excluded the possibility of sharing the revolutionary achievements of the new authorities, while condemning the crimes against the Catholic clergy.<sup>43</sup>

#### Postwar relations between the state and religious organizations as a determinant of secularization intentions

The communist authorities regarded religiosity as a retrograde social force (and the ideology of defeated social movements) and worked on its marginalization. The first decade after the war was marked by efforts to exclude religious communities from all major social processes, a process that in Montenegro was decided at party congresses.<sup>44</sup> Undoubtedly, the attitude of the new communist authorities towards religious communities was also a generator of the population's attitude toward religion.

---

<sup>42</sup> Stamatović gives a longer list of priests, monks and churchmen who were killed, classified into several categories depending on how they died. See: Stamatović, *Istorija Mitropolije Crnogorsko-Primorske*, 194–207; Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 65.

<sup>43</sup> It is interesting that one of the signatories of the Shepherd's Letter was precisely Bar Archbishop Dobrečić, who later distanced himself from the letter. Rastoder and Adžić, *Moderna istorija Crne Gore*, 34.

<sup>44</sup> Prekić, "The Religious Community and the Communist Regime," 112.

The influence of religious organizations was undoubtedly exaggerated by the new authorities. Besides the decimated clergy at the end of the war, religious organizations had a hard time recovering from the war. The prejudices of the authorities were stronger than the facts, and this was the cause of suspicion towards all three religious communities. This mistrust was further reinforced by KPJ propaganda, which inspired certain segments of the population to attack the priests, and every form of priestly activity was closely monitored.<sup>45</sup>

The period from 1945 to 1953 is generally recognized as the period of the greatest physical violence by the state and individuals against religious communities. However, social criticism of religion also came from within religious circles. Priest Simo Radunović wrote about the harmfulness of celebrating Patron Saints (*slava*),<sup>46</sup> while many imams criticized superstition, quackery, and fortune-telling among members of Islam. Lectures were held on the harmfulness of religion, and thousands of brochures were distributed explaining the incompatibility of religion with social reality. The communist leadership, in coordination with Blažo Jovanović, Montenegro's first postwar prime minister, advocated the need for the anti-religious campaign to focus on youth, an agenda strongly promoted at party meetings.

In the statute of the KPJ, it was emphasized that the profession of religion and the performance of religious ceremonies were incompatible with membership in the party (in a one-party system). Prekić<sup>47</sup> states that the exclusion of religious communities from social life in Montenegro can be traced on two levels – institutionally and through the direct influence of the party on its members. Party members were forbidden from practicing religious rituals or visiting temples, and religious buildings. For those who would not respect the instructions of the party, the punishment was a warning and expulsion from the party.

On the other hand, the activity of the clergy was controlled. Prekić states, referring to the instructions of the Central Committee of Religious Ideas in Titograd in 1952, that the activists of the party

---

<sup>45</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 368–369.

<sup>46</sup> Family's veneration of their patron saint taking place annually, exercised in both Christian communities.

<sup>47</sup> Prekić, "The Religious Community and the Communist Regime," 118.

followed how conscientious persons interpreted religion. Prekić also cites an example of how school trips and manifestations were deliberately organized on religious holidays in order to avoid celebrating them.

In Montenegro, after 1952, every channel of communication with the population was specially used to condemn all forms of religiosity, namely the celebration of baptisms, baptism itself, fasting during Ramadan, or chanting in temples and mosques. Every visit of a party member to these places was recorded and condemned.<sup>48</sup>

The main strategy employed by the new communist authorities to reduce the influence of religious communities and economically isolate them was the expropriation of their property.

The relationship between the state and religious communities in Montenegro was complementary to the agrarian reform plan.<sup>49</sup> The communist authorities planned a complete transformation of the agrarian policy, which required the accumulation of large land holdings that were not under state ownership. The land was mostly owned by religious communities and legal entities.

The reason for large land holdings in the hands of religious communities – mainly the SOC, lay in the fact that not only did the Church govern Montenegro until the middle of the 19th century as noted earlier, but also that it acquired the property by purchasing or by individuals bequeathing property to the church.

After communists seized power in Montenegro, agrarian reform could be implemented. Any landholdings that exceeded 10 hectares were confiscated from the local religious community. Religious institutions of greater importance or historical value were allowed to own up

---

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>49</sup> The Communist Party propagated the secularization of education, the separation of church and state, and agrarian reform even in the interwar period. By 1945, the Yugoslav revolution had taken on a military and then later an economic character. As early as April 1945, the draft instructions for the Law on Agrarian Reform and Colonization were drawn up. Elaborating on the draft, Minister of Colonization Sreten Vukosavljević explained that the agrarian reform would lead to conflicts with all three religious communities, and that the one with the Catholic community may spill over into the international arena, so that it would be much easier for conflicts to take place at the level of the federal unit, i.e. that the decentralization of the agrarian reform amortizes the resistance of religious communities (Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 294).

to 30 hectares of arable land and 30 hectares of forest. The exception were endowments, which were stripped of everything.

The legal construction of “higher significance or historical value” was subject to interpretation, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was responsible for defining these terms. It interpreted that the religious buildings of greater importance included monasteries: Ostrog, Piva, Morača, the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, and subsequently, Savina. Of the other religious communities, the agrarian reform affected only the possessions of the Diocese of Kotor, due to the specific way it carried out its mission through endowments, foundations, and charities, which entailed complete expropriation (182 hectares, 21 ares, and 13m<sup>2</sup>).<sup>50</sup>

The SOC in Montenegro and elsewhere was the most affected by the forced nationalization of land.<sup>51</sup> In total, 4,387 hectares, 80 ares, and 43 m<sup>2</sup> of its land were confiscated, which means that church properties constituted 44.80% of all land intended for agrarian reform in Montenegro.<sup>52</sup>

The black box of the young communist state’s policy towards religious communities was the Commission for Religious Affairs under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia. The commission’s primary function was to maintain contact with religious community bodies, providing opinions and proposals, and ensuring the implementation and application of all legal norms. Given that other religious institutions in Montenegro – except the

---

<sup>50</sup> Rastoder and Adžić, *Moderna istorija Crne Gore*, 29; Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 293–315.

<sup>51</sup> Islamic properties remained more or less intact due to coincidence – local authorities in predominantly Islamic municipalities treated the property of the Islamic religious community as a public good and temporarily ceded it for use by the local population, so the land of certain mosques of over 10ha was hidden. A completely different circumstance occurred after the adoption of the Basic Law on Expropriation in 1947, when immovable property was confiscated, based on the relevant act of the competent state authority. Thus, a mosque was demolished in Harem, near Beran, and 35 acres of *waqf*land were confiscated. In 1949, the main mosque in Berane was demolished due to the architectural reconstruction of the town. The compensation for the demolition of the mosque was paid only in 1962. In other places, the property of the Islamic religious community was reduced by a little more than 100 ares (Rastoder and Adžić, *Moderna istorija Crne Gore*, 29; Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 293–315).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

Archdiocese of Bar – had vacant positions of religious leaders (priests were either killed or left the country during the war as noted earlier), the Religious Commission did the job of assigning clergy and meeting the religious needs of the population during the war.<sup>53</sup> However, they reported problems with some priests who were suspected of being close to the Chetnik movement, and they were prohibited from retaining their positions after the war.<sup>54,55</sup>

Another type of influence of the communist government on religious communities was through the so-called priest associations, which were supposed to be a substitute for religious communities.<sup>56</sup> Priest associations had a double function. On the one hand, they would consist of those clergy who were actively or passively loyal to the communist authorities. On the other hand, through the association of priests, the government would control the work of religious organizations.

Clergy associations in Montenegro constantly received state subsidies. Between 1948 and 1956, the Orthodox clergy association received over 4 million dinars. The Islamic association, from 1951 to 1956,

---

<sup>53</sup> The communist authorities also performed the task of determining and appointing religious leaders after the war. In May 1945, the Religious Commission presented to the Holy Synod of Bishops its candidates for administrators of the MCP. The Holy Synod rejected the personal proposals of the Religious Commission after only 5 days as a whole, appointing persons whom it considered should form the administration of the Orthodox Church in Montenegro (Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 233–234). Already from the beginning of 1947, the placement of priests was under the responsibility of the church authorities. The Holy Synod of Bishops appointed Arsenije Bradvarević as the head of the SOC in Montenegro without consulting the authorities, which caused the state authorities to refuse his admission to them after the elections (*Ibid.*, 233–234).

<sup>54</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 229.

<sup>55</sup> One exception in relation of religious communities to the new authorities is the Islamic clergy in Montenegro. As Prekić states: “The attitude of the Islamic religious community towards the new authorities and their acceptance of the values of the new system were confirmed on the occasion of the adoption of the Constitution of the Islamic Religious Community in Montenegro. In the message sent to the President of the Government, Mr Blažo Jovanović, after its adoption, representatives of the Islamic clergy stated that they were ‘deeply faithful and loyal to the democratic people’s authorities.’ The clergy of the Islamic Community said that they would do everything together with the Orthodox and Catholic populations to fulfill all the tasks that the reconstruction of the country entailed and the execution of the five-year plan.” See: Prekić, “The Religious Community and the Communist Regime,” 123.

<sup>56</sup> Srđan Barišić, “Srpska pravoslavna crkva i Jugoslavija,” *YU historija*, 2017, accessed November 21, 2024, [https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura\\_religija\\_txt005.html](https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura_religija_txt005.html).

was allocated 900,000 dinars, while the Roman Catholic association received over 1.3 million dinars from 1953 to 1956. These grants fluctuated depending on the clergy's stance on contemporary political and social issues.<sup>57</sup>

The most controversial of these was the Association of Orthodox Priests. It is important to note that the establishment of this association and its work proceeded slowly due to the opposition of the Metropolitan of MCP Arsenije, but in fact, the entire church leadership of the SOC in Yugoslavia was opposed to the existence of such a parallel organization. It is worth saying that one of the lowest percentages of membership of Orthodox priests in the association was precisely in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. By the end of 1949, only 37.5% of the 120 Orthodox priests in Montenegro were members of the Association, most of whom were retired clergy. The irreconcilability of Metropolitan Arsenije towards the priest's association and other issues also led to his conviction in 1954. This year marked a turning point in the relationship between the state and the MCP, as cooperation and communication between the two became more intensive after that. By the end of 1954, over 90% of Orthodox priests in Montenegro had joined the Association.<sup>58</sup> At the Yugoslav level, the SOC continued to oppose the Association of Orthodox Priests strongly until the collapse of Yugoslavia. The Association of Priests, which effectively functioned as a mouthpiece for the communist authorities, sought to "democratize" the church hierarchy and reorganize the SOC, particularly concerning the status of the Church in Macedonia – a highly contentious issue. These efforts, however, were met with resistance from SOC bishops across Yugoslavia.<sup>59</sup>

At the same time, the authorities organized an association of Islamic priests, known as Ilmia. It was founded in Titograd on November 20, 1951. The task of the association was to take care of the material status of Islamic priests, lead activities for their political and cultural upliftment, encourage Muslim women to attend school, and prevent abuse

---

<sup>57</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 339–354.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 207–215.

<sup>59</sup> Đoko Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve III* (Beograd: BIGZ, 1991), 187–203.

of faith for political purposes and mockery. In fact, the relief provided material support for the imams, facilitating the action of removing the *zar* and *feredza*, etc. Almost all Islamic clerics were included in the membership.<sup>60</sup>

The establishment of associations of Roman Catholic priests was somewhat slower. Eventually, it was founded in Kotor in 1953, and the competencies were similar to the other two associations, where cooperation with the state authorities was again emphasized on the platform of preserving and consolidating the achievements of the National Liberation Struggle. However, its membership was significantly smaller.

### Legal framework of secularization policies

Every constitution of Yugoslavia from the communist period explicitly guaranteed freedom of religion. The Constitution of 1946 stipulated fully secular principles, guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion, and freedom of activity of religious schools, as long as their teaching is not against the Constitution. The freedom of activity of schools for priests, which were placed under the general supervision of the state, was determined, and the possibility of state aid for religious communities was legally provided.

Under the further policy of secularization, religious marriages were rendered null and void, because Article 46 stipulated that only marriages concluded before competent state authorities were considered valid. Immediately after the beginning of the secularization of Montenegrin society and the prohibition of the validity of church marriages, the number of such marriages dropped dramatically.<sup>61</sup> The strongest

---

<sup>60</sup> The instruments of influence of the communist authorities on the Islamic community in Montenegro also had normative channels. For example, social insurance could only be obtained by those who were appointed by the competent bodies of the Community, with the condition that religious service was their only profession. This was done, knowing that a large number of mosque imams were also engaged in agricultural and commercial occupations. Due to the strictly established criteria, as many as 40 priests lost their jobs after 1954, 19 retired, so only 23 imams remained active. See: Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 235–240; *Ibid.*, 214–216.

<sup>61</sup> For example, in the Archdiocese of Podgorica, there were 56 marriages in 1945, 25 in 1946, and only 5 church marriages in 1947. See more in: Stamatović, *Istorija Mitropolije Crnogorsko-Primorske*.

opposition came immediately from the MCP. The Islamic community had a slightly milder response to the normative regulation of the relationship between the state and religious communities. It was finally the most satisfied with these provisions, because all three groups were equal in Montenegro, in contrast to the unequal position of the Islamic community in Montenegro before the war.<sup>62</sup> The Catholic Church had the most objections to the restriction of the activities of religious communities outside the spiritual sphere of activity since it traditionally had the most developed charitable and socializing role in Catholic environments.

The provisions of the first Constitution were insufficiently clear in many segments, which gave state authorities broad discretionary power in their interpretation, such as the provision on the possibility of financing religious communities, which in perspective clearly depended on loyalty to the state or the authorities.<sup>63</sup>

In the Constitutional Law adopted in 1953, the collective practice of religion was spatially limited – permitting it only in religious institutions or surrounding areas such as churchyards or grocers, which could be limited for reasons of public order or of health. Exceptions were funerals or weddings that did not require prior administrative permission.<sup>64</sup>

Compared to the adoption of the constitutions, work on the first Law on the Position of Religious Communities was much more dynamic. Almost all religious communities in Yugoslavia reacted negatively to the original law from February 1953 – except the Christian Adventist Church. The final version of the law did take into account some of the criticisms of religious communities (such as the removal of the position that prescribed that teaching in schools must be based on scientific achievements, that the acts of baptism and circumcision could

---

<sup>62</sup> The progress that the Islamic community and Muslims in Yugoslavia felt during the communist period refers to literacy, the cancellation of the agrarian measures of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and material assistance to refugees in Muslim areas.

<sup>63</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 159–161.

<sup>64</sup> Marko Božić, “Ni sekularna država ni laička republika? Pravni položaj vjerskih zajednica u Komunističkoj Jugoslaviji - normativna analiza zakonskog okvira,” *Pravni zapisi* 10, no. 1 (2019): 43–44, <https://doi.org/10.5937/pravzapo-21203>.

be performed with the consent of only one parent, and other positions) were rejected requests of religious communities to recognize religious holidays as state holidays, and students in religious schools were not granted the same rights as other students of state schools. Priests were not allowed to visit prison inmates. The law allowed the free establishment of religious communities.<sup>65</sup> State or local authorities could ban processions, gatherings or similar activities in the form of religious gatherings of religious communities.<sup>66</sup> This law not only declared religion a private matter of the citizen, but also reduced the church to a self-financing institution.

However, as the church traditionally relied on state aid, this had a great impact on its functioning. The social and economic activity of the church was narrowed – a significant part of its activities was completely taken over or limited by the state, such as marriages, registers, and baptisms and other rites. In the same year, due to the aforementioned activities of the state, relations between the SOC and state authorities were terminated. Subsidies, set out in the contracts on the social insurance of priests, were absent for that year. That year, nineteen Orthodox priests were convicted throughout Yugoslavia, among them four priests and, as we noted earlier, the Metropolitan of MCP Bradvarević for cooperation with opponents of the national liberation movement (partisan movement during the war and for inciting religious hatred with statements during the war about how the Roman Catholic Church had done great harm to the Orthodox population). In July of the following year, an indictment was brought against the seventy-year-old metropolitan and he was sentenced to several years in prison. He remained incarcerated until 1958 when he was placed under house arrest.<sup>67</sup>

The Constitution of 1963 provided that religious communities could have, within the limits set by federal law, the right of ownership of immovable property, but nowhere was it stipulated that they were spared from possible further expropriations.

---

<sup>65</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice*, 168–169.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>67</sup> See: Aleksandar Stamatović, *Suđenje mitropolitu Arseniju Bradvareviću* (Nikšić: Institut za srpsku kulturu, 2017).

The Constitution of 1974 similarly shaped the boundaries of the activities of religious communities and again left certain ambiguities regarding the interpretation of certain articles. For example, Article 174 maintains that the practice of religion is an individual affair, so that no one may be forced to join or be prevented from joining a church, and it recognizes religious communities as legal persons which are free to conduct worship services, rites, and religious affairs (the latter was left undefined). However, the government may provide financial support for specific purposes, and religious communities may own property within the limit of the law.<sup>68</sup>

### Secularization in practice

#### I. Removal of *zar* and *feredza*

The attitude of the communist government towards women's agency, especially regarding Muslim women, warrants separate scholarly analysis. For the purposes of this study, it is important to point out that Muslim women in particular were the subject of modernization during and after World War II. Many Muslim women participated in the work of the Antifascist Women's Front in cities in the north and southeast of Montenegro, where Muslims predominate. For them, this was the first time they had participated in social decision-making. During the war, the Communist Party also organized numerous literacy courses for Muslim and other women in order to eradicate illiteracy among this demographic. Less well known, and discovered by Folić, is that Muslim women also participated in craft work and construction for the first time.<sup>69</sup>

A completely peculiar phenomenon in the secularization of Montenegrin society was the policy of removing the *zar* and *feredza* of Muslim women, sponsored by the communist government. The Islamic religious community was the only community in which the process of

---

<sup>68</sup> *The Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* (Ljubljana: Delo, 1974).

<sup>69</sup> Zvezdan Folić, "Škidanje zara i feredže u Crnoj Gori 1947–1953," *Istorijski zapisi* 72, no. 3–4 (1999): 73–90.

secularization (as a consequence of modernization) could be targeted at women, through educating them or through specific measures like prohibition of the *zar* and *feredza*.

The prohibition of the *zar* and *feredza* (a long, hooded overdress and outer dress worn by Muslim women) would be one of the most effective Party actions that were focused on the elimination of religious influence in society. The KPJ interpreted the religious covering of Muslim women as a form of cultural and gender backwardness and thus supported the removal of those features as a form of emancipation. The religious covering was interpreted as “remnants of the dark past.” This feature of women’s social isolation prevented them from accessing education, getting involved in the community, and – what was especially important to the Communists – becoming involved in the reconstruction of the country.<sup>70</sup>

According to Prekić, the removal of the *zar* and *feredza* was as much an emancipatory and ideological campaign as it was economically motivated. Prekić thus states that it should be noted that the campaign took place amid the reconstruction of the war-torn country, during the period of implementation of the First Five-Year Plan, which began at the end of April 1947. The Party structures needed every single person, and the population of 10,000–15,000 women who cover their faces no doubt fits into those plans.<sup>71</sup> Already during the war, there was a recorded case of four girls from the predominantly Muslim town of Gusinje who crossed over to the liberated territory of Berane and took off their *feredzas* and cut off their braids. Later, in 1950, a law was passed, banning the wearing of turbans and *feredzas*. Women who would cover their faces were fined. However, until 1953, due to the activity of the Islamic clergy, the ban quickly became effective, as a result of this approach, moving from punishing women to educating them.<sup>72</sup>

The communist campaign to influence Muslim women effectively began in mid-1947 and was predominantly directed towards the Muslim-populated north and northeast of the country. Meetings

---

<sup>70</sup> Prekić, “Kampanja skidanja zara i feredže,” 51–52.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Folić, *Vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 140–144.

were held where representatives of the Islamic community, prominent Muslims and members of the Party, explained *that taking off the veil is the duty of every Muslim woman*. The largest part of this work was carried out through local organizations of the Anti-Fascist Women's Front. In just six months, about 6,300 Muslim women took off their *zar* or *feredza*. The best results were achieved in the Berane, Bijelo Polje and Andrijevica counties, where the original plan was implemented, according to which 90% of Muslim women would remove the *zar* or *feredza*.<sup>73</sup>

It is not surprising to note that the campaign to remove the *zara* and *feredza* was most effective where the Communist Party of Yugoslavia had its strongest foothold in Muslim communities. Thus, the greatest resonance of the campaign in 1947 was in Plav, Gusinje, Rožaje, Bijelo Polje and Berane (northern Montenegro, predominantly agrarian and underdeveloped) and did not gain momentum in the Titograd district (a small town of Tuzi), Bar and Pljevlja (cities that were more developed than the aforementioned). In all districts, except for the Titograd district, Muslim women from the countryside were more likely to remove the veil than those from the city. In 1947, 6,400 Muslim women even rejected the veil, and the following year 6,167 of them, which means that in two years, as many as 12,567 Muslim women, or over 85% of them, rejected the traditional veil. In 1950, as a domino effect resulting from the Bosnian authorities, the process to pass a law banning the traditional veiling of Muslim women was also initiated in Montenegro. Such requests were submitted by Muslims from Pljevlja, followed by those from Bar and Ulcinj.<sup>74</sup>

Overall, the campaign was extremely successful in Montenegro, but it should be noted that there were cases in which women refused to leave their courtyards, thus not risking a fine for refusing to remove their traditional veils.

---

<sup>73</sup> Prekić, "Kampanja skidanja zara i feredže," 52.

<sup>74</sup> Folić, "Skidanje zara i feredže," 85–90.

## II. Secularization of education and religious holidays

In general, the attitude of the KPJ towards religion during the war was an attempt to convince the people that it was not against religion per se. Indications of the secularization of education in Montenegro came in November 1944 at the Conference of Educational and Cultural Workers in Nikšić, where the need for schools to turn to the future was emphasized. That step was followed by the decision of the Committee for Education of the Montenegrin Assembly of People's Liberation, which declared religious education a subject that students could attend only with the consent of their parents.<sup>75</sup> The next stage in the process of secularization of education came in 1952 when the Politburo of the Central Committee of the KPJ decided that religious instruction could be conducted in religious institutions but not in private homes.<sup>76</sup>

In the first postwar year, religious education was conducted in all three religious communities, but the poor financial situation prevented the full extent of such teaching. Religious education in Montenegrin schools was abolished by a decision of the Ministerial Council of the People's Republic of Montenegro on March 16, 1946, and the reaction of all three religious communities was extremely negative. This led them to attempt to hold religious classes in private homes. That failed because the priests, especially the Orthodox ones in Titograd, had difficulty finding people willing to provide rooms in their houses for religious teaching. In addition to the declining interest of youth, the indifference of some Orthodox priests to religious education was also exemplary.

By separating the church from the state, the secularization of education, i.e. the separation of the school from the church and the prohibition of religious education in public schools, the state directly weakened the economic, public, political, and cultural power, and influence church hierarchy and religion on the population.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Miloš Starovlah, *Istorija školstva u Crnoj Gori* (Podgorica: CID, 2017), 236.

<sup>76</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 380–382.

<sup>77</sup> Šerbo Rastoder, "Vjerske zajednice i Jugoslavija 1918–2006," *YU historija*, accessed November 10, 2024, [https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura\\_religija\\_txt00.html](https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura_religija_txt00.html).

The place of religious education in schools has not been fully replaced by other moral education for children. Thus, looking at the curriculum of primary schools from 1958, religious education was replaced with the Basics of Socialist Morality course, but only in that year.<sup>78</sup> Following that year, this subject can no longer be found on the list of yearly courses.

When it comes to Islamic believers, immediately after the war, religious education was conducted in their communities in *mektebs* in Ulcinj, Bar, and Rožaje, but it was abolished in 1947. However, among Islamic believers, the issue of conducting religious classes was still occasionally raised. Thus, the persistence of Islamic believers led the Commission for Religious Affairs to decide in 1962 that religious education should be taught in Ulcinj, Pljevlja, and the village of Rosulje near Pljevlja. Despite the initial great interest, the desire to attend classes decreased over time among believers.<sup>79</sup> It is interesting that the desire for religious education was most pronounced among younger Muslims, but they were obstructed in the implementation of the opening of new schools by Islamic priests from the Islamic religious community. The hard-earned possibility of conducting religious classes soon began to lose its appeal. In addition to the declining interest during the 1960s, high dropout rates were also caused by irregular teaching. Religious education was conducted most regularly in Catholic communities in Boka Kotorska. The only growth trend in children attending religious classes was recorded in the Catholic community, especially in the 1960s.

In general, the communists view the performance of religious teaching as evidence of non-acceptance of teaching such content in schools. Several cases have been recorded in which local authorities prevented the performance of religious classes. Furthermore, the government found ways to obstruct the missionary and teaching work of religious workers in other ways as well. For example, in Bar, in May 1948, the authorities confiscated 450 catechisms intended for elementary school children,

---

<sup>78</sup> It is interesting that the work plan for this course was mainly based on the equality of peoples, the harmonization of individual and social interests, private and social property, and the development of love for the socialist homeland. Starovlah, *Istorija školstva u Crnoj Gori*, 285.

<sup>79</sup> Folić, *Istorija Muslimana Crne Gore*, 247–248.

even though their use was approved by the Ministry of Education in neighboring Croatia.<sup>80</sup>

Education of the clergy was not available for the SOC in Montenegro. The work of the seminary in Cetinje which was stopped during the war, was not restored. The lack of teaching staff, which had been decimated by the war, influenced the members of the Religious Commission to agree to postpone the decision on the reopening of the seminary. The education of the Catholic clergy was difficult in the shadow of the cooling of relations between Yugoslavia and the Holy See. For example, the Committee for Science under the Government of Yugoslavia refused to grant study in Rome (which was free of charge) to four candidates from the Archdiocese of Bar, arguing that they could study at the Faculty of Theology in Zagreb. Despite these obstacles, the Archdiocese of Bar still received young and educated priests even until the beginning of the 1950s – only in the period 1946–1952, the influx was five priests. By comparison, by far the largest religious community, the SOC in Montenegro, received only one priest during this period.<sup>81</sup> Despite the material benefits, especially for Orthodox students from Montenegro who could study in seminaries in Rakovica or Prizren, interest was low.

Quite unexpectedly, the number of Roman Catholic nuns in Montenegro increased after the war. The reason for this was their dismissal from health institutions in Slovenia, and at the request of a well-known Montenegrin doctor, Cvjetko Popović, who was specializing in tuberculosis in Slovenia, the nuns were allowed to come and live in Montenegro and work at the hospital in Cetinje. Nuns dismissed from Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina found refuge in Montenegro. They worked in all major hospitals in Montenegro, including the nursing home in Perast. Most likely, the Montenegrin authorities viewed their arrival positively precisely because of the lack of trained medical personnel in secular institutions at the time.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 380–382.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 387–389. In Yugoslavia, there was a rather small number of religious schools. In 1953, there were only 21 in the entire country, of which 9 were at the college level, and 12 were at the secondary school level. Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 391–392.

<sup>82</sup> Zvezdan Folić, “Rimokatoličke redovnice u Crnoj Gori 1945–1965,” *Croatica Christiana periodica* 36, no. 70 (2012): 172–175.

The issue of religious holidays was also taken into account by the communists. During the celebration of the liberation of Bar on December 1, 1944, the celebration was attended by citizens and the most visible communist or state leadership and clergy of all three religions, and as part of the ceremony, religious services were held in the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Islamic churches. Likewise, on January 13, 1945, a ceremony was held in the Cetinje monastery on the occasion of the liberation of Montenegro. After the Orthodox liturgy, arch-priest Jovo Radović, president of the Religious Commission, enthusiastically spoke about Stalin, and pan-Slavism, and criticized the activities of Metropolitan Joanikije during the war.<sup>83</sup> In Kotor, from January 27 to February 3, 1945, the St. Triphon festivities were held. On November 18, 1945, Abdulah Hodžić congratulated Muslims in Montenegro on Eid al-Adha, calling for the legitimacy of the new Yugoslav state.<sup>84</sup>

However, with the adoption of the new constitution, a new era began. Religious holidays suddenly lost their importance and gave way to national holidays, which was the organized policy of the communist leadership. The slowest interruption of the celebration of holidays and the slowest loss of the mass of such celebrations was among the believers of Islam. The secularization of the calendar followed in 1948 – on December 22 of that year, the Presidency of the Government of Yugoslavia sent a confidential letter to the lower authorities, according to which Christmas was no longer officially recognized. The Montenegrin authorities consistently followed the party line. On Roman Catholic Christmas in 1948, all schools and administrative bodies had to work. There are also cases in Montenegrin practice where people lost their jobs because of their beliefs – Tomo Marić and Špiro Marić from Herceg Novi received a decision to terminate their employment relationship because they refused to work on Saturdays, in accordance with their Adventist beliefs.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 152–153.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 439–441.

## Impact of Secularization Policies

The pace of secularization of society also followed the dynamics of the work of the Central Committee of the KPJ. Thus, at the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee in January 1952, Tito himself emphasized that the fight against religion does not go beyond administration and that in practice the principle of the separation of the church from the state should be strictly adhered to, criticizing the work in that field. The conclusions of this session of the Politburo marked the beginning of an organized, managed anti-religious campaign in Yugoslavia. The official press also supported the campaign. Religious dogmas were criticized, and a fight was waged against religion, religious morality, and religious teachings in general.<sup>86</sup>

The paradigm of the new reality, way of life, and attitude towards religion was represented through the system of functioning of Titograd (formerly Podgorica, renamed in honor of Tito). Titograd was the newly established capital of socialist Montenegro. The transfer of the capital from Cetinje – the seat of the MCP – to Titograd, was also a symbolic spiritual departure. Titograd, which rapidly industrialized, urbanized, and represented the melting pot of Montenegro, was also the subject of attempts to marginalize religious customs. For example, the district committees in Titograd actively worked to suppress the celebration of Saint Patron.<sup>87</sup>

Research into the religiosity of Communist party members from March 1951 showed that one in four communists practised some form of religious practice daily. Of those, 0.37% of the membership baptized their children, while 0.03% of the membership entered into a spiritual marriage – only 7 members.<sup>88</sup>

The process of secularization went drastically well.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the population census from 1953 (see Table 1) showed that about 132 thousand

---

<sup>86</sup> Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 370.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 372.

<sup>88</sup> Prekić, "The Religious Community and the Communist Regime," 119.

<sup>89</sup> Lidija Jovanović, the wife of Montenegrin communist leader Blažo Jovanović, and the Central Committee of the Union of Communists of Montenegro member on June 11, 1954,

inhabitants, or 31.5%, had no religious affiliation. For comparison, the Yugoslav average was 12.5%.

Although the process of secularization was going on intensively, certain micro-areas resisted it. For example, the most intensive religious life was still conducted in both the Catholic and Orthodox communities of Boka, the Orthodox communities in Zeta (Golubovci and Mahala), Pljevlja, and the surroundings of Bijelo Polje. In general, secularization penetrated the population of Orthodoxy the fastest, for which there are many reasons. One of the frequently mentioned is the experience of religion nominally, such as the “ancestral faith,” adherence to new times, urbanization, the school system, and finally, the indifference of part of the Orthodox clergy in Montenegro. The feeling of insecurity existed among all believers. Still, the discontinuity in cultivating religious life was the least present among Islamic believers, especially the youth, who continued to show considerable devotion to the faith.<sup>90</sup>

The extent of defection from the religion of the Orthodox population is most noticeable from the analysis of the reports that the MCP metropolitans wrote to the Holy Synod in Belgrade. The analysis is facilitated by the fact that from 1961 to 1990, the position of head of the SOC in Montenegro was held by one man, Metropolitan Danilo (Dajković).

The first report<sup>91</sup> that Metropolitan Dajković submitted to the Holy Synod in 1962 after taking office indicates that there was a generally low interest among people to participate in church services (except in Boka Kotorska), and that the church discipline of priests had disappeared or was disappearing, and that there were complaints about the misconduct of some priests. In the first report, Dajković also stated that religious education and the manifestation of religiosity were at a low level. For example, the practice of fasting was very rare among the population. In a report from 1965, he cites an example of the Church of St. Sava in Tivat, the construction of which began even before the

---

stated, “In our country, the influence of the clergy and religion is not a problem like it is in other republics.” (Folić, *Država i vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori*, 373).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>91</sup> All reports to the Holy Synod are presented in: Radović and Kondić, *Ljetopis raspete Mitropolije*.

war, that although they had managed to collect the money for construction through donations from the diaspora and locals, everyone from the contractor to the supervising engineer and the workers were Catholics, because no one who was Orthodox wanted or was allowed to accept the job. In the report, Dajković cites two exceptions to the religious passivity of the Orthodox people, namely the presence of the believers in the Cetinje Monastery on Christmas, and the traditional pilgrimage to Ostrog Monastery. However, he adds that a large part of the faithful on the pilgrimage was from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In his report on his work in 1975, he noted that Montenegrins were eager and aggressive in proving their nationality and faith, but preferred to go to a pub than to church. In the same report, Dajković offered his understanding of the absence of the tradition of the people towards the church.<sup>92</sup> In that report, he stated that material interests prevail over church culture. The Metropolitan also complained about the low interest of young people in priestly education, which goes beyond the borders of Montenegro. Thus, he compared priest service in Montenegro to exile in Siberia. Apart from the previously mentioned Titograd section, the poor situation can also be seen in the rest of Montenegro.

In 1979 in Nikšić, the largest municipality by area in former Yugoslavia, only four baptisms and one church funeral were held for a population of 40,000. In his last report for 1989, Metropolitan Danilo stated that future priests first want to know what their salary will be.<sup>93</sup>

Although the focus of the work is on the period from the war to the mid-1950s, a brief overview of relevant sources from the later period serves to assess the measures of secularization and atheization. Polls from the postwar period show that, compared to other Yugoslav areas,

---

<sup>92</sup> Criticism of the metropolitan in the reports was directed more towards the population than towards the communist authorities. Metropolitan Danilo states that until 1968, the relationship between the communist authorities was good, but then it worsened due to the beginning of the so-called chapel affair – the decision and subsequent demolition of the chapel of Metropolitan Petar II Petrović Njegoš and the construction of the mausoleum where his remains were transferred. This decision produced great dissatisfaction among the clergy of the MCP. See more in: Radović and Kondić, *Ljetopis raspete Mitropolije*, 97–101.

<sup>93</sup> Radović and Kondić, *Ljetopis raspete Mitropolije*, 245–297.

the degree of classical religiosity was the lowest in Montenegro, not exceeding 19% until 1985.<sup>94</sup>

In Montenegro, the success of secularization policies is most visible through the analysis of the growth of the number of atheists by 1991 (see Table 1). The tabular representation of the numerical increase of atheists after 1953 confirms the earlier thesis about the stronger efforts of the authorities to work more diligently on the secularization of society after the first postwar population census in Montenegro.

The empirically-recorded record of departure of people from religion and the SOC in the Orthodox-dominant (Montenegro and Serbia proper), or multi-confessional area (Vojvodina and Croatia), was operationalized by the loss of the importance of Orthodoxy as a moral thread or motivation for people's practical behavior, the reduced participation of people in church rituals and church life in general.<sup>95</sup> The "sudden and terrible falling away from faith," or "fallen piety" was pointed out by Patriarch German in 1970.<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, despite these variations, the identification and religious activities of believers declined in all religious communities.<sup>97</sup> The part of the Orthodox population that remained religious in defiance of secularization policies mostly lived in the countryside, it was the unemployed population, agricultural workers, poorer population, and women more often than men.<sup>98</sup>

The reasons why atheism found more favorable ground among the Orthodox population in Montenegro, and in general among the Orthodox population in Yugoslavia, than among other religious communities are complex. According to Blagojević,<sup>99</sup> the reasons for this should be sought in internal and external church-related factors. In

---

<sup>94</sup> Alexander Mirescu, "Religion and Ethnic Identity Formation in the Former Yugoslavia," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 23, no. 1 (2003): 6, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol23/iss1/2>.

<sup>95</sup> Mirko Blagojević, *Religija i crkva u transformacijama društva: sociološko-istorijska analiza religijske situacije u srpsko-crnogorskom i ruskom (post)komunističkom društvu* (Beograd: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju: Filip Višnjić, 2005), 174.

<sup>96</sup> Rastoder, "Vjerske zajednice i Jugoslavija."

<sup>97</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 140.

<sup>98</sup> Blagojević, *Religija i crkva*, 179–180.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 175–180.

addition to the fact that the clergy of the SOC was decimated during and immediately after the war, and the church was also economically exhausted, as the economic base of its strength and the basis of its functioning – arable land was taken away. In addition, an undoubtedly important factor is the fact that the treatment of the SOC by foreign communist authorities was somewhat worse than the treatment of other religious communities because the SOC was brought into connection with Greater Serbia – bourgeois and even imperial ideas, as the latter claimed Serbian socialists of the 20th century. To this list, one more factor can be added – the strength of the communist party in the country.

A 1985–86 survey on Montenegrin public opinion recorded 19% of respondents identifying as religious.<sup>100</sup> However, with the weakening of communist rule, and especially after the death of Tito in 1980, religiosity began to increase. The last survey on religiosity in Yugoslavia, conducted in 1989 by the Consortium of Public Opinion Polling Institutions, found that 39% of Montenegrins identified as religious, reflecting a substantial rise compared to the mid-1980s.<sup>101</sup>

### Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated why Montenegro serves as a particularly compelling case study in the analysis of planned secularization and atheization in the post-World War II communist era. Within less than a century, Montenegro transitioned from a state ruled by Orthodox clergy to the Yugoslav republic with the highest proportion of atheists – more than twice the Yugoslav average.

As outlined, secularization efforts began during the war and gradually evolved into explicit atheization measures by the late 1940s and 1950s. This study has reviewed existing research, showing that secularization policies were primarily formal and normative, while atheization measures were largely informal. Further studies could explore parliamentary speeches from both the national assembly and the women's

---

<sup>100</sup> Blagojević, *Religija i crkva*, 226.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

antifascist organizations (AFŽ) to gain deeper insights into how these policies were articulated and promoted.

One particularly notable pillar of secularization was the campaign to abolish traditional Muslim dress for women. This phenomenon suggests that in Montenegro, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Macedonia, a specific form of women's agency was at play in post-war communist social policies. This topic warrants further research, particularly regarding women's roles in communist-era modernization efforts.

The sources cited in the paper – especially the Yugoslav population censuses and the annual reports of the Metropolitan of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro – suggest that Montenegro's high rate of atheism was not only a result of state policy but also reflected a genuine decline in religious engagement. The research presented here confirms the thesis that the most pronounced apathy toward religion occurred within Montenegro's largest religious community—the Orthodox population. While Muslims and Catholics in Montenegro exhibited some resistance to this trend, their overall trajectory was not drastically different.

In conclusion, the communist authorities implemented secularization and atheization through a normative, i.e. constitutional and legal framework, the secularization of education, and the promotion of new national holidays of the new state, as well as planned campaigns aimed at Muslim women.

These policies proved highly effective, but their success was facilitated by an important underlying factor: the strong influence of the Communist Party, which had deep societal roots dating back to World War II.

Finally, the trend of atheization was strongest in regions most affected by the National Liberation War. This enabled the dismantling of previous governance structures, including religious authority, and effectively gave the Communist Party a *carte blanche* to reshape Montenegrin society.

## B i b l i o g r a p h y

- Andrijašević, Živko M., and Šerbo Rastoder. *Istorija Crne Gore: od najstarijih vremena do 2003*. Podgorica: Centar za iseljenike Crne Gore, 2006.
- Bakrač, Vladimir, and Mirko Blagojević. "Religious Changes in Montenegro: From the Socialist Atheization to Post-Socialist Revitalization." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 40, no. 7 (2020): 30–43. <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol40/iss7/3/>.
- Bakrač, Vladimir. "Church and State in Montenegro: From the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Church of Serbia." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 42, no. 9 (2022): 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2394>.
- Bakrač, Vladimir. *Religija i mladi: Religioznost mladih u Crnoj Gori*. Podgorica: Narodna knjiga, 2013.
- Barišić, Srđan. "Srpska pravoslavna crkva i Jugoslavija." *YU historija*, 2017. Accessed November 21, 2024. [https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura\\_religija\\_txt0005.html](https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura_religija_txt0005.html).
- Blagojević, Mirko. *Religija i crkva u transformacijama društva: sociološko-istorijska analiza religijske situacije u srpsko-crnogorskom i ruskom (post) komunističkom društvu*. Beograd: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju: Filip Višnjić, 2005.
- Boeckh, Katrin. "Vjerski progoni u Jugoslaviji 1944. – 1953.: staljinizam u titoizmu." *Osteuropa Institut* 38, no. 2 (2006): 403–431.
- Božić, Marko. "Ni sekularna država ni laička republika? Pravni položaj vjerskih zajednica u Komunističkoj Jugoslaviji - normativna analiza zakonskog okvira." *Pravni zapisi* 10, no. 1 (2019): 40–64. <https://doi.org/10.5937/pravzapo-21203>.
- Buchenau, Klaus. "What Went Wrong? Church–State Relations in Socialist Yugoslavia." *Nationalities Papers* 33, no. 4 (2005): 547–567. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990500354046>.
- Folić, Zvezdan, Veseljko Koprivica, and Avdul Kurpejović. *Istorija muslimana Crne Gore 1918–2007. Vol. II*. Podgorica: Matica Muslimanska Crne Gore, 2015.
- Folić, Zvezdan. *Država i vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori 1945–1965*. Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore: Centralna narodna biblioteka "Đurđe Crnojević, 2007.
- Folić, Zvezdan. "Rimokatoličke redovnice u Crnoj Gori 1945–1965." *Croatia Christiana Periodica* 36, no. 70 (2012): 169–177.
- Folić, Zvezdan. *Vjerske zajednice u Crnoj Gori 1918-1953*. Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore: Društvo istoričara Crne Gore, 2001.
- Folić, Zvezdan. "Skidanje zara i feredže u Crnoj Gori 1947–1953." *Istorijski zapisi* 72, no. 3–4 (1999): 73–90.

- Herbert, David. "Christianity, Democratisation and Secularisation in Central and Eastern Europe." *Religion, State and Society* 27, no. 3–4 (1999): 277–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/096374999106485>.
- Jovanović, Jagoš. *Istorija Crne Gore*. Podgorica: CID, 2001.
- Marović, Branislav. *Ekonomska istorija Crne Gore*. Podgorica: CID, 2006.
- Mirescu, Alexander. "Religion and Ethnic Identity Formation in the Former Yugoslavia." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 23, no. 1 (2003): 1–18. <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol23/iss1/2>.
- Mojzes, Paul. "Religious Liberty in Yugoslavia: A Study in Ambiguity." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 6, no. 2 (1986): 23–41. <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol6/iss2/2>.
- Morača, Pero. *Istorija Saveza komunista Jugoslavije: kratak pregled*. Beograd: Rad, 1977.
- Papović, Dragutin. "Vjerski poglavari u SR Crnoj Gori." *Matica crnogorska* 20, no. 79 (2019): 133–160.
- Papović, Dragutin. *Intelektualci i vlast u Crnoj Gori 1945–1990*. Podgorica: Matica crnogorska, 2015.
- Papović, Dragutin. *Vjerske zajednice i nacionalizmi u Crnoj Gori (1965–1991)*. Podgorica: Matica crnogorska, 2023.
- Pavićević, Branko. *Istorija Crne Gore: Sazdanje crnogorske nacionalne države: 1796–1878*. Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, Pobjeda, 2006.
- Petranović, Branko. *Istorija Jugoslavije: 1918–1988. Knj. 1, Kraljevina Jugoslavija: 1914–1941*. Beograd: Nolit, 1988.
- Petranović, Branko. *Istorija Jugoslavije: 1918–1988. Knj. 2, Narodnooslobodilački rat i revolucija: 1941–1945*. Beograd: Nolit, 1988.
- Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova u 2023. godini, MONSTAT, 2024. <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=2282&pageid=1992>.
- Pratt, Vernon. *Religion and Secularisation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970.
- Prekić, Adnan. "Kampanja skidanja zara i feredže na sjeveru Crne Gore tokom 1947. godine." *Glas Bihora*, no. 3 (2018): 49–57.
- Prekić, Adnan. "The Religious Community and the Communist Regime in the Case of Montenegro 1945–1955." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 15, no. 44 (2016): 111–136.
- Radić, Radmila. *Država i verske zajednice 1945–1970. Vols. I & II*. Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2002.
- Radović, Amfilohije, and Pavle Kondić. *Ljetopis raspete Mitropolije crnogorsko-primorske: vremena mitropolita Danila Dajkovića: 1961–1990*. Cetinje: Svetigora, 2008.

Ramet, P. Sabrina. *Balkan Babel: Politics, Culture and Religion in Yugoslavia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992.

Ramšak, Jure, Gašper Mithans, and Mateja Režek, eds. *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe*. Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022.

Rastoder, Šerbo and Novak Adžić. *Moderna istorija Crne Gore 1988–2017: od prevrata do Nato pakta*. Podgorica: Daily Press - Vijesti, 2020.

Rastoder, Šerbo. "Vjerske zajednice i Jugoslavija 1918–2006." *YU historija*. Accessed November 10, 2024. [https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura\\_religija\\_txt00.html](https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/kultura_religija_txt00.html).

Slijepčević, Đoko. *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve III*. Beograd: BIGZ, 1991.

Stamatović, Aleksandar. *Istorija Mitropolije Crnogorsko-Primorske 1918-2009*. Podgorica: Unireks, 2014.

Stamatović, Aleksandar. *Suđenje mitropolitu Arseniju Bradvareviću*. Nikšić: Institut za srpsku kulturu, 2017.

Stanojević, Gligor and Milan Vasić. *Istorija Crne Gore. Knj. 3, Od početka XVI do kraja XVIII vijeka*. Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, Pobjeda, 2006.

Starovlah, Miloš. *Istorija školstva u Crnoj Gori*. Podgorica: CID, 2017.

*The Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*. Ljubljana: Delo, 1974.

Vujović, Dimo. "Ostroška skupština." *Istorijski zapisi*, no. 1 (1967): 115–146.

Vuković-Ćalasan, Danijela, and Rajka Đoković. "Politics and Religion in Montenegro—From 'Theocracy' to a Civic State." *Religions* 14, no. 2, 251 (2023): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020251>.



---

# THE PROHIBITION OF WOMEN'S VEILING IN THE REGION OF GORA

Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Act on the Removal of the Veil came into force in the People's Republic of Serbia in January 1951.<sup>2</sup> Its implementation involved a ban on the use of clothing items that Muslim women wore with the intention of covering their heads and bodies. This paper examines the Act's application within a local context, considering its connection to the process of secularization in society during the mid-twentieth century. It is assumed that the ban on wearing the veil (*zar* and *feredža*) represented an effort by the communist state authorities to suppress the practice of Islamic religious customs, which can be interpreted as a strategy to promote secular political ideas and socialist ideals.<sup>3</sup> In this

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is partially the result of research conducted within the framework of the bilateral project: "Religious Policies and Freedom of Conscience in Interwar and Socialist Yugoslavia: The Contexts of Change" (Bi-Rs/23-25-054), and partially the result of work on the project: "Studying and Documenting Elements of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Gorani people in the Republic of Serbia," which was implemented in 2024. The paper is also the result of work at the Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, based on the Contract for the Implementation and Financing of Scientific Research Work of the NIO in 2025, number: 451-03-136/2025-03/ 200173, dated 4 February 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Act on the Ban of Wearing the Zar and the Feredža, *Official Gazette of the People's Republic of Serbia* 4 (1951): 84–85, <https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/arhslgl/numberOverview/sgarh/14119>.

<sup>3</sup> The term communist state authorities is used to refer to the state apparatus that operated under the leadership of the Communist Party in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the paper, the abbreviation SFRY or simply the last part of the name – Yugoslavia – is used.

context, the Act on the Removal of the Veil is analysed as a legal measure aimed at prohibiting the application of religious practices in the Gora region, framed within the political and social strategies applied by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia at the time (such as equality based on people's national affiliation).

This topic is approached from the perspective of ethnology and anthropology. The research involved the application of the fundamental and most commonly used research methods in ethnology and anthropology: analysis of relevant literature and sources, as well as empirical oral material (narratives of interlocutors).<sup>4</sup> Fieldwork was conducted in Dragaš and several villages in Gora (Bačka, Brod, Globočica, Kukuljane, Leštane, Mlike, Orčuša, Radeša, Rapča), as well as in Belgrade. The fieldwork involved conversations with interlocutors who live in Gora or are permanently settled in Belgrade.<sup>5</sup>

The topic of this paper has not previously attracted significant attention from ethnologists and anthropologists, either in Serbia or abroad. The implementation of the veiling ban has often been considered within the context of achieving gender equality and the emancipation of women,<sup>6</sup> although Gora and the Gorani community have often been

---

<sup>4</sup> Vesna Vučinić Nešković, *Metodologija terenskog istraživanja u antropologiji: od normativnog do iskustvenog* (Beograd: Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta, Srpski genealoški centar, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Belgrade was the location of the research due to the fact that the largest number of Gorani people reside in the capital city of the Republic of Serbia. According to the National Council of Gorani People in the Republic of Serbia: "the results of the 2022 census, there are 7,700 Gorani people living in the Republic of Serbia, most of them in the Belgrade region, more than five thousand" (see: Gorani National Council in the RS, <https://www.facebook.com/nacionalnisavetgoranaca>). This fact can be explained by the continuous migration of Gorani people to Belgrade since the 19th century. Gorani people migrate to Belgrade because it offers the greatest employment opportunities (Ivaylo Markov, "Changing Practices of 'Being Together' in the Transnational Kin-Relationships among Gorani," *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXVII, 3 (2019): 501–22; Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom: Etnicitet, zajednica i transmigracije Goranaca u Beogradu* (Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Violeta Achkoska, "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War," in *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe. Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*, ed. Miroslav Jovanović and Slobodan Naumović (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 183–94; Zilka Spahić-Šiljak and Rebeka Jadranka Anić, *I vjernice i građanke* (Sarajevo: TPO fondacija i CIPS-Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2009); Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, ed., *Propitivanje ženskih, feminističkih i muslimanskih identiteta. Post-socijalistički konteksti u Bosni i Hercegovini i na Kosovu* (Sarajevo: Centar interdisciplinarne

excluded from these studies. As a result, the aforementioned papers have lacked information on the application of the veil prohibition in Gora. This fact influenced the choice of research methodology: fieldwork and conversations with interlocutors (Gorani people) were the primary means of obtaining original information.<sup>7</sup> The empirical material in the form of narratives serves as the backbone for writing this paper.<sup>8</sup>

The period from the 1950s to the 1970s forms the chronological framework for the research. This period was chosen as the reference

---

postdiplomske studije, Univerzitet u Sarajevu, 2012); Đermana Šeta, "Analiza utjecaja novije zabrane ženskih muslimanskih odjevnih praksi u Evropi," in *Pažnja! Odjeća, umjetnost, identitet*, ed. Irfan Hošić, Danijela Velimirović, Aleksandar Pašagić et. al., (Bihać: Tehnički fakultet Univerziteta u Bihaću / Odsjek za tekstilni dizajn, 2014), 55–64; Miloš Đurović, "Hidžab kao fenomen konstruisanja i osporavanja identiteta: primjer savremenog Novog Pazara," *Etnoantropološki problemi*, n. s. 10, 4 (2015): 821–38; Edin Šaković and Izet Sabotić, "Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica," *Glasnik arhiva i arhivističkog udruženja Bosne i Hercegovine*, no. 43 (2013): 289–306; Fahrudin Kladničanin, *Peča* (Novi Pazar: Akademski inicijativa "Forum 10," 2020).

<sup>7</sup> I began researching the Gorani community and culture in 2012, and, with brief interruptions have been conducting it continuously to this day. The clothing of Gorani women has been the subject of my research on several occasions. Empirical data have been collected multiple times within the framework of various projects (see Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Opšta mesta sećanja' u okviru ličnog sećanja – na primeru svadbe u Gori," *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU / Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA* 62, no. 1 (2014): 261–274; Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*; Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Aktivnosti žena i očuvanje nematerijalnog kulturnog nasleđa goranske zajednice," *Etnoantropološki problemi*, n.s. 18, no. 4 (2023): 1221–43, <https://doi.org/10.21301/eap.v18i4.9>). Additional empirical material was obtained through interviews with interlocutors in 2024. This data also served to verify the existing material used in the preparation of this paper. The interviews were conducted with both male and female individuals born between 1940 and 1990. The interlocutors, while discussing the implementation of the Act, shared experiences of their mothers and relatives who were married at the time the Act came into effect.

<sup>8</sup> During the research and analysis, I took into consideration that: "the space and certain segments of an event can, due to the symbolic significance that the individual and the collective attach to it, become a (general) site of memory, which is part of personal memory. It is believed that a specific space and events can become a place of remembrance and memory only if they acquire a 'symbolic aura' (Pierre Nora, "Između Pamćenja i Historije: Problematika mjestâ," in *Kultura pamćenja i historija*, ed. Maja Brkljačić and Sandra Prlenda (Zagreb: Golden marketing - Tehnička knjiga, 2006), 36) that is, if there is a will to remember (Nora, "Između Pamćenja i Historije," 39) and to recall (Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Opšta mesta sećanja"). The ban on covering has become part of collective memory primarily because "it is an event from private life that takes place in the public sphere, rich with community symbols, and within which there is a merging of different 'levels of identity' (Alaida Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti* (Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2011), 68–71; Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Opšta mesta sećanja," 271).

framework because, at the beginning of the 1970s, more noticeable changes began to occur in the economic development of Gora, changes regarding the education of female children, the use of ready-made clothing, and the adoption of new trends in women's fashion.<sup>9</sup> The 1970s marked a turning point in this regard, not only in Gora but also in other regions of the SFRY.<sup>10</sup>

An additional challenge in conducting this research is the absence of ethnological, anthropological, historical, and sociological studies on the application of Islamic rules and regulations in the Gora region. Consequently, written sources on the religious life of the Gorani during the investigated period are rather scarce. This is one of the reasons why ethnographic empirical evidence forms the basis for writing the paper. In the analysis and interpretation, alongside the narratives of interlocutors, relevant theoretical ethnological, anthropological, historical, legal, and sociological literature was used. The sources of data also include information available on the websites and Facebook pages of individual Gorani people, as well as the National Council of Gorani people in the Republic of Serbia.<sup>11</sup>

This paper seeks to contribute to ethnological and anthropological research on Islamic religious practices in Gora during the period of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's rule, in light of the aforementioned. The aim of this paper is to clarify the consequences of the ban on head covering for the social and religious life of the people of Gora. This is a pioneering endeavour aimed at contributing to the understanding of the process of secularisation in the Gorani community in the mid-20th century.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ksenija Petovar, "Osobnosti socijalnog prostora Gore i Sredske," in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska, Antropogeografskoetnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 429–44; Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 166–87.

<sup>10</sup> Nina Aksić and Hasna Ziljkić, "Ženska odevna praksa tokom 20. veka u Novom Pazaru i okolini," *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXX, no. 1 (2022): 159–60, <https://doi.org/10.2298/GEI2201149A>.

<sup>11</sup> The National Council of Gorani People in the Republic of Serbia was established on 13 November 2022 (see: The National Council of Gorani People in the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.goranci.org.rs>).

## Spatial and Social Framework of the Research

Gora region refers to the mountain basin stretching south of Prizren, nestled on the slopes of Šarplanina, Koritnik, and Korab. The Gora region includes the Dragaš borough and 18 surrounding villages.<sup>12</sup> Although the infrastructure of these settlements in the 21st century suggests that they are urban areas, the borough of Dragaš serves as the administrative, health, and educational centre of the Dragaš municipality. Prizren is the nearest town, and this geographical area is referred to as Prizren Gora (*Prizrenska Gora*).<sup>13</sup>

The term *Goranci* is the ethnonym used by Gorani people and others to describe the population of Gora.<sup>14</sup> Until 1999, they constituted the majority in the former municipality of the Gora region. In other words, the villages of Gora were exclusively inhabited by Gorani people, members of the Gorani community. The only exceptions were state officials who lived in Gora due to employment (teachers, doctors, municipal officials).<sup>15</sup> Gorani people communicate with each other using the local dialect, which they refer to as *našinski/našenski*.<sup>16</sup>

Historical sources (Ottoman *defters*) attest that in the 15th century, Gora was inhabited by a Christian population of Slavic origin.

---

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the anthropogeographical and ethnodemographic characteristics of Gora, see: Milovan Radovanović, "Antropogeografske i etnodemografske osobenosti šarplaninskih župa Gore, Opolja i Sredske," in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska. Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 429–44; Thomas Schmidinger, *Gora: SActischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora* (Wien: Wiener Verlag, 2013), [https://www.academia.edu/4305148/Gora\\_SActischsprachige\\_Muslime\\_zwischen\\_Kosovo\\_Albanien\\_Mazedonien\\_und\\_Diaspora](https://www.academia.edu/4305148/Gora_SActischsprachige_Muslime_zwischen_Kosovo_Albanien_Mazedonien_und_Diaspora); Zejnel Zejneli, *Goranci – svačiji i ničiji, a ipak svoji* (Subotica: Grafoprodukt, 2015); Sadik Idrizi and Admir Idrizi, *Kruševo (Gora)* (Prizren: Utilis, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> Radivoje Mladenović, "Govor Šarplaninske župe Gora," in *Srpski dijalektološki zbornik XLVIII, Rasprave i grada*, ed. Pavle Ivić (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti i Institut za srpski jezik SANU, 2001), 1–606.

<sup>14</sup> Mitra Reljić, "Goranci – od geografske odrednice do etnonima," *Oktoih: Časopis Odjeljenja za srpski jezik i književnost Matice srpske – Društva članova u Crnoj Gori* 1, no. 1–2 (2011): 165–73.

<sup>15</sup> Zejneli, *Goranci – svačiji i ničiji, a ipak svoji*.

<sup>16</sup> Mladenović, "Govor Šarplaninske župe Gora."

During the period of Ottoman rule, conversion to Islam took place.<sup>17</sup> Today, the Gorani people still tell the story of “Baba Božana” – the last Christian in Gora.<sup>18</sup> Interviewees also mentioned that there is material evidence in Gora suggesting that the ancestors of the present-day population were Muslims, or that Muslim settlers arrived in Gora prior to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>19</sup> One such piece of material evidence is a stone plaque with an inscription that once stood on the wall of a mosque in Gora. Interviewees claimed that part of the Gorani community considers this plaque to be significant proof that the first mosque in the Balkans was built in Gora before the arrival of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>20</sup> During our research in Gora, we were unable to see the plaque as, according to interviewees, it had been removed for preservation. All members of the Gorani community are Muslims (Sunni), with the conversion to Islam in Gora gaining momentum in the 19th century.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Tatjana Katić, “Prelazak na islam stanovništva Gore i Opolja, prema osmanskim katastarskim popisima,” *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXIX, no. 1 (2021): 65–82. For the social and religious context of the Gora region during the Ottoman Empire period, see: Milan Ivanović, “Kulturna baština Gore, Opolja i Sredske župe,” in *Šarplaninske župe Gorar, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut “Jovan Cvijić,” Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 453–78.

<sup>18</sup> The interlocutors cited the example of a woman – “Baba Božana” – as evidence that there were Christians in the Gora region before the acceptance of Islam. According to oral tradition, she is said to have been buried at a site where a Christian cemetery once existed, near the village of Brod. Other members of her family moved to Prizren while she was still alive, as noted by Petar Kostić, one of her descendants (Petar Kostić, *Crkveni život pravoslavnih Srba u Prizrenu i njegovoj okolini u XIX veku*, Beograd, 1928).

<sup>19</sup> The narrative states that Islam was brought to the Gora region by a family originating from Aleppo (Halepa), present-day Syria. According to this account, the family settled in Gora as a result of population migrations from Asia Minor. As evidence, a private document is cited, which is in the possession of a family in Gora that traces its ancestry to these settlers from Aleppo (Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*, 340).

<sup>20</sup> Nadir Dacić and Lejla H. Alomerović, *Islamska zajednica Srbije (1868–2018) (1284–1439 hidžretska godina), zajednica muslimana Srbije – kratak pregled nastanka i razvoja* (Beograd: Fakultet islamskih nauka u Beogradu, Kulturno društvo muslimana Srbije “Gajret,” 2018), 101–103.

<sup>21</sup> See Katić “Prelazak na islam stanovništva Gore i Opolja, prema osmanskim katastarskim popisima,” 65–80. There are several theories regarding when they adopted Islam, as well as regarding their origin (see Radovanović, “Antropogeografske i etnodemografske osobnosti šarplaninskih župa Gore, Opolja i Sredske,” 11–47; Ebubekir Sofuoğlu, *Şar Dağlarındaki Genetik Şifreler - Gora Abidesi* (Baský: Fsf Print Hause / Avcýlar Ýstanbul, 2007); Schmidinger,

The following is a brief outline of the social, economic, and cultural conditions in the Gora region during the 1950s, specifically during the period when the Act banning the wearing of the veil was enacted.

The villages in Gora during this period represented a distinctly rural environment, as was the case with most mountain settlements in the area. Electrification in most of the Gorani villages was implemented quite late, only in the 1970s.<sup>22</sup> The population was primarily engaged in livestock farming, although, from the 1950s onwards, animal husbandry was slowly abandoned and eventually completely disappeared.<sup>23</sup>

As a result, there began an intense migration of the male population “to the *gurbet*”, that is, seasonal work in cities across the former state.<sup>24</sup> The consequences of these migrations influenced changes in the age and gender structure of the population in the Gora region. According to interviewees, women performed household and farm-related tasks, with typically one older male member of the family remaining at home. Women did not pursue education past the first four grades of primary school.<sup>25</sup> The vast majority of the population lacked the financial means to send their children to school after primary education, leading young men to learn trades and inherit their fathers' occupations. During this period, many Gorani people engaged in various crafts outside of Gora.

The position of women, or rather their role in the family and household, was not identical across all Gorani villages. According to interviewees, patriarchal patterns were more pronounced in the family and kinship relations in villages that were more distant from Draglaš. The position of women in the family can also be inferred from the fact

---

*Gora: Sactischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora; Zejneli, Goranci – svačiji i ničiji, a ipak svoji).*

<sup>22</sup> Zejneli, *Goranci – svačiji i ničiji, a ipak svoji*; Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*.

<sup>23</sup> Harun Hasani, “Migracije stanovništva Gore,” in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut “Jovan Cvijić,” Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 154–56.

<sup>24</sup> *Na gurbet* (to the *gurbet*) – a term used in Gorani community and the wider Balkan region for seasonal migration movements of the male population. *Pečalba* is a synonym for this type of migration (see Hasani, “Migracije stanovništva Gore,” 154–56; Petko Hristov, “The Balkan Gurbet / Pečalbarstvo – Past and Present,” *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXIII, 3 (2015): 551–63; Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 45–79.

<sup>25</sup> Petovar, “Osobnosti socijalnog prostora Gore i Sredske,” 434–36.

that there was no option to choose a marital partner, girls married at a young age, and there was limited movement for girls and women in public spaces.<sup>26</sup> Married women were required to wear clothing that covered both the body and head. This primarily involved the *terlik* and headscarf.<sup>27</sup> These garments were made of wool within the domestic craft industry. Women would cover their heads with a white *headscarf*, tying it in such a way that it covered their mouth and nose. They are said to have been “veiled” (Gorani dialect: *zabuljeni*). Wearing the *terlik* was mandatory when women left the family home or yard, and the scarf was also worn inside the house when male family members were present.

According to the interviewees, women actively participated in religious practices performed in the private space, i.e. at home. Women prayed and taught children how to pray. Visits to the mosque were reserved solely for male family members. The interviewees also stated that during the holy month of Ramadan, everyone fasted – a regular practice among the Gorani people even after World War II. Ramadan Bajram and Kurban Bajram were the two most important holidays celebrated in Gora. In addition, there was a practice of observing certain Christian holidays, such as Christmas.<sup>28</sup> *Đuren* is also one of the holidays that has

---

<sup>26</sup> See Zorica Divac, “Svadbeni običaji u Sredačkoj župi i Gori,” in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut “Jovan Cvijić,” Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II: 1995), 195–202; Petovar, “Osobnosti socijalnog prostora Gore i Sredske,” 434–38.

<sup>27</sup> *Terlik* – a term used in the Gorani community for a type of handmade black cloak, reaching to the middle of the shin. It is used to cover the body. The interlocutors consider the *terlik* and the white headscarf as part of Gorani tradition. They do not directly associate the covering of married women with these garments to Islam and religious practices (see Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 237).

<sup>28</sup> The interlocutors emphasized that the celebration of Christian holidays has remained from the time when the Gorani people were Christians. Christian holidays were celebrated within the family circle. In literature, we come across the narratives of Gorani people that are similar to the discourse of the interlocutors who participated in my researches (see Žan-Arno Derans and Loran Žeslen, *Putovanje u zemlju Goranaca: Balkan, početak XXI veka* (Beograd: Medijska knjižara Krug, 2011); Schmidinger, *Gora: Sactischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora*; Aleksandar Pavlović, “Proslava Đurena u Prizrenskoj Gori - prilog istraživanju,” *Zbornik radova Filozofskog fakulteta u Prištini* 51, no. 2 (2021): 159–89).

been celebrated for centuries in the Gora region.<sup>29</sup> Judging by the ritual actions performed, it suggests the presence of pre-Christian elements in the social and cultural practices.<sup>30</sup>

The distance of the Gorani villages from Dragaš, as well as their poor communication with the population of other villages, also affected the stricter adherence to religious regulations in everyday life.<sup>31</sup> Interlocutors noted that the difficult communication between villages, as well as between the villages and Dragaš, contributed to the slower and less rigorous implementation of the ban on covering and religious practices.

### The Ban on Wearing the Veil and Secularization

In this paper, secularism is approached as an ideological framework that the communist regime in postwar Yugoslavia sought to implement through various strategies and mechanisms.<sup>32</sup> The ban on wearing the veil, in this context, represents only one such strategy aimed at achieving gender equality and the emancipation of women.<sup>33</sup> Secularization

<sup>29</sup> For an explanation of the celebration of Đuren in the 21st century, see Pavlović, "Proslava Đurena u Prizrenskoj Gori," 159–89.

<sup>30</sup> Dragoslav Antonijević, "Etnički identitet Goranaca," in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović, Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić," 1995), 84–88.

<sup>31</sup> Desanka Nikolić, "Etnokulturni stereotipi stanovnika Gore i Sredačke župe," in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska, Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 167–74; Divac, "Svadbeni običaji u Sredačkoj župi i Gori," 195–202; Petovar, "Osobenosti socijalnog prostora Gore i Sredske," 433.

<sup>32</sup> In this sense, the strategies that are fundamentally political and initiated by the state authorities can be viewed as political pragmatics (see Špiro Marasović, "Križa ateizma," *Crkva u svijetu* 20, no. 4 (1985): 344, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/14455607.pdf>). In relation to this, alongside the process of secularization, the atheization of Yugoslav society can also be considered (see Esad Ćimić, *Drama ateizacije: religija, ateizam i odgoj* (Sarajevo: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika, 1971)); Marasović "Križa ateizma"; Ante Katalinić, "Dva tipa ateizacije," *Obnovljeni Život: časopis za filozofiju i religijske znanosti* 36, no. 3–4 (1981): 264–68.

<sup>33</sup> Violeta Achkoska, "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War," in *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe. Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*, ed. Miroslav Jovanović

is a complex social phenomenon that is approached in different ways depending on the context in which it is considered. There are several definitions of the term, depending on which dimension of the phenomenon is being emphasized.<sup>34</sup> The concept of secularization differs in religious contexts from its interpretation in secular ones.<sup>35</sup> Three key aspects of secularization can be identified: the separation of religious institutions from the state, the relegation of religion and religious practice from social life, and the transfer of religious beliefs and practices to the private, intimate sphere.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, it is “important to distinguish between the ideology of secularism and the process of secularization, or ‘secular’ as an epistemological category and ‘secularization’ as a political doctrine.”<sup>37</sup> This paper approaches secularization as a descriptive category, analysing it in the context of the application of specific normative regulations introduced by the communist state apparatus with the aim of creating a secular state.

---

and Slobodan Naumović, *Studies on South East Europe* Vol. 3. (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 184–86.

<sup>34</sup> See Dylan Reaves, “Peter Berger and the Rise and Fall of the Theory of Secularization”, *Denison Journal of Religion* 11, Article 3 (2012): 11–13, <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/religion/vol11/iss1/3/>.

<sup>35</sup> Sava Aksić, “Sekularizacija države (Pojam, uzroci i posledice)”, *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Nišu* 57, no. 80 (2018): 181–85, <https://doi.org/10.5937/zrpfni1880181A>.

<sup>36</sup> See Reaves, “Peter Berger and the Rise and Fall of the Theory of Secularization,” 11; Ivan Janez Štuhec, “Sekularna Europa i novo pozicioniranje religije u društvu,” *Nova prisutnost* 12, no. 1 (2014): 6–9; Gašper Mithans, “Religious Communities and the Change of Worldviews in Slovenia (1918–1991): Historical and Political Perspectives,” *Annales: Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies, Series Historia et Sociologia* 30, no. 3 (2020): 416, 424, <https://doi.org/10.19233/ASHS.2020.27>.

In academic and public discourse, the terms *laicism* and *laicization* are also used, which essentially refer to the separation of religion from the state, and particularly the separation of schools from the Church and clergy (see Aksić, “Sekularizacija države (Pojam, uzroci i posledice),” 182). Some authors clearly emphasize the distinction between the terms *laicism* and *secularization* (see Dino Abazović, “Sekularizam i sekularizacija u sadašnjem javnom diskursu – iz nereligijske perspektive,” in *Religija i sekularna država: Uloga i značaj religije u sekularnom društvu iz muslimanske, kršćanske i jevrejske perspektive sa fokusom na Jugoistočnu Europu*, ed. Ahmet Alibašić and Stefan Schreiner, Međunarodni simpozijum, Sarajevo (BiH) 21.-24. oktobar/lis-topad 2007 (Sarajevo, 2007), 191–92.

<sup>37</sup> Talal Asad, *Formations of Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1; Abazović, “Sekularizam i sekularizacija u sadašnjem javnom diskursu – iz nereligijske perspektive”, 190.

Based on the current research findings, it can be stated that there is a pronounced confessional identification with Islam as a religion among the Gorani people. In conducting the research and analysing empirical data, the starting point was the understanding that confessional identification is a broader concept than religiosity, and implies “acknowledging and aligning with a specific faith, regardless of personal (ir)religiosity.”<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the veil was approached both as a segment of religious practice among women and as a social norm and customary rule of behaviour within the Gorani community.<sup>39</sup> This means that it is not always possible to equate the act of women covering themselves with the existence of belief in God. In other words, the absence of covering among women in Gora is not considered an indication of a lack of belief in God, nor is it seen as a sign of a loss of religiosity among the Gorani people.<sup>40</sup> In this paper, the ban on wearing the veil is not approached as a strategy that would a priori lead to the abandonment of religious beliefs and practices.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Radmila Radić, “Pripadanje bez verovanja i poznavanja,” in *Novosti iz prošlosti. Znanje, neznanje, upotreba i zloupotreba istorije*, ed. Vojin Dimitrijević (Beograd: Beogradski centar za ljudska prava, 2010), 107.

<sup>39</sup> According to the interpretations of Islamic religious principles by certain Islamic scholars, the practice of covering for women in Islam is not prescribed by the Act and is therefore considered an expression of cultural and social influences on the formation of traditional religious rules, which over time came to be regarded as religious obligations (see Marjana Harget, “Kuranski propisi o odijevanju kao temelj egalitarnosti u islamu,” *Etnološka istraživanja / Ethnological Researches* 1, no. 12/13 (2008): 191–201; Ivan Ejub Kostić, “Islam i feminizam u postkolonijalnom dobu,” *Kom V*, no. 3 (2016): 95–119.

<sup>40</sup> In this context, it should be noted that covering for women is part of Gorani tradition, passed down through generations for centuries, and did not have solely religious connotations (see Nikolić, “Etnokulturni stereotipi stanovnika Gore i Sredačke župe,” 169–74; Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 149–66). Particularly valuable in this context are the data provided by authors of Gorani origin (see Ljajko Šefit, *Istanbulske rane*, Gornji Milanovac: Grafoprint, 2018); Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*, 2020). Further data on the role of women’s clothing items such as the ‘terlik’ and ‘marama’ (headscarf) in the creation of symbols of Gorani tradition and community, as well as Gorani identity (see Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, “‘Opšta mesta sećanja’ u okviru ličnog sećanja – na primeru svadbe u Gori,” *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU / Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA* 62, no. 1 (2014): 261–74; Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, “Aktivnosti žena i očuvanje nematerijalnog kulturnog nasleđa goranske zajednice,” *Etnoantropološki problemi*, n.s. 18, no. 4 (2023): 1221–43.

<sup>41</sup> See Marasović, “Križa ateizma,” 212–213.

The individual level of secularization can be viewed in two ways: through the enforcement of covering in public spaces and through the implementation of measures to control covering by individuals (family members, neighbours). Individuals, through their actions directed against the covering of women, contributed to the secularization in the Gorani community (collective level). In this way, there is an overlap between the individual and collective levels. However, it is not justified to draw conclusions about the level of religiosity of individuals, as this was not the aim of the research. For this reason, the paper discusses religious practices within the Gorani community and the impact of the ban on covering on their (non)execution. The paper examines the application of the ban on covering for women as one of the attempts by the authorities to reduce the influence of religion on individuals and Gorani community. It is assumed that removing the veil is a strategy for restricting individual religious freedom and, in this way, propagating secular political ideas. The application of the aforementioned Act is examined within the context of the state-imposed process of secularisation of Gorani society in the mid-20th century. The phenomenon of the ban on covering is extremely complex, as the research results presented here demonstrate. Therefore, all the points made above should be understood as an attempt to shed light on the particularities of religious practice in Gora during the period of the creation of a secular social structure in socialist Yugoslavia.

In ethnology and anthropology, as well as in related disciplines, numerous studies have been published in which clothing and dress practices are examined in various contexts and using different approaches.<sup>42</sup> We can agree with the observation of Nina Aksić and Hasna Ziljkić that “The challenge of studying dress lies in its complexity, in the ability of a single dress practice to reflect a whole range of different experiences, cultural, folk, and religious traditions, social changes, and so on.”<sup>43</sup> It is also a fact that: “Through clothing, a person presents themselves to the community, informing others about their taste, income, habits,

---

<sup>42</sup> Dragan Žunić, *Tradicionalna estetska kultura, Telo i odevanje*, ed. Dragan Žunić (Niš: Centar za naučna istraživanja SANU i Univerziteta u Nišu), 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Aksić and Ziljkić, “Ženska odevna praksa tokom 20. veka u Novom Pazaru i okolini,” 150.

nationality, and religious affiliation.”<sup>44</sup> The example of the ban on covering among Muslim women, discussed in this paper, shows that clothing has strong symbolic significance and value, as well as a communicative function within society. It represents a channel through which information is both given and received across multiple social fields simultaneously. It is well-known that the Communist Party considered religion the main obstacle to achieving not only gender equality but also equality among the peoples and nationalities of Yugoslavia. The removal of the veil was therefore presented in the public sphere as one of the key strategies of secularization, believed to contribute to equality both on a gendered and national basis.<sup>45</sup>

### The Application of the Veil Ban in Gora region

It is clear that the ban on wearing the veil directly interfered with the religious practices and religious identity of the Muslim population, and represents an example of the violation of religious freedoms and basic human rights.<sup>46</sup> The application of the Act in Gora region began shortly after it came into effect in 1951. Women were placed in a position where they had to choose between customary law and legislative norms, between their microcosm and society.<sup>47</sup> In such social circumstances, it was not at all easy for women to reconcile old and new social and

<sup>44</sup> Milina Ivanović Barišić, *Odevanje u okolini Beograda: druga polovina 19. i prva polovina 20. veka*, Posebna izdanja, knj. 88. (Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 2017), 9.

<sup>45</sup> See Achkoska, “Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War,” 187–88; Fahrudin Kladničanin, *Peča* (Novi Pazar: Akademska inicijativa “Forum 10”, 2020). The key role in channelling ideas of the emancipation of Muslim women and policies of gender and national equality was played by the anti-fascist women’s movement – AFŽ (see: Achkoska, “Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War,” 187–188; Miroslava Malešević, *Didara: Životna priča jedne Prizrenke*, Etnološka biblioteka knj. 14 (Beograd: Srpski genealoški centar, 2004); Kladničanin, *Peča*, 10–11, 12). For certain aspects of its activities in Gora region, see: Malešević, *Didara: Životna priča jedne Prizrenke*, 75–76.

<sup>46</sup> See Zilka Spahić-Šiljak and Rebeka Jadranka Anić, *I vjernice i građanke* (Sarajevo: TPO fondacija i CIPS-Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2009), 168; Edin Šaković and Izet Šabotić, “Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica,” *Glasnik arhiva i arhivističkog udruženja Bosne i Hercegovine*, no. 43 (2013): 305.

<sup>47</sup> Achkoska, “Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War,” 186.

cultural values and practices. The ban on covering had very traumatic consequences for many women in the Region of Gora, according to the memories of the Gorani people.<sup>48</sup> Women found it extremely difficult not to wear their headscarf in public places in the way they were used to. Gorani women traditionally covered their heads with a white scarf. According to the testimonies of the interlocutors, they tied it in such a way that “only their eyes were visible, they were veiled”.

One of my interlocutors said:

“I was a little girl, they banned those black *feredža* from being worn. And they took them all away. You weren’t allowed to wear those black *feredža*. Later, they allowed the *feredža* again.” The interlocutor explained that she used the word ‘feredža’ to refer to the covering of women in Gora due to the way they used to cover themselves at the time – they were completely covered.<sup>49</sup>

The interlocutors also stated:

“They asked for the scarves to be removed.”<sup>50</sup>

“When communism took over, communism removed the scarves. It was even impossible to fast.”<sup>51</sup>

“Communism took off the veils, and fasting was not allowed either.”<sup>52</sup>

When discussing the practice of covering, the interlocutors emphasized:

“It was shameful to go without a scarf.”<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> See Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*, 119.

<sup>49</sup> The interlocutor was born in the village of Radeša and was 73 years old when we had the conversation (in 2015).

<sup>50</sup> The interlocutor was born in the village of Bačka and was a 72 years old when we had the conversation (in 2013). He recalled the words of his mother, who didn’t want to remove her headscarf or leave the yard of the house without it.

<sup>51</sup> The statement was given to me by a 67-year-old woman from Dragaš. In our conversation in 2024, she spoke about the period when the ban on covering was in effect, based on the experiences of Gorani women, whom she listened to during her upbringing.

<sup>52</sup> The interlocutor was born in 1984 in Gora, grew up, and currently lives in Belgrade. His statement is based on the narratives of the people from Gora, which he heard during his upbringing. The conversation took place in 2021.

<sup>53</sup> The statement was given to me by a 64-year-old woman from Dragaš. In our conversation in 2024, she spoke about the period when the ban on covering was in effect, based on the experiences of her mother, to whom she listened to during her upbringing.

“It is dignified for a woman to be covered.”<sup>54</sup>

“She should be covered. It’s a sign of respect for the elders.”<sup>55</sup>

The interlocutors stated that covering for women was a sign of respect for Gorani tradition, and that it was part of the social practice of the Gorani people, which aligned with their understanding of Islamic religious teachings and rules. This can be inferred from the narratives of the women who experienced the ban on covering as a disgrace, improper behaviour, and a disrespect for tradition and elders.<sup>56</sup> Similar observations are found in the literature: “Removing the veil was, however, very painful for many women, who experienced it as a great shame.”<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the ban on covering in Gora was not only recognized as an attack on religious practice, as was the case with the ban on fasting. The interlocutors, when talking about the situation they faced due to the implementation of the Act banning covering, as well as other programs of the Communist Party in Gora, mentioned that teachers encouraged children at school to drink water in order to get them to break their Ramadan fast, which is the third pillar of Islam. They also added that these actions were carried out by teachers who were themselves from Gora.

I have pointed out that women did not want to remove their scarves because it violated the basic rules of behaviour within the community. Therefore, in an attempt to circumvent the ban, they avoided going to public places, particularly to the town of Dragaš.<sup>58</sup> However, they still

---

<sup>54</sup> The statement of a 58-year-old woman from Rapča, the conversation we had in 2023. She spoke about the 1950s, when the ban on covering was in effect, based on the experiences of her aunts.

<sup>55</sup> The statement of 48-year-old woman from the village of Globočica. In the conversation we had in 2022 she talked about the practice of covering in Gora. She emphasized that the practice of covering women always has the same meaning, regardless of whether it refers to the 1950s or the present time.

<sup>56</sup> In support of the aforementioned, there are data provided by Admir Idrizi, “Zakon o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže,” [https://www.academia.edu/38338015/Zakon\\_o\\_zabrani\\_nošenja\\_zara\\_i\\_feredže\\_pdf](https://www.academia.edu/38338015/Zakon_o_zabrani_nošenja_zara_i_feredže_pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Šaković and Šabotić, “Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica,” 305. Šaković and Šabotić explain the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period when the banning of the veil was in implementation.

<sup>58</sup> The interlocutors cited examples of their mothers, aunts and other women from the village who did not want to go out without a headscarf. A similar practice has been recorded in other

had to go out and work in the fields, to the river, or to the village well to wash clothes, for example. During these times, they tied their scarves so that their faces were uncovered. Idrizi, one of the few Gorani authors who has written on this topic, also notes that scarves were not banned; instead, they had to be tied so that the face was uncovered. He connects the ban on covering with the authorities' intention to "destroy the Muslim society and the foundation of its pillar – the woman".<sup>59</sup>

The *terlik* was also perceived as a garment that covered the body. Instead of wearing the *terlik*, Gorani women wore garments that somewhat allowed them to cover their bodies.<sup>60</sup> A statement has been recorded according to which women wore the *terlik* "inside out."<sup>61</sup> This means that the inside of the *terlik* was worn on the outside, as it was not black. Gorani women also wore overcoats to cover their bodies, especially after the 1960s, when mass-produced clothing became more accessible to the people in Gora.

The ban on covering primarily disrupted the continuity of the centuries-old tradition of using specific garments (scarves and *terlik*) that were also used to express a woman's marital status. In the literature, the implementation of the ban on covering is noted as one of the causes for the migration of Muslims from the Novi Pazar and Macedonia regions to Turkey.<sup>62</sup> The interlocutors also mentioned that the reason for the migration of families from Gora to Turkey in the 1950s was precisely the enforcement of the Act banning the veil, as well as the implementation of other repressive measures by the Communist authorities in Gora.

As noted, the women in Gora did not want to voluntarily remove their headscarves.<sup>63</sup> The enforcement of the Act in Gora was carried

---

parts of Yugoslavia (see: Achkoska, "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War," 186; 190–91; Šaković i Šabotić, "Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica," 305).

<sup>59</sup> Idrizi, "The Law on the Prohibition of Wearing the Veil."

<sup>60</sup> Idrizi, "The Law on the Prohibition of Wearing the Veil."

<sup>61</sup> Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*, 119.

<sup>62</sup> See Aksić and Ziljkić, "Ženska odevna praksa tokom 20. veka u Novom Pazaru i okolini," 166–74.

<sup>63</sup> Contrary to the aforementioned, we recorded narratives from interlocutors who view the implementation of the mentioned Act as an opportunity to free themselves from religious

out by the police, and there was also control at the level of individuals employed in schools or local administration in Dragaš and surrounding villages.<sup>64</sup> According to the interlocutors, the strictest enforcement of the Act was evident precisely in the borough of Dragaš. They also pointed out that there were repressive measures against individuals who did not comply with the Act.<sup>65</sup> One frequently cited example was that of a pregnant woman who was sentenced to prison for wearing a scarf when visiting the doctor. Women were not free to move beyond the yard of their homes, as there was always the possibility of encountering a neighbour who could report them to the authorities.<sup>66</sup> This situation reflects the informal networks of control that were extremely developed and present in all social contexts during the communist period. People were wary of each other, fearing that someone close to them might report them to the authorities for acting contrary to the party regulations or other formal or informal institutions. Informal social networks thus played a crucial role in the secularization process in the Region of Gora.

I have emphasized that despite this, women did not wish to abandon the practice of covering, and it was not until the mid-1960s that there were more frequent examples of women going out in public without their headscarves and *terlik*. These changes were mostly made by young women, as evidenced by a documentary film shot in a village in Gora.<sup>67</sup> The practice of wearing mass-produced clothing, such as jeans and tight blouses, became more common in the 1970s. Fashion trends in the clothing of girls and women starting from the early 1960s can also be viewed in the context of the secularization of society at that time.<sup>68</sup>

---

prescriptions and customary rules, or as a chance to express personal choices in clothing. These statements primarily concern young women who, from the 1970s onwards, adapted their attire to the fashion trends of the time. This means that the girls wore jeans (denim trousers) and did not cover their heads with a veil (see Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 166–88).

<sup>64</sup> Idrizi, “The Law on the Prohibition of Wearing the Veil.”

<sup>65</sup> For information on repressive measures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see: Šaković and Šabotić “Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica,” 302–304.

<sup>66</sup> A similar situation has been recorded in Macedonia (see Achkoska, “Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War,” 189–91).

<sup>67</sup> This refers to a film by Birte Trerup, a Danish ethnomusicologist who stayed in Gora in the 1960s and recorded valuable audio and video material.

<sup>68</sup> See Elvira Dizdarević, *Ideologija i moda u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji 1960-tih godina: pojava džinsa* (Diploma thesis, Univerzitet u Sarajevu, 2019); Nina Aksić, *Kultura svih ili kultura za sve*

According to the interlocutors, these changes had more far-reaching consequences for the practice of covering women in Gora than the impact of the legal regulations themselves.

The change in the clothing of girls and women was not viewed with approval by most Gorani people. According to them, the introduction of fashion trends was seen as distancing young people from Gorani tradition, and religious practice was seen as part of that tradition, which was taken for granted and not questioned. The interlocutors claim that during the period of intense enforcement of the Act (in the 1950s), the population of Gora did not fear abandoning their faith, that is, Islamic teachings and practices, but rather feared the loss of the symbols of Gorani identity.<sup>69</sup> This supports the assertion that the people of Gora perceive the wearing of the scarf and *terlik* primarily as symbols of Gorani tradition, rather than merely as expressions of religious affiliation and belief in God.<sup>70</sup> This can be explained by the fact that Gora is a local community where Muslims constitute the majority population.

---

*Institucionalni amaterizam u Novom Pazaru u periodu socijalizma* (Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 2023).

<sup>69</sup> The ban on women covering their heads represented an act of preventing public expression of religious affiliation. However, based on the research presented here, it is not possible to speak about the impact of the ban on changes in the faith in God and Islamic religious teachings. From the above, it can be assumed that the ban on covering did not necessarily contribute to a decrease in belief. This reasoning arises from the understanding of covering by interlocutors as a part of Gorani tradition and customary practices. Furthermore, academic papers suggest that the roots of women's covering in Islam should be traced back to pre-Islamic traditions, and thus, the ban on their retention can be seen as an attack on the pre-Islamic part of Islamic tradition (see Harcet, "Kuranski propisi o odijevanju kao temelj egalitarnosti u islamu," 191–201; Kostić, "Islam i feminizam," 104–105). Certainly, further research should be conducted with a focus on the impact of the ban on women's covering in Gora and its effect on changes in an individual's (personal) faith in God.

<sup>70</sup> Amin does not consider head covering for women to be an expression of religious devotion, as Islamic rules allow women to have their head and faces uncovered (see Kostić, "Islam i feminizam," 105). Haddad also notes that it is very difficult to prove that head and body covering for Muslim women is something prescribed as a social obligation for believers. He argues that it is a practice linked to the cultures and traditions of specific regions (Tāhir al Haddad, "Imr'atuna fi al-sharia wa lmujtama," in *Muslim Women in Law and Society Annotated translation of al Tahir al-Haddad's Imr'atuna fi al-sharia wa l-mujtama*, ed. Ronak Husni and Daniel L. Newman (New York: Routledge, 2007), 42–43; according to Kostić, "Islam i feminizam," 105). Harcet connects the practice of covering the head and body among Muslims with pre-Islamic practices (see Harcet, "Kuranski propisi o odijevanju kao temelj egalitarnosti u islamu," 191–92).

For Gorani people, Gorani tradition served as a tool for constructing their own identity, both at the individual and collective level.<sup>71</sup> The survival of the Gorani community, according to the interlocutors, was closely linked to the adherence to Gorani customs and the performance of cultural practices that allowed the creation of symbolic boundaries between their community and the Albanian community living in the surrounding area. The emancipation of women expressed through new clothing practices was therefore viewed as an attack on the symbols of Gorani identity and the survival of the Gorani community. Women in Gora have always had an exceptional role in creating and preserving marital and family relations, as well as the symbols of Gorani culture and identity. Religious practice is thus perceived as part of the cultural and identity practices of the Gorani people. Therefore, it is not surprising that much attention was given to the clothing of women in Gora.<sup>72</sup>

Based on the above, the implementation of various prohibitions, such as the ban on women covering their heads, led to religious teachings being carried out and passed on within the domestic, family environment. This consequently contributed to strengthening religious practice in the family setting. The family became the focal point for the continued practice of religious teachings and rituals, and due to the migration of the male population, it was the woman/mother who became the bearer of that practice.<sup>73</sup> Based on this, the ban on covering may have contributed to the weakening and/or loss of an individual's connection with the religious institution (mosque), but not necessarily the loss of faith in (the existence of) God and adherence to Islamic religious prescriptions and rules. In support of this, the data shows that interlocutors most often perceived the ban on covering as an attack

---

<sup>71</sup> See Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*.

<sup>72</sup> See Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Opšta mesta sećanja' u okviru ličnog sećanja – na primeru svadbe u Gori," 261–74; Đorđević Crnobrnja "Aktivnosti žena i očuvanje nematerijalnog kulturnog nasleđa goranske zajednice," 1221–43. The role of the *terlik* and scarf in the construction of Gorani tradition and identity is also reflected in the content available on the Facebook page of the National Council of Gorani people in Serbia and the website: "Gora vo srce," <https://www.facebook.com/nacionalnisavetgoranaca/>; <https://gora.in.rs>.

<sup>73</sup> Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Aktivnosti žena i očuvanje nematerijalnog kulturnog nasleđa," 1221–43.

on Gorani tradition and customary practices, which served to regulate relationships within the family and the community.<sup>74</sup>

### Conclusion

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the ban on head covering in Gora had a certain impact on the achievement of secular paradigms.<sup>75</sup> In this context, the question arises as to whether the ban on head coverings was truly implemented with the aim of secularising the Muslim community within the then federal state. If this was indeed the goal, it suggests that the practice of covering women was recognised as extraordinarily significant in the lives of not only Muslims but also as a practice whose omission was supposed to lead to fundamental changes in the application of Islamic principles and rules in people's lives. Considering this, the ban on wearing the veil can be viewed as a strategy intended to eliminate social patterns and religious practices that held strong symbolic significance at both the collective and individual levels.

To what extent the ban actually succeeded in this regard cannot be easily judged, primarily because it was not the only measure implemented by the state system aimed at achieving gender equality, as well as equality among all peoples and nationalities within Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the notion that "covering the hair and face is an Islamic innovation, despite there being no explicit prescription in the Quran about covering the face"<sup>76</sup> suggests that the absence of this practice would not necessarily contribute to secularisation. In light of this, it is understandable that the Act banning head coverings could not, by

---

<sup>74</sup> Haddad and Amin emphasized that it is not Islamic religious rules that place women in a subordinate position, but rather patriarchal models and traditional religious prescriptions (see Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women & The New Woman* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 2000), 7; al Haddad, "Imra'atuna fi al sharia wa lmujtama," 42–43; according to Kostić, "Islam i feminizam," 104–105). These models and prescriptions clearly had a greater influence on regulating marital, familial, and social relations in various settings than the actual Sharia rules.

<sup>75</sup> A similar situation is recorded in other regions of the SFRY (see Aschkoska, "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women," 183–94; Šaković and Šabotić, "Skidanje zara i feredže," 289).

<sup>76</sup> Harcet, "Kuranski propisi o odijevanju," 191.

itself, lead to the abandonment of religious practices at the individual level. In other words, secularisation did not occur merely as a result of the change in the dress practices of Muslim women.

Research findings also lead to the conclusion that the ban on wearing the headscarf was not only a key strategy for achieving secularisation, but rather served as a repressive measure that could not be overlooked, given that it was proclaimed by the communist authorities as an important instrument for the emancipation of women and the achievement of equality among the peoples and nationalities in Yugoslavia.

I have noted that the wearing of the headscarf and the *terlik* in Gora is linked to tradition, which has been influenced by Islamic religious principles. Therefore, the ban on wearing these garments was primarily perceived as an attack on Gorani tradition. This does not, however, negate the impact of the ban on the sustainability of Islamic religious practice and identity. Women did not contribute to secularisation merely because they stopped wearing the headscarf. It follows that it is not possible to draw conclusions about the (in)effectiveness of this process in the Gorani community based solely on changes in dress practices. It turns out that the change in dress was, in fact, instrumentalised by the political elite and social structures.

The research demonstrates that dress practices are an excellent indicator of social, economic, and political influences within a particular environment. In this sense, the findings of the research on the relationship between the secularisation process and the ban on covering during the socialist period can be understood. However, the ban was successful at the level of changing the form – dress practice, which was significant at a certain point in time. Yet, it could not, in the short term, provoke changes in cultural norms or result in a transformation of traditional attitudes and values concerning the regulation of family and marital relations, nor could it affect changes regarding the abandonment of other elements of religious practice. According to the interlocutors, alongside the ban on coverings, there was also a ban on observing religious rules, such as fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Additionally, during the communist period, the sale and consumption of alcohol in the Gora region became more widespread. Interlocutors stated that the appearance of alcohol and the fasting ban had far-reaching consequences

on the application of Islamic religious rules in Gora, compared to the ban on wearing the headscarf. It follows that the implementation of the ban on covering did not have the same effect on secularisation in Gora as did the abandonment of fundamental religious practices that constitute basic duties in Islam.

## B i b l i o g r a f y

Abazović, Dino. "Sekularizam i sekularizacija u sadašnjem javnom diskursu – iz nereligijske perspektive." In *Religija i sekularna država: Uloga i značaj religije u sekularnom društvu iz muslimanske, kršćanske i jevrejske perspektive sa fokusom na Jugoistočnu Evropu*, edited by Ahmet Alibašić and Stefan Schreiner, 189–96. Međunarodni simpozijum, Sarajevo (BiH) 21.-24. oktobar/listopad 2007. Sarajevo, 2007.

Achkoska, Violeta. "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War." In *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe: Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*, edited by Miroslav Jovanović and Slobodan Naumović, 183–194. Studies on South East Europe, Vol. 3. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004.

Act on the Ban of Wearing the Zar and the Feredža. *Official Gazette of the People's Republic of Serbia* 4 (1951): 84–85. Accessed March 12, 2025. <https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/arhslgl/numberOverview/sgarh/14119>.

Aksić, Nina. *Kultura svih ili kultura za sve Institucionalni amaterizam u Novom Pazaru u periodu socijalizma*. Monografska izdanja, Edicija – Posebna izdanja knj. 95. Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 2023.

Aksić, Nina, and Hasna Ziljkić. "Ženska odevna praksa tokom 20. veka u Novom Pazaru i okolini." *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU LXX*, no. 1 (2022): 159–60. <https://doi.org/10.2298/GE12201149A>.

Aksić, Sava. "Sekularizacija države (Pojam, uzroci i posledice)." *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Nišu* 57, no. 80 (2018): 181–96. <https://doi.org/10.5937/zrpfni1880181A>.

Amin, Qasim. *The Liberation of Women & The New Woman*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 2000.

Antonijević, Dragoslav. "Etnički identitet Goranaca." In *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Atnropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, edited by Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović, 76–88. Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II. Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić", 1995.

Asad, Talal. *Formations of Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Asman, Alaida. *Duga senka prošlosti*. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2011.

Čimić, Esad. *Drama ateizacije: religija, ateizam i odgoj*. Sarajevo: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika, 1971.

Dacić Nadir, and Lejla H. Alomerović. *Islamska zajednica Srbije (1868-2018) (1284-1439 hidžretska godina), zajednica muslimana Srbije – kratak pregled nastanka i razvoja*. Beograd: Fakultet islamskih nauka u Beogradu, Kulturno društvo muslimana Srbije “Gajret”, 2018.

Derans, Žan-Arno, and Loran Žeslen. *Putovanje u zemlju Goranaca: Balkan, početak XXI veka*. Beograd: Medijska knjižara Krug, 2011.

Divac, Zorica. “Svadbeni običaji u Sredačkoj župi i Gori.” In *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, edited by Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović, 195–202. Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II. Beograd: Geografski institut “Jovan Cvijić”, 1995.

Dizdarević, Elvira. *Ideologija i moda u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji 1960-tih godina: pojava džinsa*. Diploma thesis, Univerzitet u Sarajevu, Filozofski fakultet, 2019.

Dorđević Crnobrnja, Jadranka. “‘Opšta mesta sećanja’ u okviru ličnog sećanja – na primeru svadbe u Gori.” *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU / Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA* 62, no. 1 (2014): 261–74.

Dorđević Crnobrnja, Jadranka. *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom. Etnicitet, zajednica i transmigracije Goranaca u Beogradu*. Posebna izdanja sv. 93. Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 2020.

Dorđević Crnobrnja, Jadranka. “Aktivnosti žena i očuvanje nematerijalnog kulturnog nasleđa goranske zajednice.” *Etnoantropološki problemi*, n. s. 18, no. 4 (2023): 1221–43. <https://doi.org/10.21301/eap.v18i4.9>.

Đurović, Miloš. “Hidžab kao fenomen konstruisanja i osporavanja identiteta: primjer savremenog Novog Pazara.” *Etnoantropološki problemi*, n. s. 10, no. 4 (2015): 821–38.

“Gora vo srce”. Accessed January 28, 2025. <https://gora.in.rs>.

Gorani National Council in the RS – Nacionalni savet Goranaca. Accessed January 28, 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/nacionalnisavetgoranaca/>.

Al Haddad, Tahir. “Imra’atuna fi al sharia wa lmujtama.” In *Muslim Women in Law and Society Annotated translation of al Tahir al-Haddad’s Imra’atuna fi al-sharia wa l-mujtama*, edited by Ronak Husni and Daniel L. Newman. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Harcet, Marjana. “Kuranski propisi o odijevanju kao temelj egalitarnosti u islamu.” *Etnološka istraživanja/Ethnological Researches* 1, no. 12/13 (2008): 191–201.

Hasani, Harun. "Migracije stanovništva Gore." In *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska. Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, edited by Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović, 11–75. Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić", Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995.

Hristov, Petko. "The Balkan Gurbet /Pečalbarstvo – Past and Present". *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXIII, 3 (2015): 551–63.

Idrizi, Admir. "Zakon o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže." Accessed March 7, 2025. [https://www.academia.edu/38338015/Zakon\\_o\\_zabrani\\_nošenja\\_zara\\_i\\_feredže\\_pdf](https://www.academia.edu/38338015/Zakon_o_zabrani_nošenja_zara_i_feredže_pdf).

Idrizi, Sadik and Admir Idrizi. *Kruševo (Gora)*. Prizren: Utilis, 2020.

Ivanović-Barišić, Milina. *Odevanje u okolini Beograda: druga polovina 19. i prva polovina 20. veka*. Posebna izdanja, knj. 88. Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 2017.

Ivanović, Milan. "Kulturna baština Gore, Opolja i Sredske župe." In *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska. Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, edited by Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović, 453–78. Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II. Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić", 1995.

Katalinić, Ante. "Dva tipa ateizacije." *Obnovljeni Život: časopis za filozofiju i religijske znanosti* 36, no. 3–4 (1981): 264–68.

Katić, Tatjana. "Prelazak na islam stanovništva Gore i Opolja, prema osmanjskim katastarskim popisima." *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXIX, no. 1 (2021): 65–82.

Kladničanin, Fahrudin. *Peča*. Novi Pazar: Akademska inicijativa "Forum 10", 2020.

Kostić, Ivan Ejub. "Islam i feminizam u postkolonijalnom dobu." *Kom V*, no. 3 (2016): 95–119.

Kostić, Petar. *Crkveni život pravoslavnih Srba u Prizrenu i njegovoj okolini u XIX veku*. Beograd, 1928.

Malešević, Miroslava. *Didara: Životna priča jedne Prizrenke*. Etnološka biblioteka knj. 14. Beograd: Srpski genealoški centar, 2004.

Marasović, Špiro. "Križa ateizma." *Crkva u svijetu* 20, no. 4 (1985): 338–48. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/14455607.pdf>.

Markov, Ivaylo. "Changing Practices of 'Being Together' in the Transnational Kin-Relationships among Gorani." *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXVII, no. 3 (2019): 501–22.

Mithans, Gašper. "Religious Communities and the Change of Worldviews in Slovenia (1918–1991): Historical and Political Perspectives." *Annales: Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies, Series Historia et Sociologia* 30, no. 3 (2020): 415–34. <https://10.19233/ASHS.2020.27>.

Mladenović, Radivoje. "Govor Šarplaninske župe Gora." In *Srpski dijalektološki zbornik XLVIII, Rasprave i građa*, edited by Pavle Ivić, 1–606. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti i Institut za srpski jezik SANU, 2001.

The National Council of Gorani people in the Republic of Serbia – Nacionalni savet Goranaca. Accessed January 28, 2025. <https://goranci.org.rs/info/>.

Nikolić, Desanka. "Etnokulturni stereotipi stanovnika Gore i Sredačke župe." In *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska, Antropogeografskoetnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, edited by Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović, 169–74. Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II. Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, 1995.

Nora, Pierre. "Između Pamćenja i Historije. Problematika mjesta." In *Kultura pamćenja i historija*, edited by Brkljačić Maja and Sandra Prlenda, 21–43. Zagreb: Golden marketing - Tehnička knjiga, 2006.

Pavlović, Aleksandar. "Proslava Đurena u Prizrenskoj Gori - prilog istraživanju." *Zbornik radova Filozofskog fakulteta u Prištini* 51, no. 2 (2021): 159–89.

Petovar, Ksenija. "Osobnosti socijalnog prostora Gore i Sredske." In *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografskoetnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, edited by Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović, 429–44. Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II. Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, 1995.

Radić, Radmila. "Pripadanje bez verovanja i poznavanja." In *Novosti iz prošlosti. Znanje, neznanje, upotreba i zloupotreba istorije*, edited by Vojin Dimitrijević, 107–25. Beograd: Beogradski centar za ljudska prava, 2010.

Radovanović, Milovan. "Antropogeografske i etnodemografske osobnosti šarplaninskih župa Gore, Opolja i Sredske." In *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, edited by Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović, 429–44. Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II. Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, 1995.

Reaves, Dylan. "Peter Berger and the Rise and Fall of the Theory of Secularization." *Denison Journal of Religion* 11, Article 3 (2012): 11–19. Accessed March 7, 2025. <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/religion/vol11/iss1/3/>.

Reljić, Mitra. "Goranci – od geografske odrednice do etnonima." *Oktoih: Časopis Odjeljenja za srpski jezik i književnost Matice srpske – Društva članova u Crnoj Gori* 1, no. 1–2 (2011): 165–73.

Schmidinger, Thomas. *Gora: SActischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora*. Wien: Wiener Verlag, 2013. [https://www.academia.edu/4305148/Gora\\_SActischsprachige\\_Muslime\\_zwischen\\_Kosovo\\_Albanien\\_Mazedonien\\_und\\_Diaspora](https://www.academia.edu/4305148/Gora_SActischsprachige_Muslime_zwischen_Kosovo_Albanien_Mazedonien_und_Diaspora).

Sofuoğlu, Ebubekir, ed. *Şar Dağlarındaki Genetik Şifreler - Gora Abidesi*. Baský: Fsf Print Hause - Avcýlar Ýstanbul, 2007.

Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka, ed. *Propitivanje ženskih, feminističkih i muslimanskih identiteta. Post-socijalistički konteksti u Bosni i Hercegovini i na Kosovu*. Sarajevo: Centar interdisciplinarne postdiplomske studije, Univerzitet u Sarajevu, 2012.

Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka, and Rebeka Jadranka Anić. *I vjernice i građanke*. Sarajevo: TPO fondacija i CIPS-Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2009.

Šaković, Edin, and Izet Šabotić. "Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica." *Glasnik arhiva i arhivističkog udruženja Bosne i Hercegovine*, no. 43 (2013): 289–306.

Šefit, Ljajko. *Istanbulske rane*. Gornji Milanovac: Grafoprint, 2018.

Šeta, Đermana. "Analiza utjecaja novije zabrane ženskih muslimanskih odjevnih praksi u Evropi." In *Pažnja! Odjeća, umjetnost, identitet*, edited by Irfan Hošić, Danijela Velimirović, Aleksandar Pašagić et. al., 55–64. Bihać: Tehnički fakultet Univerziteta u Bihaću, Odsjek za tekstilni dizajn, 2014.

Štuhec, Ivan Janez. "Sekularna Europa i novo pozicioniranje religije u društvu." *Nova prisutnost* 12, no. 1 (2014): 5–22.

Vučinić Nešković, Vesna. *Metodologija terenskog istraživanja u antropologiji. Od normativnog do iskustvenog*. Posebna izdanja, knj. 10. Beograd: Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta, Srpski genealoški centar, Etnološka biblioteka, 2013.

Zejneli, Zejneli. *Goranci – svačiji i ničiji, a ipak svoji*. Subotica: Grafoprodukt, 2015.

Žunić Dragan, *Tradicionalna estetska kultura - Telo i odevanje*, edited by Dragan Žunić. Niš: Centar za naučna istraživanja SANU i Univerziteta u Nišu, 2009.

---

# THE PROBLEM WITH COURTESY: WOOING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LATE SOCIALIST SLOVENIA

J u r e R a m š a k

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

“When the Church and the State opened themselves to dialogue, I would have probably decided to join the League of Communists if doing so could have contributed to the common good,” a Catholic priest told a Slovenian regional newspaper towards the end of 1989, as socialism neared its end.<sup>2</sup> Can such statements be interpreted as a positive response to the invitation to religious and non-religious citizens to participate in society on an equal footing, which was extended by members of the Slovenian socialist authorities in the 1970s and stood open to the end of the 1980s?<sup>3</sup>

The fact that after 1990 neither priests nor laity ventured such statements is not, in itself, proof of the failure of religious policy from the period of Yugoslav socialism – despite the insistence of leading

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is a result of the research program P6-0272 *The Mediterranean and Slovenia*, the research project N6-0173 *Religious change in Slovenia and Yugoslavia: Religious conversions and processes of atheization*, and bilateral projects between Slovenia and Serbia (BI-RS/23-25-054) and Slovenia and Montenegro (BI-ME/23-24-013), all funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

<sup>2</sup> Izidor Pečovnik, “Če bi pomagal k skupni blaginji in če bi lahko, bi postal komunist,” *Novi tednik NT&RC*, December 28, 1989, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Jure Ramšak, “A Close Flirtation with the Revolution: Slovenian Left-Wing Catholics, the Vatican’s Ostpolitik, and a Test of Faith for Socialist Self-Management,” in *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022).

theologians of the Slovenian Catholic Church on portraying this period in exclusively monochromatic tones since its demise.<sup>4</sup> A more suitable starting point for discussion would be a hermeneutic re-examination of the problematic aspects of the relationship between the State (the Communist Party/League of Communists) and religious communities (the Catholic Church), some of which were discussed publicly, some privately, and some not at all. These are precisely the areas that led to German historian Klaus Buchenau (focusing mostly on Croatia) to wonder “what went wrong.”<sup>5</sup>

The Slovenian environment – frequently presented to the international public and Vatican representatives as an oasis of coexistence, where religious matter could be managed in a *different* way<sup>6</sup> – offers a particularly productive case study for analysing the constants, compromises, and long-term impacts of the religious policy implemented under the banner of the League of Communists (LC).<sup>7</sup>

The present article, which is based on public and archival documents of various Slovenian administrative and consultative bodies concerned with religious issues, traces the strategy of late socialist establishment to integrate Christians as equal partners into the project of self-management socialism or at least prevent the obstruction of this project by the majority religious population. But these endeavours were essentially controversial, for rather than applying the self-management principles to the regulation of religious issues, they sought to preserve

<sup>4</sup> Albin Kralj, *Teologija osvoboditve in slovenski katoličani* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Buchenau, “What went wrong? Church–state relations in socialist Yugoslavia,” *Nationalities Papers* 33, no. 4 (2005): 547–567, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990500354046>.

<sup>6</sup> Jure Ramšak, “The Crumbling Touchstone of the Vatican’s Ostpolitik: Relations between the Holy See and Yugoslavia, 1970–1989,” *The International History Review* 43, no. 4 (2021), 858–860, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2020.1819859>.

<sup>7</sup> The most comprehensive scholarly work to date on this topic is Dejan Pacek, *Od konflikta h kompromisu. Oris odnosa med državo in Katoliško cerkvijo v Sloveniji 1966–1991* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2023), while many other relevant insights, from which this article also draws, have been contributed by: Mateja Režek, *Med resničnostjo in iluzijo: slovenska in jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem (1948–1958)* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2005); Mateja Režek, “Cuius regio eius religio: The relationship of communist authorities with the catholic church in Slovenia and Yugoslavia after 1945,” in *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period*, ed. Balázs Apor, Péter Apor and E. A. Rees (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2008); Jure Ramšak, *(Samo)upravljanje intelekta: družbena kritika v poznosocialistični Sloveniji* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2019).

the non-confrontational relationship with the (conservative) hierarchy of the Catholic Church, even though the latter had been officially denied the role of advocate of believers' rights.

This strategy was supported by a series of formal and informal mechanisms that created the impression that the northernmost Yugoslav republic was undergoing opposite processes to those taking place in its immediate neighbour, the socialist republic of Croatia – another majority-Catholic republic, yet one where relations between religious and civil authorities were far more discordant than Slovenia.<sup>8</sup> Still, the key questions that should have been addressed within the framework of advanced Yugoslav self-management democracy, as the regime defined itself, remained to some degree identified as problematic, but essentially unresolved all through the end of the 1980s.

#### From the Cabinet to the Field: The Hesitant Renouncement of the Marxist-Leninist Principles of Religious Policy

The position of Catholics, as well as other believers, in socialist self-managed Yugoslavia was paradoxical and unclear from the beginning, and remained so until the very end of the country's existence. The foundations of Yugoslav communist atheism, laid after World War II and based on Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, stressed the importance of inculcating a "scientific worldview" and revealed a key determinant of the system – its incapability to tolerate any authority outside its own framework.<sup>9</sup> Although granted significantly more freedom than its counterparts in most other communist countries especially from the 1960s onwards, the Yugoslav LC pursued a religious policy that resulted, as some of the leading scholars have shown, in controversial outcomes.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, "Le religioni e la dissoluzione della Jugoslavia," in *Dopo la pioggia. Gli stati della ex Jugoslavia e l'Albania*, ed. Antonio D'Alessandri and Armando Pitassio (Lecce: Argo, 2011), 484.

<sup>9</sup> Radmila Radić, "Politička ideologija kao sekularna religija i njena integrativna funkcija," in *Dijalog povjesničaralistoričara IV*, ed. Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac (Zagreb: Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Pedro Ramet, "Catholicism and Politics in Socialist Yugoslavia," *Religion in Communist Lands* 10, no. 3 (1982): 272, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637498208431033>; Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Before and after the Great Transformation* (Boulder:

As a matter of fact, it would be more accurate to speak of several religious policies, for religious situations varied from one constituent republic to another, particularly after the adoption of the new federal constitution in 1974, which entrusted the relations with religious communities almost exclusively to republican bodies. The communist elites in individual constituent republics implemented each their own distinct policies and, even more so, strategies of everyday relationships with the Catholic Church's hierarchy and clergy, even though the programme of the LC adopted at the congress of 1958, included ideological guidelines on the role of religion in Yugoslavia's socialist society that applied to all republics.<sup>11</sup>

The different methods of addressing religious issues in individual Yugoslav republics and autonomous provinces in the late 1970s clearly affected the work of the Federal Commission for Relations with Religious Communities, as internal coordination and the adoption of joint decisions became nearly impossible.<sup>12</sup> Such modifications of religious policy were characteristic not only of federal units with diverse religious landscapes (Orthodox, Catholic, Islamic), but also those with largely homogenous religious landscapes, such as Croatia and Slovenia, where Catholics were in the majority. Comparatively, different religious environments in Yugoslavia exhibited varying levels of correlation

---

East European Monographs, 1992), 339–397; Klaus Buchenau, *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945–1991: Ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004); Vjekoslav Perica, *Sveti Petar i Sveti Sava: Sakralni simboli kao metafore povijesnih promjena* (Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2009); Mateja Režek, "Searching for a path to dialogue between Christianity and Marxism in early socialist Slovenia," in *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> The last Party programme, adopted at the 7th congress of the LCY, stated: "When Yugoslav communists represent their Marxist materialist world view consistently, they are aware that religion, which arises from and is maintained in specific historical conditions of material and spiritual backwardness of people, cannot be overcome through administrative means, but only with the continuous development of socialist social relations, the diffusion of scientific knowledge and the general improvement of human consciousness, through which actual human freedom is progressively pursued and material and spiritual conditions causing various delusions and misconceptions are eradicated." (*Sedmi kongres Zveze komunistov Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1958), 479–480).

<sup>12</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 156, f. 18/1980-II, Poročilo o uresničevanju programa komisije za leto 1979, January 29, 1980, 5.

between religion and ethno-nationalism, which had a major impact on the policies of republican LCs. This was mostly a consequence of dissimilar historical backgrounds, for in Slovenia the religious factor had been decidedly less crucial in the nation-building process than it had been in Croatia, owing to the ambiguous role of Catholicism during the 20th century.<sup>13</sup>

In the late 1970s, in the years immediately preceding the end of the President Tito's era and for several years after that, one of the biggest issues of the LC religious policy was how to win the loyalty of Catholics. In Slovenia, the idea was to engage them in the socialist self-management process, for which the Communist Party saw a precedent in the participation of wide religious strata in the partisan movement during World War II. Christian socialists' broad engagement in the wartime coalition with the Communists was a result of a deep ideological split within Slovenian political Catholicism at the end of the 1930s and was an exception in the Yugoslav context.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the potential development of the Catholic left into an independent political organization was thwarted already during the war, and its leader, the Slovenian poet and writer Edvard Kocbek, was excluded from the leading establishment after the war.<sup>15</sup>

Decades after the war the Party was still afraid that a rival organization of socialist orientation could threaten its monopoly.<sup>16</sup> With the majority of supporters of a resurrection of the prewar clerical model exiled, the regime saw the emergence of such an opposition as quite an unrealistic threat; a matter of greater concern to them was the Christian

---

<sup>13</sup> Mitja Velikonja, "Slovenian and Polish Religio-National Mythologies: A Comparative Analysis," *Religion, State & Society* 31, no. 3 (2003): 233–260, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0963749032000107054>; Zdenko Roter, "Odnos med katoliško cerkvijo in državo v osemdesetih letih (1)," *Teorija in praksa* 24 (1987).

<sup>14</sup> Egon Pelikan and Gašper Mithans, "Political Representations and the Confrontation of Marxism and Christianity in Interwar Slovenia: The Christian Socialist Journal *Beseda o sodobnih vprašanjih* as Case Study," in *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> Aleš Gabrič, "Odnos komunistične oblasti do katoliških intelektualcev po letu 1945," *Nečakov zbornik: procesi, teme in dogodki iz 19. in 20. stoletja*, ed. Kornelija Ajlec, Bojan Balkovec and Božo Repe (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Režek, *Cuius regio eius religio*; Režek, *Searching for a path*.

Socialists, whose independent political organization was completely unacceptable to the Party, although they recognized the inevitability of the socialist system and were favourably disposed towards a partnership with the Communists.<sup>17</sup>

In the late socialist period, the task of publicly defending the stances of the LC was delegated to select Marxist philosophers and sociologists of religion. This strategy did not entirely prevent sporadic interventions by political structures from occurring, but it did succeed in elevating the level of debate, which now continued through an exchange of views between young Marxists who encouraged dialogue and had a strong theoretical foundation, and theologians.<sup>18</sup>

Slovenian Marxist sociologists and philosophers started to shed light on the complexity of the phenomenon of religion in the socialist self-management society sooner and in a more nuanced manner than their colleagues from the Zagreb-and-Belgrade-based *Praxis* philosophical school, who erased the atheistic vocabulary from their categorical apparatus under the influence of western Marxism, yet found it difficult to avoid doctrinal antireligious views.<sup>19</sup> By the late 1970s, the Slovenians, after having empirically analyzed religiousness and acquainted themselves with progressive Catholic movements in Yugoslavia and abroad (South America, Italy, Germany), openly discussed the prospect of religion surviving within the socialist system and the legitimacy of religious motivation in the consolidation of socialist regime.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Stane Kavčič and Lev Modic, *Socialistične sile, religija, cerkev* (Ljubljana: Komunist 1968), 76.

<sup>18</sup> Radmila Radić, "The Yugoslav Authorities and the Christian-Marxist Dialogue of the Late Sixties and Early Seventies," in *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022).

<sup>19</sup> Mislav Kukoč, "Problem religije u hrvatskoj marksističkoj filozofiji," in *Religija i sloboda: Prilog 'socioreligijskoj karti Hrvatske'*, ed. Ivan Grubišić (Split: Institut za primijenjena društvena istraživanja, 1993), 73.

<sup>20</sup> SI AS 1277, b. 21, f. 13, Posvet Republiške konference ZSMS na temo Marksizem in njegov odnos do religije ter vloga subjektivnih sil do religije in cerkve, April 24–25, 1978, 1–3. That did not mean, however, that the leading Slovenian intellectuals of Marxist orientation fully adopted the stances on religion proposed by their western colleagues and European communist parties; cf. Daniela Saresella, *Catholics and Communists in Twentieth-Century Italy: Between Conflict and Dialogue* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

Sociologists of religion also took it upon themselves to organise field seminars for the members of the Slovenian LC since religious issues were frequently still shrouded in prejudice, poorly understood, and viewed as a deviation from the official Party line.<sup>21</sup> Following the trajectory of Slovenian Party's understanding of religion from the late 1970s onwards, a gradual departure from it being viewed as a "reactionary phenomenon" can be observed, while the Croatian Party structure continued to see it as such well into the 1980s.<sup>22</sup>

This change coincided with the fact that in Slovenia the most important positions in the Slovenian LC were taken over by the postwar generation of young politicians. Having covered the area of religious communities even before becoming President of the LC of Slovenia (1986–1989), Milan Kučan stood out among them, obviously influenced by the dialogue-oriented Slovenian sociologists.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, their Croatian colleagues (Branko Bošnjak, Srdjan Vrcan, Esad Ćimić) had a limited influence on the matter as the conservative establishment (Jure Bilić, Jakov Blažević, Milutin Baltić, Dušan Dragosavac, Ranko Pukarić, Zlatko Uzelac) was still firmly in power in this republic.<sup>24</sup>

By the late 1970s, the most important Slovenian Party bodies privately acknowledged the unprincipled nature of Party politics, the second-class position of believers in society, and, last but not least, the need to abandon the outdated prewar and postwar patterns.<sup>25</sup> Yet the logic of power monopoly that the Party derived from its Marxist atheism prevented any substantial change to its programme until the end of the 1980s.

---

<sup>21</sup> SI AS 1589/IV, b. 251, f. 757, Drugi del magnetograma 17. seje Predsedstva CK ZKS, October 16, 1975, 37/1; SI AS 1277, b. 21, Protokolirani dopisi 13, Posvet Republiške konference ZSMS na temo Marksizem in njegov odnos do religije ter vloga subjektivnih sil do religije in cerkve, April, 24–25, 1978, 1, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commissar. The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 113.

<sup>23</sup> Zdenko Roter, *Padle maske: Od partizanskih sanj do novih dni* (Ljubljana: Sever & Sever, 2013), 326.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ramet, *Cross and Commissar*, 100–101, 113.

<sup>25</sup> SI AS 1589/IV, b. 547, f. 5734, Magnetogram 2. seje Predsedstva CK ZKS za idejno in teoretično delo v Zvezi komunistov, July 18, 1979, 5/3 AV, 5/7 AV.

For believers, what mattered most was not the Party's theoretical commitment to the eventual demise of religion, but rather its practical adherence to the principle that, in the meantime, believers and non-believers should be granted full equality.

### Communist Party Commissars, Church Dignitaries, and Their Own Self-Management

At the legal level, almost all European state-socialist regimes defined religion as “a matter of the individual,”<sup>26</sup> and the spirit of this definition, along with its related provision prohibiting the “abuse” of religious feelings for political purposes, permeated the Yugoslav legislation and programmatic documents as well. By underlining that the limits of the Church's freedom were set by the Church itself, as the chief Yugoslav ideologue Edvard Kardelj stated,<sup>27</sup> this unclear situation left room for interpretation and arbitrary decision-making in accordance with the political atmosphere of the moment.

Customarily, anything outside the Party's political and social hegemony was labelled as clericalism, defined in its broadest sense as “a tendency to organise believers in a particular way in relation to matters of public interest and outside the religious sphere, to propagate Catholic views outside the sphere of faith, to establish the Catholic sociopolitical, cultural and economic doctrine as a possibility of just social order.”<sup>28</sup> Those in the Party concerned with religion argued that a manifest, outward expression of religious feelings should be redirected into an internal, existential form of faith. Based on the premise (unavowed in the public discourse) that socialist affiliation and faith were mutually exclusive, they declared that “turning religion into a private

---

<sup>26</sup> Klaus Buchenau, “Socialist secularities: The Diversity of a Universalist Model,” in *Multiple Secularities Beyond the West*, ed. Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Matthias Mid-dell (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 264.

<sup>27</sup> Edvard Kardelj, *Smeri razvoja političnega sistema socialističnega samoupravljanja* (Ljubljana: Komunist, 1977), 126.

<sup>28</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 55, IV-SZDL, Poskus informacije o stanju odnosov med samoupravno družbo in verskimi skupnostmi, undated, 2.

matter of the individual that has nothing to do with one's socialist orientation and activity, means finding balance between prevention and treatment in the regulation of religious affairs."<sup>29</sup> But as the appeals from local Party officials for an exhaustive definition of "admissible" Church activities implied, the implementation of such "prevention" or the ideological-political struggle rested on arbitrary bases.

The question arose whether truly "parallel" political and social activities existed and how to respond when, for examples, priests established clubs where their parishioners could watch television and read religious press, or when they organized assistance for the elderly and for farmers on high-mountain homesteads.<sup>30</sup> Obviously, the regime kept a close watch on the preservation of its monopoly in organising all important social activities, thus preventing the Catholic Church from entering the "social vacuum" and "sucking" passive citizens into post-conciliar activities for lay persons.<sup>31</sup>

Another problem was the parish councils, constituted in accordance with the Vatican II's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, in which certain Party commissars saw a transfer of priestly activities into the secular environment, where their actions could be interpreted as having a broader social background.<sup>32</sup> Their objective was therefore to ensure that religious citizens did not organise in the fashion of "self-management", which was only reserved for initiatives guided by the LC or its mass organizations.

Invented to stand as an example of the "democratic" manner of addressing open issues were Coordination Committees for Relations between Self-management Society and Religious Communities, established in 1970, which met under the auspices of the Socialist Alliance of Working People's (SAWP's) republican and municipal conferences.<sup>33</sup> Not constituting the authorities themselves, these committees had no

---

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>31</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 6, f. 50, Nekateri aspekti stanja in delovanja verskih skupnosti v Sloveniji, November 26, 1969, 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 6, f. 50, Informacija o formiranju Koordinacijskega odbora za urejanje odnosov med cerkvijo in samoupravno družbo pri RK SZDL, December 22, 1970.

power of direct decision-making; their purpose was to monitor political problems and ensure, through communication with the parties involved, that the individual problems would not escalate into raising fundamental doubt in established Church-State relationships.<sup>34</sup> In reality, their sessions, attended by representatives of the authorities as well as clergy and lay believers, addressed mainly everyday matters, such as obtaining permits for construction or renovation of churches,<sup>35</sup> while discussions about key parameters of religion policy remained the domain of Party decision-makers.

The main republican body in charge of religious policy implementation was the Commission of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia for Religious Issues (CRI), renamed in 1975 as the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities (CRRC).<sup>36</sup> The CRI was established at the very first wartime meeting of the Slovene National Liberation Council in February 1944,<sup>37</sup> yet operated in the shadow of the secret services until the 1960s. After the adoption of constitutional amendments in 1971 and the change in jurisdictions, Slovenian communists negotiated all open issues directly with Slovenian ordinaries, at republican level, and no longer in Belgrade at the level of federal bodies, that is, with the Yugoslav Bishops' Conference.<sup>38</sup>

With the republics facing each their own religious challenges, it had become increasingly difficult to harmonise religious policies at the federal level, with the republican commissions taking a more or less joint stand only on issues related to the Holy See.<sup>39</sup> Members of the Slovenian CRI/CRRC were representatives of socio-political organizations and experts in religious issues, but the most important decisions

---

<sup>34</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 6, f. 50, Skrajšano besedilo uvodnih misli Janeza Vipotnika, December 23, 1970.

<sup>35</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 55, IV-SZDL, Poskus informacije o stanju odnosov med samoupravno družbo in verskimi skupnostmi, undated, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Pacek, *Od konflikta h kompromisu*, 47–54.

<sup>37</sup> *Sklepi in odloki. Prvo zasedanje Slovenskega narodnega osvobodilnega sveta* (Ljubljana: Prop. kom. IOOF, 1945), 20.

<sup>38</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 6, f. 50, Nekateri aspekti stanja in delovanja verskih skupnosti v Sloveniji, November 26, 1969, 47.

<sup>39</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 156, f. 18/1980, Poročilo o uresničevanju programa dela komisije za leto 1979, January 29, 1980, 5.

were still adopted in the so-called micro-coordination sessions of the SAWP Coordination Committee, which met at least once a month and saw participation of five to ten top Party and republican officials. Such a structure was thus a guild with a considerably narrower composition, yet considerably broader powers than the pluralistically composed SAWP Coordination Committee and existed until the second half of the eighties.<sup>40</sup>

Given the unsatisfactory operation of municipal religious commissions, the majority of which were only active in large towns, the republican CRRC functioned as a meeting place of representatives of state and religious authorities, and received up to 400 priests and ecclesiastical dignitaries per year.<sup>41</sup>

While the majority approached the CRRC with requests and demands related to material conditions of the Catholic Church operation, some, particularly bishops and auxiliary bishops, the leadership of the Faculty of Theology, and editors of religious press, were sometimes summoned there to defend themselves after so-called “incidents” (such as the publication of critical articles), but more often than not, *before* such “regrettable events” could even happen. Yet even such conversations – if we are to trust the statements terminating the official records – would end in a “courteous,” “cooperative,” or even “friendly” atmosphere.<sup>42</sup> A practice established over the years of CRRC’s operation that virtually all newly appointed church dignitaries (bishops and auxiliary bishops, heads of religious schools, and monastic orders) asked for an audience themselves, as would also most priests travelling outside the country or returning from longer stays abroad.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Božo Repe, *Rdeča Slovenija. Tokovi in obrazi iz obdobja socializma* (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2003), 66.

<sup>41</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 6, f. 50, Nekateri aspekti stanja in delovanja verskih skupnosti v Sloveniji, November 26, 1969, 45.

<sup>42</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 6, f. 50, Zabeležka o razgovoru z mariborskim škofom dr. Maksimiljanom Držečnikom in njegovim pomožnim škofom dr. Vekoslavom Grmičem, July 21, 1970; SI AS 1211, b. 150, f. 5, Poročilo o razgovoru namestnika predsednika Franca Pristovška z glavnim urednikom Družine dr. Dragom Klemenčičem, September 19, 1980.

<sup>43</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 6, f. 50, Nekateri aspekti stanja in delovanja verskih skupnosti v Sloveniji, November 26, 1969, 45.

Also, in contrast to Croatia, where such a practice was introduced only in 1979,<sup>44</sup> the president of the Slovenian CRRC, who was also the vice-president of the republican Executive Council (that is, the Slovenian government), would invite bishops, heads of monastic orders, principals of religious schools, and the leadership of the Cyril-Methodius Priestly Patriotic Association to New Year's receptions, which always received positive coverage in the religious press.<sup>45</sup> Occasions for courtesy calls, where even the most delicate issues were not shied away from, included not only official receptions but also personal invitations to dinners, which bishops received on their birthdays,<sup>46</sup> and the bishops' visits to the Yugoslav Embassy during their *ad limina* visits to the Vatican (though those were gladly avoided by Croatian bishops). Especially close ties were established between Alojzij Šuštar, who replaced Jožef Pogačnik in 1980 as the Ljubljana Archbishop and Metropolitan, and the then-president of CRRC, Boris Frlec.<sup>47</sup> During the great shifts of the 1980s, they also met in private and "enjoyed completely relaxed conversations."<sup>48</sup>

Personal contacts with ecclesiastical ordinaries were not the only special approach adopted by Slovenian politicians in managing relations with the Church. They also avoided introducing repressive measures against the clergy. As a result of a political initiative, after the end of the 1960s, judicial courts no longer sentenced the clergy to imprisonment, pronouncing, in the worst case, suspended sentences.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Siniša Zrinščak, "Odnos Crkve i države u Hrvatskoj od 1945. do 1990. Godine," in *Religija i sloboda. Prilog 'socioreligijskoj karti Hrvatske'*, ed. Ivan Grubišić (Split: Institut za primijenjena društvena istraživanja, 1993), 120. See also: Pacek, *Od konflikta h kompromisu*, 455–493; Aleš Gabrič, "Odnos slovenske politike prema 'maspoku,'" *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 42 (2010).

<sup>45</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 6, f. 50, Nekateri aspekti stanja in delovanja verskih skupnosti v Sloveniji, November 26, 1969, 46.

<sup>46</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 150, f. 5, Zapis o razgovoru z ljubljanskim pomožnim škofom dr. Stanislavom Leničem in kanonikom dr. Lojzetom Šuštarjem, November 7, 1978; Zapis o razgovoru z dr. Francem Dolinarjem, glavnim arhivarjem in bibliotekarjem ljubljanske nadškofije, October 19, 1977.

<sup>47</sup> Pacek, *Od konflikta h kompromisu*, 222, 232, 237.

<sup>48</sup> Ljerka Bizilj, *Cerkev v policijskih arhivih* (Ljubljana: self-published, 1991), 38.

<sup>49</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 6, f. 18-1974, Odnosi z rimskokatoliško cerkvijo v SR Sloveniji, January 24, 1974, 5.

Although the “hostile outbursts” of certain priests and theologians may have merited punishment in accordance with religious legislation, courts refrained from taking repressive measures out of the concern that it would make the censored individuals into martyrs both at home and especially abroad. At the same time, the regime wanted to demonstrate its ability to deal with non-socialist tendencies at the intellectual level.<sup>50</sup>

### The Illusion of Convergence

While in Croatia, Catholic ceremonies organized during the nine years of the worship of Virgin Mary (1975–1984) turned into an opportunity for ethnic mobilization,<sup>51</sup> in Slovenia the 1980s were marked by no particular events that could sour the atmosphere between the Catholic Church and the authorities. Both sides found a common language to deal with practical matters, such as construction of new churches, conservation of the religious cultural heritage, priests’ social security, and religious funerals. There were still some open issues, such as the position of Catholic teachers or atheization of children in schools, but the Catholic side became more tolerant and its critical voices were toned down.<sup>52</sup> Until the end of the 1980s, at the base of the LC’s relation with the Catholic Church was “the depoliticization of religious interest,” so the authorities did not tolerate any parallel activities and demands for religious radio and TV programs, which had been made repeatedly since the end of the 1960s by both Catholic Church representatives and believers themselves.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> SI AS 1589/IV, b. 557, f. 5897, Seminar o religiji in položaju verskih skupnosti v socialistični samoupravni družbi, February 7, 1980, 33.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Miroslav Akmadža, *Katolička crkva u komunističkoj Hrvatskoj 1945.-1980.* (Zagreb & Slavonski Brod: Despot Infinitus & Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2013).

<sup>52</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 156, f. 18/1980-II, Zapisnik 7. seje komisije SR Slovenije za odnose z verskimi skupnostmi, May 6, 1980; SI AS 1211, b. 157, f. 18/1986-II, Poročilo Koordinacijskega odbora za odnose med samoupravno družbo in verskimi skupnostmi, undated.

<sup>53</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 157, f. 18/1985-II, Zapisnik 5. seje komisije SR Slovenije za odnose z verskimi skupnostmi, March 5, 1985, 13; SI AS 1211, b. 157, f. 18/1985-II, Nagovor predsednika komisije SR Slovenije za odnose z verskimi skupnostmi dr. Borisa Frleca na novoletnem sprejemu, January 18, 1985.

In the second half of the 1980s, the issue of public religious life centred around the celebration of Christmas.<sup>54</sup> Yugoslavia was one of the few socialist countries in which Christmas was not a public holiday. Believers kept appealing to the authorities, yet the wind of change did not blow until 1986, when the president of the SAWP republican conference, Jože Smole, wished Merry Christmas to the national TV audience (Archbishop Šuštar had done the same via the national radio a year before). His gesture caused quite a stir throughout Yugoslavia, and was not met with unanimous approval even in Slovenia.<sup>55</sup> Smole's gesture raised more doubts in other parts of Yugoslavia than in Slovenia since it was not understood as a step towards democratization but as a sign of political manipulation with religion.<sup>56</sup>

In principle, SAWP conferences in other republics did not oppose the act of their Slovenian counterpart, although they did not want to repeat it in their own multireligious environments where such gestures could have sparked off unforeseen reactions. Thus at the end of 1987, the Croatian media only highlighted the theme of New Year's holidays, whereas Slovenian TV and radio channels, as well as cultural institutions, had already enriched their programs with Christmas motifs, albeit laying emphasis on the depiction of folk tradition rather than the denominational aspect of this religious feast.<sup>57</sup> Christmas was finally declared a public holiday in 1989, but not as "a feast of peace and family" rather as an unspecified work-free day, which was according to the republican decision-makers "the optimum that can be today argued for in the Slovenian and Yugoslav situation".<sup>58</sup>

The end of the 1980s thus saw a shift in the social and political arenas in Slovenia and, consequently, a gradual development of a new understanding of the social role of religion and Church. Again,

<sup>54</sup> Pavec, *Od konflikta h kompromisu*, 327.

<sup>55</sup> Stefano Lusa, *Razkroj oblasti: Slovenski komunisti in demokratizacija države* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2012), 158–159.

<sup>56</sup> The act of the Slovenian SAWP was met with the most negative reactions in Macedonia and Vojvodina (SI AS 1211, b. 20, f. 15/1987-I, Informacija o reagovanju domačih i inostranih sredstava informisanja na božičnu čestitku, January 16, 1987, 3).

<sup>57</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 157, f. 18/1986-II, Obeleževanje božiča v Sloveniji, undated.

<sup>58</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 158, Zapisnik o seji sekretariata komisije SRS za odnose z verskimi skupnostmi, June 23, 1989.

that was largely the result of the engagement of conciliatory sociologists of religion, who had regularly attended CRRC sessions for at least a decade. Given the reserved stance of theologians (most notably Anton Stres)<sup>59</sup> who were increasingly present in public life, sociologist Marko Kerševan argued at the beginning of 1988 that “the Church no longer acts as an organization of power and largely no longer strives for power sharing, but prefers to act as one of the entities of civil society, therefore its operation can no longer be simply classified under clericalism or integralism.”<sup>60</sup>

In line with such perception of the Catholic Church’s public role, at the end of 1988, the year of the culmination of social turmoil, the CRRC estimated that religious communities in Slovenia did not stand out from other social entities regarding their critical stance on the then state of affairs. The CRRC did notice that the Catholic Church wanted to strengthen its social role, yet its prevailing aims were those of stabilization and democratization also espoused by the Party leadership.<sup>61</sup> At

---

<sup>59</sup> At that time Anton Stres, since 1985 chairman of the “Justice and Peace” (*Iustitia et Pax*) Council (later Commission) operating under the auspices of the Slovenian Regional Bishops’ Conference, was of the opinion that even if the Catholic Church should not intervene in the political arena, it had the moral right to judge open social questions. He also stood against the Catholic Church partnership with the ruling communist structures and called for the separation of the LC from the state and for the abolition of its monopoly of power (Tone Stres, “Cerkev je tolerirana, ne pa tudi spoštovana,” *Teleks*, May 19, 1988). In that period, such a stance was quite in harmony with the attitude of sociologists and journalists writing for the major Slovenian newspapers, whom however some more conservative communists criticised for their “immense trust in ecclesiastical authors” (Zdenko Roter, “Konec nekega obdobja (odnosov med katoliško cerkvijo in državo v Sloveniji),” *Teorija in praksa* 27 (1990), 272).

<sup>60</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 158, Verske skupnosti in ustavne spremembe, December 26, 1988, 11. The CRRC thus defended both Anton Stres and Alojzij Šuštar whose opinions Belgrade (superficially) interpreted as proof of Catholic Church political ambitions and its readiness to share power with the LC, while in reality they both wanted to stress that the Catholic Church was part of civil society (SI AS 1211, b. 3, f. ZVK 1988, Komentar k pisanju biltenov Zveznega sekretariata za informacije z dne 16. 6. in 18. 7. 1988).

<sup>61</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 158, Pregled in ocena dogajanja v odnosih z verskimi skupnostmi v letu 1988, undated, 2. One year before, the Slovenian CRRC had sharply rejected the conclusions reached by the federal Commission, which suggested that the Slovenian Catholic Church facilitated politicisation and the rise of the conservative faction. The Slovenian CRRC sent Belgrade well-corroborated analyses showing that the Slovenian Catholic Church did not try to establish contacts with the emerging bourgeois right (SI AS 1211, b. 3, f. ZVK 1987, Mnenje o “Informaciji o pojavama klerikalističskog delovanja i sektaškog odnosa prema vernicima u SFRJ”, April 16, 1987).

the end of the 1980s, this gradualist view, which advocated the preservation of national unity in response to Belgrade's centralist tendencies, served the Church as a well-calculated common denominator with the liberal Communist establishment at the helm of the Slovenian LC and the republic.

The Catholic Church also did not intervene in the process of pluralization of the Slovenian political arena; according to Anton Stres, the Catholic Church was criticized by the opposition forces from the *Nova revija* circle<sup>62</sup> for not being among the most vocal protagonists of "the Slovenian spring".<sup>63</sup> Since the early 1989, when the Slovenian Christian Social Movement developed from the *Revija 2000* circle, the Slovenian Catholic Church leadership had been caught in the dilemma whether to participate in political organization of Catholics or not. But even then, it seemed that the socialist establishment, which still tried to prevent people from organising themselves on a religious basis, and the Catholic Church leadership were of the same page about that, since both the CRRC president Boris Frlec and Archbishop Alojzij Šuštar stood against the establishment of such (para)political associations.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, the movement, which was led by the Slovenian Catholic intellectual Peter Kovačič Peršin and aimed to build on the legacy of prewar Christian socialism and its cooperation in the antifascist coalition, was left with no support, and the Christian Socialists were excluded from the democratization process. Many years later, Peter Kovačič Peršin claimed that even then the ruling structures of the Slovenian Catholic Church witnessed a strong presence of forces tacitly supported by Archbishop Alojzij Šuštar, whose aim was not autonomous political organization of Christians but the resurrection of prewar clericalism.<sup>65</sup>

With his vision defeated, Peter Kovačič Peršin withdrew and made room for Lojze Peterle, who in November 1989 transformed the movement into a party – the Slovenian Christian Democrats, which

---

<sup>62</sup> Božo Repe, *Jutri je nov dan. Slovenci in razpad Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Roter, "Konec nekega obdobja," 267.

<sup>64</sup> SI AS 1211, b. 158, Zapisnik o seji komisije SRS za odnose z verskimi skupnostmi, April 10, 1989, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Kovačič Peršin, "Misлити, da prevrati niso več mogoči, je naivno," *Delo-Sobotna priloga*, July 2, 2011.

later formed the backbone of the first post-socialist DEMOS government. After that, virtually nothing remained of the legacy of Christian Socialism. A card that the Party establishment had often and readily played to legitimise its policies ever since World War II had turned into a marginal phenomenon in its own Catholic midst.

### Conclusion

Towards the end of 1980, the federal and republican Secretariats for Information organized a study trip to Slovenia entitled “Relations between socialist societies and religious communities” for over 30 correspondents of the world’s leading media outlets accredited in Belgrade and Vienna. The journalists visited the highest organs of the republican authorities, a Catholic religious school, a monastery, and the seat of the Ljubljana archdiocese, and everywhere they went they were told about a cooperation that the state authorities judged as correct or even positive. The official reports, however, failed to include the answer to a question made by a reporter of the German ARD television network, Friedhelm Brebeck, who asked why it had been necessary to come precisely to Slovenia to discuss this particular topic, and noted that, apparently, everything was clear about the Church-State relationship at the top levels, but less so at the base.<sup>66</sup>

As we have seen in this discussion, Party activists in the field did view the activities of the Catholic Church for greater lay engagement with suspicion, but this was not the only contradictory aspect of the LC’s response to the post-conciliar *aggiornamento* of the Catholic Church and the impetus on the part of progressive-oriented groups of theologians and laity. There was some ambiguity even at the very top of the Communist Party, which departed from postwar practices or even concurrent repressive actions in other republics, yet did not follow the recommendations of (Marxist) sociologists of religion to thoroughly revise the still operative and essentially Leninist principles of understanding and “managing” the phenomenon of religion. In this context, their

---

<sup>66</sup> DAMSP, 1980, b. 145, d. 466454, Zabeleška o boravku inostranih dopisnika na studijskom putovanju u SR Sloveniji od 3. do 5. decembra 1980. godine, December 10, 1980.

safer bet was cooperative prelates and priests who were not only uncritical of the state authorities but also of their own institution. Under the surface of this apparent atmosphere of cooperation – complementarity even – between state and religious authorities, currents cultivating not only marked anti-socialism but also certain visions of integral Catholicism were strengthening. The latter came to light not long after the Slovenian LC parted from power and the position of Slovenian national leader within the disintegrating Yugoslav federation.

It is clear that in their attitude towards religion and opening their doors to religious members, the communist parties in Western European countries took far greater strides than the Communist Party that invented socialist self-management and generally claimed to have made it the farthest in the democratization and humanization of society.

Considering all contexts of political pragmatism within and outside Yugoslavia, the question is, of course, whether Yugoslav communists would have been able to follow their Italian, French, and Spanish comrades in full – but on the other hand, they showed no particular interest in doing so either. As a consequence, even the decreasing number of priests and laity, like the one mentioned in the beginning of this paper, were left without a key counterargument against the ever-louder voices from their own ranks, stating that Christianity and socialism just cannot coexist.

## B i b l i o g r a p h y

- Arhiv Republike Slovenije [Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, Ljubljana]:
- SI AS 1211, Komisija Republike Slovenije za odnose z verskimi skupnostmi [Commission for Relations with Religious Communities of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia].
  - SI AS 1277, Edvard Kardelj, osebni fond [Edvard Kardelj personal fonds].
  - SI AS 1589, Centralni komite Zveze komunistov Slovenije [Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia].

Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije [Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia]:

- Politička arhiva [Political Archive].

- Akmađža, Miroslav. *Katolička crkva u komunističkoj Hrvatskoj 1945.-1980.* Zagreb & Slavonski Brod: Despot Infinitus & Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2013.
- Bizilj, Ljerka. *Cerkev v policijskih arhivih.* Ljubljana: self-published, 1991.
- Buchenau, Klaus. *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945-1991. Ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004.
- Buchenau, Klaus. "What went wrong? Church-state relations in socialist Yugoslavia." *Nationalities Papers* 33, no. 4 (2005): 547-567. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990500354046>.
- Buchenau, Klaus. "Socialist secularities: The Diversity of a Universalist Model." In *Multiple Secularities Beyond the West*, edited by Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Matthias Middell, 261-282. Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614514053.261>.
- Gabrič, Aleš. "Odnos slovenske politike prema ‚maspoku‘." *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 42 (2010): 7-22.
- Gabrič, Aleš. "Odnos komunistične oblasti do katoliških intelektualcev po letu 1945." In *Nečakov zbornik: procesi, teme in dogodki iz 19. in 20. stoletja*, edited by Kornelija Ajlec, Bojan Balkovec and Božo Repe, 367-378. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2018.
- Kardelj, Edvard. *Smeri razvoja političnega sistema socialističnega samoupravljanja.* Ljubljana: Komunist, 1977.
- Kavčič, Stane, and Lev Modic. *Socialistične sile, religija, cerkev.* Ljubljana: Komunist, 1968.
- Kovačič Peršin, Peter. "Misliti, da prevrati niso več mogoči, je naivno." *Delo-Sobotna priloga*, July 2, 2011.
- Kralj, Albin. *Teologija osvoboditve in slovenski katoličani.* Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2009.
- Kukoč, Mislav. "Problem religije u hrvatskoj marksističkoj filozofiji." In *Religija i sloboda. Prilog 'socioreligijskoj karti Hrvatske'*, edited by Ivan Grubišić, 67-82. Split: Institut za primijenjena društvena istraživanja, 1993.
- Lusa, Stefano. *Razkroj oblasti: Slovenski komunisti in demokratizacija države.* Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2012.
- Mojzes, Paul. *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR: Before and after the Great Transformation.* Boulder: East European Monographs, 1992.
- Morozzo della Rocca, Roberto. "Le religioni e la dissoluzione della Jugoslavia." In *Dopo la pioggia: Gli stati della ex Jugoslavia e l'Albania*, edited by Antonio D'Alessandri and Armando Pitassio, 469-488. Lecce: Argo, 2011.
- Pečovnik, Izidor. "Če bi pomagal k skupni blaginji in če bi lahko, bi postal komunist." *Novi tednik NT&RC*, December 28, 1989.

Pacek, Dejan. *Od konflikta h kompromisu: Oris odnosa med državo in Katoliško cerkvijo v Sloveniji 1966–1991*. Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2023.

Pelikan, Egon, and Gašper Mithans. "Political Representations and the Confrontation of Marxism and Christianity in Interwar Slovenia: The Christian Socialist Journal *Beseda* o sodobnih vprašanjih as Case Study." In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 21–42. Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022.

Perica, Vjekoslav. *Sveti Petar i Sveti Sava. Sakralni simboli kao metafore povijesnih promjena*. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2009.

Radić, Radmila. "Politička ideologija kao sekularna religija i njena integrativna funkcija." In *Dijalog povjesničar/istoričara IV*, edited by Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac, 467–483. Zagreb: Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, 2001.

Radić, Radmila. "The Yugoslav Authorities and the Christian–Marxist Dialogue of the Late Sixties and Early Seventies." In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 71–93. Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022.

Ramet, Pedro. "Catholicism and Politics in Socialist Yugoslavia." *Religion in Communist Lands* 10, no. 3 (1982): 256–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637498208431033>.

Ramet, Pedro. *Cross and Commissar: The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Ramšak, Jure. "Between ideology and pragmatism: Polemic on the civil rights of Christians in the socialist Slovenia of the 1970s." *Religion, State and Society* 43, no. 2 (2015): 168–183. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2015.1053188>.

Ramšak, Jure. *(Samo)upravljanje intelekta: družbena kritika v poznosocialistični Sloveniji*. Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2019.

Ramšak, Jure. "The Crumbling Touchstone of the Vatican's Ostpolitik: Relations between the Holy See and Yugoslavia, 1970–1989." *The International History Review* 43, no. 4 (2021): 852–869. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2020.1819859>.

Ramšak, Jure. "A Close Flirtation with the Revolution: Slovenian Left-Wing Catholics, the Vatican's Ostpolitik, and a Test of Faith for Socialist Self-Management." In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 95–115. Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022.

Repe, Božo. *Jutri je nov dan: Slovenci in razpad Jugoslavije*. Ljubljana: Modri-  
jan, 2002.

Repe, Božo. *Rdeča Slovenija: Tokovi in obrazi iz obdobja socializma*. Ljubljana:  
Sophia, 2003.

Režek, Mateja. *Med resničnostjo in iluzijo: slovenska in jugoslovanska politika v  
desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem (1948-1958)*. Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2005.

Režek, Mateja. "Cuius regio eius religio: The relationship of communist au-  
thorities with the catholic church in Slovenia and Yugoslavia after 1945." In *The  
Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period*, edited by  
Balázs Apor, Péter Apor and E. A. Rees, 213–233. Washington: New Academia  
Publishing, 2008.

Režek, Mateja. "Searching for a path to dialogue between Christianity and  
Marxism in early socialist Slovenia." In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism  
in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak,  
Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 43–55. Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022.

Roter, Zdenko. "Odnos med katoliško cerkvijo in državo v osemdesetih  
letih (1)." *Teorija in praksa* 24 (1987): 280–297.

Roter, Zdenko. "Konec nekega obdobja (odnosov med katoliško cerkvijo in  
državo v Sloveniji)." *Teorija in praksa* 27 (1990): 265–276.

Roter, Zdenko. *Padle maske: Od partizanskih sanj do novih dni*. Ljubljana:  
Sever & Sever, 2013.

Saresella, Daniela. *Catholics and Communists in Twentieth-Century Italy.  
Between Conflict and Dialogue*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.

*Sedmi kongres Zveze komunistov Jugoslavije*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba,  
1958.

*Sklepi in odloki. Prvo zasedanje Slovenskega narodnega osvobodilnega sveta*.  
Ljubljana: Prop. kom. IOOF, 1945.

Stres, Tone. "Cerkev je tolerirana, ne pa tudi spoštovana." *Teleks*, May 19,  
1988.

Velikonja, Mitja. "Slovenian and Polish Religio-National Mythologies: A  
Comparative Analysis." *Religion, State & Society* 31 (2003): 233–260.

Zrinščak, Siniša. "Odnos Crkve i države u Hrvatskoj od 1945. do 1990.  
godine." In *Religija i sloboda. Prilog 'socioreligijskoj karti Hrvatske'*, edited by Ivan  
Grubišić, 107–126. Split: Institut za primijenjena društvena istraživanja, 1993.



---

# SERBIAN PRESS AND EASTERN ORTHODOXY IN SERBIA IN THE 1980s

Petar Dragišić

## Introduction

The end of World War II and the establishment of communist rule in Yugoslavia placed the Serbian Orthodox Church in an extremely difficult position. The communist government regarded religious communities as dangerous ideological and political rivals and consequently tried to reduce their influence through various repressive measures. The abolition of religious education in schools and agrarian reform, which deprived religious communities of a large portion of their property, are only some of the methods employed by the regime to suppress the influence of the religious communities in Yugoslavia. Moreover, the Serbian Orthodox Church faced pressure from the authorities to recognize the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the 1980s witnessed a gradual revitalization of religiosity in Serbia. This process was closely linked to the grave crisis that followed the death of the charismatic Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito in

---

<sup>1</sup> On the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church in socialist Yugoslavia, see: Radmila Radić, *Država i verske zajednice 1945–1970* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2002); Dragoljub Živojinović, *Srpska pravoslavna crkva i nova vlast: 1944–1950* (Srbinje, Beograd, Valjevo, Munich: Univerzitetski obrazovani pravoslavni bogoslovi, Hilendarski fond, Zadužbina “Nikolaj Velimirović i Justin Popović”, 1998); Đoko Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve, knj. 3, Za vreme Drugog svetskog rata i posle njega* (Beograd: Catena mundi, 2018); Radmila Radić and Momčilo Mitrović, *Zapisi sa sednica Komisije za verska pitanja NR/SR Srbije: 1945–1978. godine* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2012).

1980. The crisis encompassed both economic and political dimensions. A key factor in the economic crisis was Yugoslavia's substantial foreign debt, which reached \$20 billion at the start of the decade.<sup>2</sup>

The bad economic strategy of the Yugoslav regime led to a noticeable drop in the standard of living. This was reflected in high inflation, a decline in purchasing power and shortages of consumer goods. In addition, Yugoslav society in the 1980s was hit by a grave political crisis. The Albanian rebellion in Kosovo in 1981 highlighted the extreme fragility of the Yugoslav multi-ethnic experiment. Although the uprising was suppressed by repressive measures, tensions in Kosovo persisted. In the following years, the Kosovo issue escalated into a major crisis that shook the very foundations of the Yugoslav system.<sup>3</sup>

In the early 1980s, relations between the Yugoslav republics deteriorated sharply. Tensions between republican elites came to the fore in the crisis surrounding the election of the influential Serbian politician Dragoslav Marković as a member of the Presidency of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) following the 12th Congress of the LCY in 1982. This brief crisis was resolved through a compromise between the Yugoslav party elites, although it did not eliminate the underlying discord between the Yugoslav republics. Moreover, in the following years, the ethnic tensions paved the way to the collapse of the multi-ethnic Yugoslav federation in the early 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

The grave crisis in Yugoslavia also had serious social consequences. Ethnic tensions in Kosovo during the 1980s destabilized the largest Yugoslav republic – Serbia – and triggered the ethnic mobilization of Serbs. Considering the important, if not, crucial role of Eastern Orthodoxy in the formation of the Serbian ethnic identity, the ethnic

---

<sup>2</sup> Branko Petranović and Momčilo Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918–1988: Tematska zbirka dokumenata* (Beograd: Rad, 1988), 1278; Suzan Vudvord, *Balkanska tragedija: Haos i raspad posle Hladnog rata* (Beograd: Filip Višnjić, 1997), 37; Slobodan Selinić, *Srbija 1980–1986: Politička istorija od Tita do Miloševića* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2021), 115; Ljubiša S. Adamović, Đžon R. Lempi and Rasel O. Priket, *Američko-jugoslovenski ekonomski odnosi posle Drugog svetskog rata* (Beograd: Radnička štampa, 1990), 134.

<sup>3</sup> Petar Ristanović, *Kosovsko pitanje 1974–1989* (Novi Sad: Prometej; Beograd: Informatika, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Slobodan Selinić, *Srbija 1980–1986*, 13–43.

mobilization of Serbs in the 1980s spurred a revival of the religiosity of Serbs, as well as the improvement of the reputation of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbian society.

### Age of Distrust

The considerable influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the growing interest of Serbs in religion during the 1980s can be reconstructed with the help of an analysis of the Serbian press from that period. During the 1980s, the daily newspapers and magazines in Serbia carefully monitored the renewal of Serbian religiosity and the increasing influence of the Orthodox clergy on Serbian politics and society. Articles and comments in the Serbian press from the time indicate that the communist regime did not fully control this process, but tried to take advantage of it. Thus, in the final decade of communism in Serbia, a *modus vivendi* was established between the state and the church, which had both social and political ramifications.

The growing rapprochement between the state and the Serbian Orthodox Church was reflected in the meeting of two Serbian leaders – Dobrivoje Vidić (President of the Presidency of Serbia) and Dušan Čkrebić (President of the Parliament of Serbia) – with the Serbian Patriarch German in 1981. The regime and the state-controlled press wanted to demonstrate its intention to establish a *modus vivendi* with the Serbian Orthodox Church. To mend fences with the Serbian Orthodox Church, the regime in Serbia made several substantial concessions. According to an article published in the Belgrade weekly *NIN* in October 1981, the bulk of the contentious issues in the relationship between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the regime in Belgrade were settled. The government approved the construction of new churches and a new building for the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade, and resolved the issue of health care for monks, nuns, and students of the Faculty of Theology. Furthermore, as mentioned in the *NIN* article, the regime signaled its readiness to address another major issue in the relations between the church and the state in Serbia. The Serbian Orthodox Church had insisted for decades on resuming the construction of the Saint Sava Temple in Belgrade, which had begun before World War II.

Although the regime was still hesitant to fully approve this undertaking, it did agree to the construction of the St. Sava Center instead of the temple, which was intended to house several important institutions of the Serbian Orthodox Church (church archive, library, and treasury). The *NIN* journalist emphasized that the St. Sava Center would serve as a “temple of goodwill between the church and the state.”<sup>5</sup>

The same article, published in October 1981, detailed the session of the Presidency of Serbia on the relationship between the state and the Serbian Orthodox Church. This session also indicated the regime’s readiness to improve relations with the church. It was also noted that the attitude of the majority of priests towards the state was positive, and some municipal authorities were criticized for confiscating church properties. The President of Serbia, Dobrivoje Vidić, emphasized that the government would have to change many things to maintain the trend of normalizing relations with the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>6</sup> The journalist from the Belgrade magazine emphasized that good relations with the Serbian Orthodox Church were necessary, among other things, due to the significant influence of the church in the rural areas of Serbia. Nevertheless, reading between the lines reveals another reason that motivated the regime in Belgrade to improve its relationship with the Serbian Orthodox Church. The author of the article quoted parts of an address of Dušan Čkrebić, in which the president of the Serbian assembly spoke about the right-wing, conservative faction within the Serbian Orthodox Church – the God–Worshipper Movement (Bogomoljački pokret):

The God–Worshipper Movement – these are religious fanatics, religiously and ethnically exclusive (...) And we cannot be indifferent to them. There is also Amfilohije Radović, an assistant professor at the Faculty of Theology, a Greek student, whose speech at the funeral of Justin Popović was on the verge of a criminal offense and he was reprimanded for it. It should be said that there are not many of them, but they have a certain influence.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Dragan Jovanović, “Put dobre volje,” *NIN*, October 4, 1981, 24–25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

This trend in the Serbian Orthodox Church, personified by Nikolaj Velimirović, was also criticized in the statement issued following the aforementioned session of the Presidency of Serbia: “The Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Serbia considers the latest attempts to rehabilitate Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, who was a known enemy of our socialist community and who was connected with the activities of God-Worshipper Movement, an expression of Serbian nationalism (...).”<sup>8</sup>

These harsh criticisms of the conservative factions in the Serbian Orthodox Church at the session of the Presidency of Serbia in the fall of 1981 suggest that the Serbian regime feared the strengthening of this current within the Serbian Orthodox community, which was strongly anti-communist. It can be assumed that by supporting the “moderate” wing of the SOC, led by Patriarch German, the regime sought to reduce the influence of the more radical segments of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

However, despite the regime’s efforts to improve its relations with the Orthodox community in Serbia, the Serbian Orthodox Church was not satisfied with its status in Serbian society. In the early 1980s, the *Pravoslavljje* magazine, the organ of the Patriarchate of the SOC, severely criticized the way several Serbian state-controlled media reported on the Serbian Orthodox Church and its clergy. For example, in March 1982, *Pravoslavljje* reported on the frequent attacks on the Serbian Orthodox Church and its clergy. In this regard, *Pravoslavljje* cited the magazine *Komuna*, which in January 1982 published an article about a meeting of a local committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which criticized the Serbian Orthodox Church for meddling in politics, instead of focusing on souls. The *Pravoslavljje* journalist saw in this attitude a jealousy of the popularity of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its clergy in socialist Serbia: “Perhaps someone is disturbed that we are still a God-believing nation, that our youth are still interested in religion and secrets of life.”<sup>9</sup>

A few months later, the organ of the Patriarchate of the SOC scrutinized an article in the Belgrade weekly *Ilustrovana politika*, which

---

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Obrad Simulov, “Neka se bave dušom, a ne politikom,” *Pravoslavljje*, March 15, 1982, 6.

criticized the decision of parents from the small Bosnian town of Rudo to send their daughter to the Serbian monastery of Žiča. The *Ilustrovana politika* reporter highlighted the considerable anxiety of Rudo's residents about the resurgence of interest in religion. A local communist official was also quoted as calling the girl's parents "religious fanatics." The author of the article published on April 1, 1982, in *Pravoslavljje*, stressed that the text was malicious and described Serbian monasteries as "the brightest spots of our nation," "the sources of literacy, culture, and spirituality" of Serbs, and "the pivots of Serbian history." *Pravoslavljje* further pointed out that the *Ilustrovana politika* weekly condemned the parents of the girl who went to a monastery, while at the same time absolving parents of children who became drug addicts, alcoholics, and thieves of any responsibility.<sup>10</sup> A month later, *Pravoslavljje* also criticized an article in *Omladinske novine* for negatively portraying the monks in the Serbian monastery of Kaona in northeastern Serbia.<sup>11</sup>

The organ of the Patriarchate of the SOC continued its conflict with the Belgrade state-controlled press during the summer of 1982. First, the Belgrade daily *Politika* came under fire for estimating that only 7% of the Serbian population were believers. The *Pravoslavljje* magazine refuted this estimate, arguing that respondents did not give honest answers out of fear. The same issue of *Pravoslavljje* severely criticized an article published on May 15, 1982 in the magazine *Omladinske novine*, titled "New Wave Believers." This Belgrade youth magazine reported on the large crowd of young people in the Holy Trinity Cathedral in the Serbian city of Niš for Good Friday, suggesting that the religiosity of most of them was superficial, i.e. that young people either went to church "by accident" or because they were "being attracted by the mystique surrounding these space and events, the desire to stand out from the crowd and to be something special." The author of the *Pravoslavljje* article expressed doubts about the veracity of the responses of the young people surveyed, claiming that the *Omladinske novine* magazine intended to mock the Serbian Orthodox Church and its believers. The

---

<sup>10</sup> Dragan Terzić, "Još povodom članka *Silom u manastir*: O jednom uzbuđenju," *Pravoslavljje*, April 1, 1982, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Milutin Knežević, "Ima li granica uvredama?," *Pravoslavljje*, May 1, 1982, 3.

author concluded the article by expressing his conviction that “our church is not without a future and that young people have not abandoned God.”<sup>12</sup>

In a similar vein, two years later, *Pravoslavlje* cast doubt on the findings of a survey that reported that 98% of students in the northern Serbian province, Vojvodina, believed that science would triumph over religion. *Pravoslavlje* disputed the sincerity of the surveyed students’ responses, denouncing such surveys as “a kind of psychological and moral pressure [on children].”<sup>13</sup>

In the first half of the 1980s, the Serbian Orthodox Church expressed dissatisfaction not only with the media coverage of the church and its clergy, but also with artistic representations of the Serbian Orthodox Church that portrayed it negatively. In May 1980, the organ of the Serbian Patriarchate condemned the portrayal of Serbian Orthodox clergy in Veljko Bulajić’s feature film *A Man Who Should Be Killed* and in a theater play directed by Dejan Mijač, which was being performed at the Serbian National Theater in Novi Sad.<sup>14</sup> In late 1980, priest Dragan Terzić published a critical review of Dobrilo Nenadić’s novel *Dorotej* in *Pravoslavlje*, which in 1978 had received a National Library of Serbia’s award. In Nenadić’s novel, Terzić saw an overt criticism of the Serbian Orthodox Church. He remarked: “The whole book is permeated with such vulgarisms and sacrilege that we are surprised by the fact that the publisher did not also think of the religious members of our society, whose religious feelings were hurt by this book.”<sup>15</sup>

In March 1982, Bishop Simeon condemned, in *Pravoslavlje*, Goran Stefanovski’s drama *Wild Meat*, which had been broadcast on Television Belgrade in prime time in February of the same year. Bishop Simeon perceived this drama not only as an attack on the clergy but also on the *slava* (a Serbian Orthodox tradition of celebrating a family’s patron saint).<sup>16</sup> A year later, *Pravoslavlje* revisited Veljko Bulajić’s film *A*

<sup>12</sup> Mitar Milovanović, “Bog u anketama i dušama mladih,” *Pravoslavlje*, July 1, 1982, 10.

<sup>13</sup> “Prva petoletka vojvođanske ateizacije,” *Pravoslavlje*, April 15, 1984, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Dušan Petrović, “To nije lik srpskog pravoslavnog sveštenika iz 1942. Godine,” *Pravoslavlje*, July 1, 1980, 5–6; “Čovek koga treba ubiti,” *Pravoslavlje*, May 15, 1980, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Dragan Terzić, “O Doroteju,” *Pravoslavlje*, December 15, 1980, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Episkop Simeon, “Povodom drame Divlje meso,” *Pravoslavlje*, March 15, 1982, 5.

*Man Who Should Be Killed*. Bishop Simeon not only denounced the way the Montenegrin bishop Sava was portrayed in the movie but also claimed to have identified hidden satanic messages in Bulajić's work, concluding his text by claiming that the film confirmed "that Satan exists and controls human souls."<sup>17</sup> In the same issue of *Pravoslavljje*, priest Dragan Terzić denounced the TV comedy *Doktorka na selu* for, among other things, scornfully mocking the Holy Archangel. In this regard, Terzić noted that there were no sanctions for such invectives against the church and Orthodoxy: "It seems that everyone has the right to publicly portray the church, religion, priests and believers whatever he likes, being aware that he could not be held accountable for it. It is an area where everyone has absolute freedom of thought and expression."<sup>18</sup>

In the following years, *Pravoslavljje* persisted in denouncing anti-religious trends in Serbian society. In May 1984, an article entitled "Church and Socialism" listed the most striking examples of anti-theism, i.e. anti-religious indoctrination in Serbia, primarily in Serbian schools. The author underlined that children were taught in schools that God did not exist and were being pressured not to go to church. In addition, he expressed his deep displeasure with media coverage of the church and clergy in Serbia.<sup>19</sup>

In March 1985, the organ of the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church stressed that the Serbian media were "full of atheistic attacks on believers." However, unlike earlier articles, the criticism was more moderate since the article called into question the responsibility of the regime for these media attacks on the church and believers. Moreover, the author of the article praised the decision of the Television Belgrade to air *the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* by Serbian composer, Stevan Mokranjac.<sup>20</sup>

This article in the *Pravoslavljje* magazine signaled a significant change in the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church within Serbian society. This shift was also indicated by media coverage of the church and religious issues. In the mid-1980s, the Belgrade press frequently reported

<sup>17</sup> Episkop Simeon, "Povodom filma Čovjek kojeg treba ubiti," *Pravoslavljje*, March 15, 1983, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Dragan Terzić, "O Doktorci," *Pravoslavljje*, March 15, 1983, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Dragan Terzić, "Crkva i socijalizam," *Pravoslavljje*, May 1, 1984, 6–7.

<sup>20</sup> Žarko Gavrilović, "Crkva i informisanje," *Pravoslavljje*, March 1, 1985, 3.

on the resurgence of religiosity in Serbian society, especially among the youth. Although the state-controlled press as a rule emphasized the superficiality of the new wave of religiosity in Serbia, there were no outright attacks on the Serbian Orthodox Church and believers. These articles were fairly impartial and were often based on scientific, primarily sociological, research into the religiosity of Serbian society in the 1980s. Given that the press at that time was under strict control of the regime, the impartiality of these articles indicates that the communist regime in Serbia had by then substantially modified its previous attitude towards the Serbian Orthodox Church, and even towards religion.

### On the Road to Desecularization

In July 1984, the Belgrade weekly *NIN* published an article on the growing religious fervor among Serbia's youth, highlighting the large number of young people who spent Good Friday at the city's main church, the Cathedral Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Belgrade. In addition, the article contained statistical data that confirmed the growing interest of young people in religion. It noted, among other findings, that a survey conducted in Subotica (northern Serbia) indicated that 41% of high school students were religious, as well as that the research conducted in Belgrade revealed a notable decline in the proportion of youth who did not attend church, in comparison to the research conducted in the 1970s.<sup>21</sup> In the same year, the *NIN* weekly published the findings of the research carried out by the Belgrade Institute of Social Sciences, which indicated that roughly 20% of Belgraders identified as religious. Nevertheless, this research suggests significant deviations from traditional religious dogmas. The article stated that only a limited number of those who declared themselves as believers accepted the theological interpretation of the world.<sup>22</sup> The leader of this research project concluded that the process of secularization in Serbia had stopped, stressing at the same time the indications that the process

---

<sup>21</sup> Slobodanka Ast, "Ujed anđela," *NIN*, July 29, 1984, 18–20.

<sup>22</sup> Stevan Nikšić, "Bog 1984. u Beogradu," *NIN*, September 9, 1984, 16–19.

of a “religious renewal” had begun.<sup>23</sup> In early 1987, *NIN* again underscored the growing interest of young Serbs in religion, reporting that churches in Belgrade were overcrowded on Christmas Eve.<sup>24</sup>

In the mid-1980s, the prestigious magazine *Duga* also covered the resurgence of religiosity in Serbia. An article published in May 1984 highlighted the large number of young residents of Belgrade who attended Belgrade churches on Good Friday.<sup>25</sup> Besides, in early 1987, *Duga* emphasized the growing interest of young people in Serbia in theological studies.<sup>26</sup> In March 1988, *Ilustrovana politika* also reported on the increase of religiosity in Serbian society. A large increase in the consumption of candles in churches, huge crowds in churches on the major religious holidays, as well as the rise in the sales of religious publications in Belgrade bookstores were taken as proof of the growing interest of Serbs in religious customs. Moreover, an Orthodox priest was quoted as pointing out the considerable rise in baptisms and church weddings in Belgrade. *Ilustrovana politika* also featured an interview with a Belgrade neurologist, who perceived the return to religion as a manifestation of a crisis of rationalist thought.<sup>27</sup>

The tangible proof of the regime’s changing attitude towards the Serbian Orthodox Church was the decision of the authorities to allow the resumption of construction of the Saint Sava Temple in Belgrade. It was the top priority of the Serbian Orthodox Church and consequently, the SOC insisted on it in every conversation with the representatives of the Serbian regime. After World War II, the communist government decided to halt the construction of the Saint Sava Temple, which had begun before the war. In the early 1980s, the regime proposed to the Serbian Orthodox Church that instead of the temple, the Centre of Saint Sava would be built on the same site, which would house the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Patriarchal

---

<sup>23</sup> Stevan Nikšić, “Kraj ateizacije,” *NIN*, September 9, 1984, 16–17.

<sup>24</sup> Ivan Kovačević, “Božićne poruke,” *NIN*, January 18, 1987, 17–18.

<sup>25</sup> Rajko Đurđević, “Zašto mladi sve više odlaze u crkvu? Mali vernici velikog petka,” *Duga*, May 5–19, 1984, 28–29.

<sup>26</sup> Vanja Bulić, “Petokraka na slavskom kolaču,” *Duga*, December 27–January 9, 1987, 16–19.

<sup>27</sup> Slobodan Reljić, “Bogoiskateljstvo nije nova partija,” *Ilustrovana politika*, March 22, 1988, 25–27.

Library, and the Museum of Frescos. Serbian Patriarch German, however, rejected and continued to insist on the resuming of the building of the Saint Sava Temple. The turning point came in May 1984, when Dušan Čkrebić was elected as the President of the Presidency of Serbia. According to Čkrebić's memoirs, soon after he was elected, he convinced powerful Serbian political figures to agree to restart the building of the St. Sava Temple. He notified Patriarch German about this decision after the meeting of the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church in May 1984:

With considerable excitement, I informed Patriarch German and the members of the Synod that the Serbian Orthodox Church can proceed with the building of the temple (...) This news seemed shocking. The dignitaries of the Serbian Orthodox Church did not hide their joy and satisfaction, but remained calm [...] Thus, I practically lifted the ban and enabled the resuming of the building of the Saint Sava Temple. This, at least in part, preserved the honor of my generation, which found the strength to cancel a political decision of its predecessors [...] <sup>28</sup>

The permission to continue the construction of the Saint Sava Temple was not the only concession granted by the regime to the Serbian Orthodox Church in the 1980s. In addition, the church received permission to build a new building for the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade, and the state also financially supported this undertaking.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, at the request of Patriarch German, a road was constructed from Novi Pazar (a city in southwestern Serbia) to the famous medieval monastery Đurđevi Stupovi.<sup>30</sup>

In 1989, the Belgrade students' magazine *Student* welcomed the government's decision to continue the building of the St. Sava Temple. The author of the article in the *Student* magazine rejected the claim that the construction of the St. Sava Temple was an "act of nationalism," and refuted the notion that Belgrade did not need such a gigantic sacred building. He put forward two arguments against this thesis: first, he emphasized that the proportions of the temple matched the

---

<sup>28</sup> Dušan Čkrebić, *Život, politika, komentari* (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2008), 266–271.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 277–278.

significance of St. Sava, and second, that until then Belgrade did not have a church that would meet the growing needs of the believers. The article concluded with the statement that “the Serbian people deserve this temple.”<sup>31</sup>

This article published in April 1989 hinted that the resuming of the construction of the temple had its fierce opponents. A few months later, an article in the *Komunist* magazine, the organ of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, indicated that opponents of strengthening the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church existed also at the very heart of the system. The *Komunist* article commented on an advertisement for a magazine of the Šabac diocese, *Glas crkve*, published in the most reputable Serbian daily newspaper, *Politika*. The *Komunist* article criticized the *Politika* daily for advertising the conservative church magazine, focusing in particular on its content. The *Komunist* journalist was particularly struck by Nikolaj Velimirović’s article in the advertised issue of the *Glas crkve* magazine, in which Velimirović referred to Marx as a “red beast” and Marxism as “an enemy of Christianity, European civilization, and the human race.” The entire article by Nikolaj Velimirović was, according to the *Komunist* journalist, a “militant anti-Marxist tirade.” The *Komunist* columnist questioned why *Politika* would publish this kind of advertisement, but offered no answer.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, the answer was quite obvious. The *Komunist* magazine was the mouthpiece of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, whereas the Belgrade daily *Politika* was under the control of the Serbian leadership, namely Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević. During the years of the so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution, Serbia progressively moved to the right, distancing itself from the Yugoslavia shaped by the 1974 constitution. The “*awakening of the people*” in Serbia (*dogaćanje naroda*) and the ethnic mobilization in Serbia, generated chiefly by the mounting ethnic tensions in Kosovo in the 1980s, separated the Serbian political class from the Yugoslav establishment bringing it closer to the right-wing opposition circles in Serbia as well as to the Serbian Orthodox Church. An indicator of the growing closeness of the Serbian

---

<sup>31</sup> Nevenka Milošević, “Beograd dobija svoju katedralnu crkvu,” *Student*, April 15, 1989, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Ljubomir Radović, “Otvorene karte,” *Komunist*, July 28, 1989, 19.

political class and the Serbian Orthodox Church in the late 1980s was the frequent contact between the leaders of the Serbian regime and the Serbian Orthodox Church, which was covered by the Belgrade press.

In June 1986, *Pravoslavlje* published an article about the celebration of the 800th anniversary of the Studenica monastery, which was attended by the Vice-President of the Presidency of the SR of Serbia, Vukoje Bulatović. In his speech on the occasion, Bulatović underlined that “there are few nations that can boast of such a monument.”<sup>33</sup> In May 1987, the President of Serbia, Ivan Stambolić, hosted a dinner for the members of the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which was also attended by Patriarch German. In an interview with *NIN*, Patriarch German emphasized that the meeting with Stambolić was “full of understanding and mutual respect” and he thanked the President of Serbia for the permission to continue the building of the Saint Sava Temple.<sup>34</sup> Two years later, the *Politika* daily published information on the front page about the meeting between Stambolić’s successor, President of Serbia Slobodan Milošević, and Patriarch German. On Christmas 1990 (January 7) a high-level delegation, headed by Serbian Prime Minister Stanko Radmilović, visited Patriarch German in the hospital. This information was also featured on the front page of *Politika*.<sup>35</sup>

Frequent interviews of Serbian Orthodox Church leaders with Belgrade’s non-church press were another indicator of the rapprochement between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the regime. In May 1983, the renowned *NIN* journalist Aleksandar Tijanić interviewed Amfilohije Radović, then assistant professor of the Faculty of Theology and later Metropolitan Bishop of Montenegro and the Littoral. In the introductory part of the interview, Tijanić described his interlocutor as educated and persuasive, but noted that he was a representative of the “hard-line” faction in the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Vukoja Bulatović, “Veliki dan Studenice,” *Pravoslavlje*, June 1, 1986, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Svetislav Spasojević, “Sve će doći na svoje mesto,” *NIN*, July 5, 1987, 20–23.

<sup>35</sup> “Slobodan Milošević primio patrijarha Germana,” *Politika*, June 24, 1989, 1; “Božićna poslanica patrijarha Germana,” *Politika*, January 7, 1990, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Aleksandar Tijanić, “Šta je večito, a šta prolazi,” *NIN*, May 8, 1983, 19–20.

The common elements of interviews with prominent dignitaries of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Patriarch German, Bishop Amfilohije Radović, and Atanasije Jefić) published in the Belgrade press towards the end of the 1980s were the issue of Kosovo and the process of the normalization of relations with the Serbian regime. In an interview with *Duga* on Christmas Day 1989, Amfilohije Radović stressed that the building of the St. Sava Temple was “evidence of deeper renovations.”<sup>37</sup> A year later, in an interview with *NIN*, Bishop Amfilohije remarked that the Serbian leaders “understood the vital interests of the people,” expressing hope that such a trend would continue.<sup>38</sup> In an interview with *NIN* on June 25, 1989, Patriarch German conveyed a similar message: “The current change in the attitude of the Serbian leadership towards the Serbian Orthodox Church is the beginning of close cooperation for the common good of all.”<sup>39</sup>

### Conclusion

The Serbian press coverage of the Serbian Orthodox Church and religious issues in the early 1980s reflected the considerable reservations of the Serbian public and the Serbian regime about the Serbian Orthodox Church and religion in general. Articles published in the organ of the patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church, *Pravoslavlje*, expressed significant dissatisfaction with the Serbian Orthodox Church’s status in Serbian society at that time. In the second half of the 1980s, however, the communist regime in Serbia chose to strengthen ties with the Serbian Orthodox Church. This reconciliation coincided – unsurprisingly – with major upheavals in former Yugoslavia during the late 1980s, particularly the escalation of ethnic tensions in Kosovo. Despite profound ideological differences, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the communist regime in Serbia (in particular after Milošević came to power in 1987) shared similar views on the Kosovo crisis. This enabled the development of a close alliance between these two centers of power

---

<sup>37</sup> Rajko Đurđević, “Stid će spasiti svet,” *Duga*, January 7–20, 1989, 24–27.

<sup>38</sup> Milorad Vučelić, “Sabor i dostojanstvo,” *NIN*, January 7, 1990, 15–17.

<sup>39</sup> Milo Gligorijević, “Kosovske lekcije iz istorije,” *NIN*, June 25, 1989, 4–6.

in Serbia. In an interview with *Duga* in August 1989, professor of the Faculty of Theology Atanasije Jeftić emphasized that it was the Kosovo crisis that contributed substantially to improving the relationship between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian regime, arguing that due to the escalation of tensions in Kosovo, the Serbian leadership better understood the position of the Serbian Orthodox Church on the Kosovo issue.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, scientists and journalists observed an increase in religiosity in Serbia, especially among young people. Given the significant role of Eastern Orthodoxy in the formation of the ethnic identity of the Serbs, the ethnic mobilization of the Serbs – driven largely by the Kosovo crisis in the 1980s – contributed enormously to a renaissance of religiosity in Serbia. In the years that followed, this phenomenon fundamentally changed the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbian society.

## B i b l i o g r a p h y

Adamović, Ljubiša S., Džon R. Lempi, and Rasel O. Priket. *Američko-jugoslovenski ekonomski odnosi posle Drugog svetskog rata*. Beograd: Radnička štampa 1990.

Ast, Slobodanka. "Ujed anđela." *NIN*, July 29, 1984, 18–20.

Bulatović, Vukoja. "Veliki dan Studenice." *Pravoslavlje*, June 1, 1986, 8.

Bulić, Vanja. "Petokraka na slavskom kolaču." *Duga*, December 27–January 9, 1987, 16–19.

Čkrebić, Dušan. *Život, politika, komentari*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2008.

Durđević, Rajko. "Zašto mladi sve više odlaze u crkvu? Mali vernici velikog petka." *Duga*, May 5–19, 1984, 28–29.

Durđević, Rajko. "Stid će spasiti svet." *Duga*, January 7–20, 1989, 24–27.

Episkop Simeon. "Povodom filma Čovjek kojeg treba ubiti." *Pravoslavlje*, March 15, 1983, 3.

Episkop Simeon. "Povodom drame Divlje meso." *Pravoslavlje*, March 15, 1982, 5.

Gavrilović, Žarko. "Crkva i informisanje." *Pravoslavlje*, March 1, 1985, 3.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ratomir Milić, "Kosovo je naša rana," *Duga*, 5–18 August, 1989, 30–34.

- Gligorijević, Milo. "Kosovske lekcije iz istorije." *NIN*, June 25, 1989, 4–6.
- Jovanović, Dragan. "Put dobre volje." *NIN*, October 4, 1981, 24–25.
- Knežević, Milutin. "Ima li granica uvredama?" *Pravoslavlje*, May 1, 1982, 3.
- Kovačević, Ivan. "Božićne poruke." *NIN*, January 18, 1987, 17–18.
- Milić, Ratimir. "Kosovo je naša rana." *Duga*, August 5–18, 1989, 30–34.
- Milošević, Nevenka. "Beograd dobija svoju katedralnu crkvu." *Student*, April 15, 1989, 14.
- Milovanović, Mitar. "Bog u anketama i dušama mladih." *Pravoslavlje*, July 1, 1982, 10.
- Nikšić, Stevan. "Bog 1984. u Beogradu." *NIN*, September 9, 1984, 16–19.
- Nikšić, Stevan. "Kraj ateizacije." *NIN*, September 9, 1984, 16–17.
- Petranović, Branko, and Momčilo Zečević. *Jugoslavija 1918–1988: Tematska zbirka dokumenata*. Beograd: Rad, 1988.
- Petrović, Dušan. "To nije lik srpskog pravoslavnog sveštenika iz 1942. godine." *Pravoslavlje*, July 1, 1980, 5–6.
- Radić, Radmila, and Momčilo Mitrović. *Zapisnici sa sednica Komisije za verska pitanja NR/SR Srbije: 1945-1978. godine*. Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2012.
- Radić, Radmila. *Država i verske zajednice 1945–1970*. Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2002.
- Radović, Ljubomir. "Otvorene karte." *Komunist*, July 28, 1989, 19.
- Reljić, Slobodan. "Bogoiskateljstvo nije nova partija." *Ilustrovana politika*, March 22, 1988, 25–27.
- Ristanović, Petar. *Kosovsko pitanje 1974–1989*. Novi Sad: Prometej, Beograd: Informatika, 2019.
- Selinić, Slobodan. *Srbija 1980–1986: Politička istorija od Tita do Miloševića*. Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2021.
- Simulov, Obrad. "Neka se bave dušom, a ne politikom." *Pravoslavlje*, March 15, 1982, 6.
- Slijepčević, Đoko. *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve. Knj. 3: Za vreme Drugog svetskog rata i posle njega*. Beograd: Catena mundi, 2018.
- Spasojević, Svetislav. "Sve će doći na svoje mesto." *NIN*, July 5, 1987, 20–23.
- Terzić, Dragan. "O Doroteju." *Pravoslavlje*, December 15, 1980, 11.
- Terzić, Dragan. "Crkva i socijalizam." *Pravoslavlje*, May 1, 1984, 6–7.
- Terzić, Dragan. "Još povodom članka *Silom u manastir*: O jednom uzbuđenju." *Pravoslavlje*, April 1, 1982, 3.
- Terzić, Dragan. "O Doktorki." *Pravoslavlje*, March 15, 1983, 3.
- Tijanić, Aleksandar. "Šta je večito, a šta prolazi." *NIN*, May 8, 1983, 19–20.
- Vučelić, Milorad. "Sabor i dostojanstvo." *NIN*, January 7, 1990, 15–17.

Vudvord, Suzan. *Balkanska tragedija: Haos i raspad posle Hladnog rata*. Beograd: Filip Višnjić, 1997.

Živojinović, Dragoljub. *Srpska pravoslavna crkva i nova vlast: 1944–1950*. Strbinje, Beograd, Valjevo, Munich: Univerzitetski obrazovani pravoslavni bogoslovi, Hilendarski fond, Zadužbina “Nikolaj Velimirović i Justin Popović”, 1998.



---

# CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY AS PRIMAL SPIRITUALITY? SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM SLOVENIA

Igor Jurekovič

## Introduction

Since its emergence in the early decades of the 20th century, Charismatic Christianity<sup>1</sup> has rapidly spread across the globe. Scientific estimates suggest that there are as many as 700 million Charismatics worldwide,<sup>2</sup> positioning the movement as the most successful of the 20th century and the fastest-growing religion in human history.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, its emergence is said to have accelerated the rise of Global Christianity.<sup>4</sup> While significant demographic shifts in the Global South certainly contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon,<sup>5</sup> the inquiry into why this specific form of Christianity has garnered such a substantial following remains inadequately addressed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Neither the scientific, nor the theological literature recognizes any agreed upon label for Charismatic Christianity. Given their origins, such Christian communities and churches are usually labelled as either Pentecostal, Pentecostal-Charismatic or merely Charismatic. Given my intention to pinpoint and evaluate a common quality of such Christians, I will be using *Charismatic* in order to flesh out their common characteristics.

<sup>2</sup> Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo, "Status of Global Christianity 2024."

<sup>3</sup> David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Peter Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 24, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614516477>.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Eric P. Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth? Demography and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Profile, 2010).

Explanations from the social sciences regarding the emergence of Charismatic Christianity typically adopt a functionalist perspective, recognising the interconnectedness of significant social transformations and the global proliferation of Charismatic movements. These theories typically link the latter to the former through the perspective of material deprivation or the Weberian correlation between a specific form of Christianity and economic advancement.<sup>6</sup>

However, anthropologists have noted that such explanations do not adequately address the specific characteristics of Charismatic Christianity. One particularly interesting theory was developed by the theologian Harvey Cox, who proposed an analysis of Charismatic Christianity as a manifestation of primal spirituality.<sup>7</sup> This paper explores the advantages of Cox's approach, which, while favoured by theologians, has been relatively overlooked in social scientific discussions. This paper will present an analysis grounded in an empirical study carried out in three Christian Charismatic communities in Slovenia, highlighting both the advantages and disadvantages of Cox's approach through evidence gathered from Slovenia and other regions.<sup>8</sup> To begin, I will present a concise overview of Charismatic Christianity both globally and locally in Slovenia, emphasising its historical evolution and theological traits. Next, I will examine the prevalent social scientific analyses regarding the significant appeal of Charismatic Christianity. Finally, I will offer a detailed summary of the primal spirituality approach

---

<sup>6</sup> Emilio Willems, *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); Christian Lalive d'Épinay, *Haven of the Masses: A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile*, World Studies of Churches in Mission (London: Lutterworth P, 1969); Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992); Paul Freston, "Pentecostalism in Latin America: Characteristics and Controversies," *Social Compass* 45, no. 3 (September 1998): 335–358, <https://doi.org/10.1177/003776898045003002>; Isabelle V. Barker, "Charismatic Economies: Pentecostalism, Economic Restructuring, and Social Reproduction," *New Political Science* 29, no. 4 (December 2007): 407–427, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393140701688305>.

<sup>7</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire from heaven: the rise of Pentecostal spirituality and the reshaping of religion in the twenty-first century* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Research behind this paper was funded by the research programme "Problems of Autonomy and Identities at the Time of Globalisation" (P6–0194) and the training of Young Researchers. Both are funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARIS).

as articulated by Harvey Cox and assess the value of understanding Christian Charismatics as adherents of primal spirituality, drawing on research findings from both international sources and Slovenia.

### Global and local vistas of Charismatic Christianity

Before sketching the global and local outlines of Charismatic Christianity, it is worth considering its complexities. As the eminent theologians Cecil Robeck and Amos Yong recently pointed out, brush strokes are of no use when it comes to outlining the characteristics of those phenomena labelled as Charismatic Christianity: “The definition of what it means to be ‘Pentecostal’ has become nearly as elusive as a grain of sand in a desert windstorm.”<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, definitions remain inescapable. While a discussion of its particular characteristics will be presented below, Charismatic Christianity can be broadly understood by referring to the baptism in the Spirit and the manifestation of *charismata* or gifts of the Spirit. In this light, I will be following Allan Anderson’s authoritative definition of Charismatic Christianity as “the churches with a ‘family resemblance’ that emphasize the working of the Holy Spirit, especially in the use of such ‘gifts of the Spirit’ as healings, prophecies and speaking in tongues.”<sup>10</sup>

Beyond this, Charismatic Christianity is difficult to pin down from a theological point of view. Problems arise from the religious make up of Charismatics – they include Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican churches, rendering any conclusive doctrinal foundation exceedingly elusive. Consider, for instance, conversion, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. These rites are perceived fundamentally differently among Protestant and Catholic Charismatics. Nevertheless, Charismatic Christians possess certain shared ideas and, primarily, common experiences.

---

<sup>9</sup> Cecil M. Robeck and Amos Yong, “Global Pentecostalism: An Introduction to Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, ed. Cecil M. Robeck and Amos Yong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Allan Anderson, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*, ed. Lamin Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2016), 653, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118556115.ch49>.

The primary distinction that separates Charismatics from other Christians is their practice of Spirit baptism. Charismatics claim that, while water baptism is required to receive the Spirit, Spirit baptism is a unique and independent experience accessible to all baptised Christians.<sup>11</sup> This is explained in biblical terms by Mark, who records John the Baptist saying: "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."<sup>12</sup> The experience of baptism in the Spirit is thought to empower the Christian in a manner similar to the formation of the first Apostolic church, as detailed in the *Acts of the Apostles*, the biblical wellspring of Classical Pentecostals and contemporary Charismatics alike: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the baptism in Spirit should be understood as a gateway to empowerment via the workings of the Spirit.<sup>14</sup> According to the Acts, apostles experienced the outpouring of the Spirit on the 50th day after Easter as they gathered in prayer and anticipation of the Spirit:

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.<sup>15</sup>

This leads us to the second defining characteristic of Charismatic Christianity: *glossolalia* or speaking in tongues. Baptism in the Spirit can be understood as key to the unlocking of gifts of the Spirit also known as *charismata* or *charisms*, from which Charismatic Christianity derives its name. While these gifts are well-known across Christian communities, Charismatics believe that these gifts are not confined to the Apostolic age of the first church but can also be attained in

---

<sup>11</sup> William Caldwell, *Krst v Svetem Duhu* (Ljubljana: Kristusova binškožna cerkev, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> Mr 1:8.

<sup>13</sup> Acts, 1:8.

<sup>14</sup> William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1993), 128.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-4.

contemporary times.<sup>16</sup> While the total number of gifts remains ambiguous, most common lists enumerate the nine gifts delineated in the initial Epistles to the Corinthians (12–14). Included among these is the gift of speaking in tongues, a specific form of prayer that remains incomprehensible to both the individual praying and any observers.<sup>17</sup> Speaking in tongues can be roughly defined as a “meaningless but phonologically structured human utterance believed by the speaker to be a real language, but bearing no systematic resemblance to any natural language, living or dead.”<sup>18</sup> Charismatics typically believe that praying in tongues means praying directly to God as narrated by Paul: “For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit.”<sup>19</sup> From this it follows that speaking in tongues is a gift that “edifies the one engaged in prayer,” which is why it is commonly viewed as a “useful practice,” which should be “cultivated in the believer’s daily life,” as by doing so a Christian “is built up in faith and in spiritual life.”<sup>20</sup>

Beyond these general outlines, Charismatic Christianity exhibits significant variety in both scientific and theological definitions and actual communities and churches.<sup>21</sup> Building on Allan Anderson’s work, Charismatic Christianity can be usefully categorized into three

<sup>16</sup> Keith Warrington, “Darovi Duha”, in *Binkoštniki v 21. stoletju: Identiteta, vera, praksa*, ed. Corneliu Constantineanu and Christopher J. Scobie (Ljubljana: Podvig, 2016), 193–217.

<sup>17</sup> Unless there is a person present, which has received the gift of interpreting and translating tongues into everyday speech.

<sup>18</sup> William John Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels: The Religious Language of Pentecostalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 2.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:2.

<sup>20</sup> Menzies and Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, 139.

<sup>21</sup> See for example: Walter Hollenweger, “After Twenty Years’ Research on Pentecostalism,” *Theology* 87, no. 720 (November 1984): 403–12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X8408700602>; Joel Robbins, “The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, no. 1 (October 2004): 119–23, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.32.061002.093421>; Michael Bergunder, “Constructing Pentecostalism: On Issues Of Methodology And Representation,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 27, no. 1 (April 2007): 52–71, <https://doi.org/10.1179/jeb.2007.27.1.005>; André Droogers, “Essentialist and Normative Approaches,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder and André Droogers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 30–50; Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard van der Maas, eds., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2007).

consecutive *waves*, whose representative communities and churches nowadays coexist: firstly, there are Classical Pentecostals, which emerged as an independent Protestant church during the first two decades of the 20th century; secondly, there is the *pentecostalisation* of other Christian churches, which took place during the first twenty years after the World War II, leading to the emergence of the Charismatic renewal; and thirdly, during the last decades of the 20th century, the pentecostalisation spread among large swaths of smaller Evangelical churches, giving rise to the Neocharismatics. This categorization is particularly useful as it highlights the varieties of institutional frameworks within Charismatic Christianity. Classical Pentecostals established their own Protestant churches, the Charismatic Renewal characterises the pentecostalisation of various Christian churches from within, and the Neocharismatics signify the institutional independence of the Charismatic impulse. In addition, there exists considerable scholarly debate regarding the distinction of an additional second wave, primarily composed of African Independent Churches, or a fourth wave of Charismatic Christianity, identified as the New Apostolic Reformation.<sup>22</sup> Given that these issues are still under discussion, I will follow the three waves categorisation.

The initial expression of Charismatic Christianity can be traced to the emergence of Pentecostalism at the beginning of the 20th century. Though there are a number of contemporary studies proving a multifaceted genealogy of Pentecostalism,<sup>23</sup> its origin is nevertheless commonly attributed to the Azusa Street revival, led by pastor William Seymour between 1906 and 1909.<sup>24</sup> Seymour effectively implemented the doctrine of initial evidence, which was developed in 1901 by former Methodist pastor Charles Fox Parham, who initiated a comparable revival in Topeka, Kansas, during which he articulated the concept of speaking in tongues as essential evidence of baptism in the Spirit. This

---

<sup>22</sup> Peter Wagner, *Churchquake! How the New Apostolic Reformation Is Shaking up the Church as We Know It* (Ventura: Regal, 1999); Allan Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions," in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson and Michael Bergunder (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 18.

<sup>23</sup> Bergunder, "Constructing Pentecostalism"; Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 36–39.

<sup>24</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Emanate Books, 2017).

theological cornerstone is integral to the Full Gospel doctrine, which serves as the theological foundation of Classical Pentecostalism. The Full Gospel emphasises Jesus Christ as central to Pentecostalism, encapsulating his significance through the concepts of salvation, sanctification, faith healing, and the Second Coming.<sup>25</sup>

As a Protestant church, Pentecostals inevitably fragmented into three major groups, which distinguished themselves along theological and social – particularly racial – lines. First, there are Wesleyan or Holiness Pentecostals, who trace their roots to the Holiness movement. Currently, these Pentecostals make up the largest Black Pentecostal communities such as the Church of God and the Church of God in Christ. Secondly, there are Baptist or Finished Work Pentecostals, represented today by, for example, the Foursquare Church and Assemblies of God, the largest worldwide Pentecostal network of churches. Thirdly, there are the Oneness Pentecostals, who, represent the most theologically distinct grouping within the Pentecostal family.<sup>26</sup>

The rise of Pentecostalism and the theological innovations they brought about did not go unnoticed among fellow Christians. Beginning in the early 1950s, the process of *pentecostalisation* or *charismatic renewal* began to reshape other Christian churches as well. This process started with fellow Protestant Christians, mainly Episcopalians, and continued within the Orthodox, Anglican and most famously the Catholic Church.<sup>27</sup> Pentecostalisation involved adopting key Pentecostal features; primarily the emphasis on the Baptism of the Spirit and the resulting manifestations of spiritual gifts, and a particular style of Pentecostal worship began to be recognised as integral to many a Christian church. This process was so evident that observers referred to it as a new Pentecostal revival among Christians, resulting in terms such as Neopentecostals and Catholic Pentecostals or Pentecostal

---

<sup>25</sup> Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1987), 20–22.

<sup>26</sup> Vinson Synan, “Pentecostalism: Varieties and Contributions,” *Pneuma* 9, no. 1 (1987): 31–49, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157007487X00047>; Anderson, “Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions”.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 157.

Catholics.<sup>28</sup> The Catholic Church was among the last to experience pentecostalisation, which took place only after Vatican II. However, it was the Catholic Charismatic Renewal that attracted the most followers during the second wave of Charismatic Christianity.

While Catholics represent the largest segment of the Charismatic renewal, the third wave of Charismatic Christianity is predominantly comprised of Protestant evangelicals. Also dubbed independent or post-denominational, the Neocharismatics represent the institutional independence of Charismatic Christianity since the 1980s.<sup>29</sup> Neocharismatic churches and communities are characterized by greater theological flexibility, seen either in relegating the importance of such staples of Pentecostalism as the doctrine of initial evidence or in numerous theological novelties. Among these novelties are the dissemination of prosperity theology, power evangelism, and holy laughter, alongside an emphasis on worship music. The rise of prosperity theology<sup>30</sup> can be traced back to the Word of Life movement and its founder Kenneth Hagin and to his successor Kenneth Copeland. Though initially a US product, prosperity gospel is now part-and-parcel of the largest Pentecostal and Neocharismatic communities in the Global South – such as the Brazilian *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* or the Nigerian *Redeemed Christian Church of God*.<sup>31</sup> Power evangelism is a form of evangelism that makes use of mass faith healing and ecstatic worship events, associated with the Toronto Blessing phenomenon.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics: The Origins, Development, and Significance of Neo-Pentecostalism* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976); René Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977); Meredith B. McGuire, *Pentecostal Catholics: Power, Charisma, and Order in a Religious Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

<sup>29</sup> Peter Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, Vine Books, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> Also known as the health and wealth gospel or name-it-and-claim-it theology.

<sup>31</sup> Amos Yong, "A Typology of Prosperity Theology: A Religious Economy of Global Renewal or a Renewal Economics?" in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement*, ed. Katherine Attanasi and Amos Yong (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 15–34; Virginia Garrard-Burnett, "Neopentecostalism and Prosperity Theology in Latin America: A Religion for Late Capitalist Society," *Iberoamericana – Nordic Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 42, no. 1–2 (February 2013): 21, <https://doi.org/10.16993/ibero.32>.

<sup>32</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, *Main Street Mystics: The Toronto Blessing and Reviving Pentecostalism* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003); Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, *Catch the Fire:*

Finally, the production of Charismatic worship music has been nearly monopolized by Hillsong, the Australian mega church. Hillsong music is now the unescapable repertoire of many a Charismatic church – be it Pentecostal, Charismatic renewal or Neocharismatic – leading to the *hillsongisation* of Christianity.<sup>33</sup> These three Neocharismatic novelties have long since been widely dispersed among Evangelical communities worldwide, making headway among other Charismatic communities as well.

The emergence of Neocharismatics and the proliferation of their novelties among Christians worldwide has made the already difficult task of approximating the number of Charismatics even harder. Scientific evaluations indicate that there are between 614 to 683 million Charismatic Christians globally, representing approximately a quarter of the total Christian population.<sup>34</sup> Should we regard Charismatics as an independent Christian denomination, they would rank as the second largest cohort of Christians, following Catholics. Among Charismatic Christians, the largest group consists of Neocharismatics, followed by members of different Charismatic renewals and lastly Classical Pentecostals. According to the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, there are 94 million Pentecostals, 206 million members of Charismatic renewals and 313 million Neocharismatics worldwide. Finally, it is imperative to highlight that Charismatic Christianity exhibits a significant geographical disparity with as much as 82% of all Charismatics residing in the Global South. Among the ten nations with the highest populations of Charismatics, the United States stands out as the sole representative from the Global North. In the regions of the Global South, Charismatics are nearly uniformly distributed across Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia.<sup>35</sup>

---

*Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Gerardo Martí, “The Global Phenomenon of Hillsong Church: An Initial Assessment,” *Sociology of Religion* 78, no. 4 (January 2018): 377–386, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx059>.

<sup>34</sup> See Johnson and Ross, “Atlas of Global Christianity 1910–2010,” 103; Johnson and Zurlo, “Status of Global Christianity 2024”.

<sup>35</sup> Jenkins, *The next Christendom*; Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910–2010* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 101–102.

On the other hand, statistics on European Charismatics present a stark contrast. Scientific assessments tend to vary to some degree: for example, the *Atlas of Global Christianity* estimates that there are 31.6 million Charismatics in Europe,<sup>36</sup> the research network GloPent, dedicated to researching global Pentecostalism, puts the figure at 37.5 million,<sup>37</sup> while William Kay and Anne Dyer, editors of *European Pentecostalism*, estimate the number at a mere 17 million.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, various estimations generally converge on the conclusion that Europe possesses the smallest proportion of Charismatics among all continents. Moreover, a notable aspect of the phenomenon in Europe is that a significant proportion of Charismatics are affiliated with the Charismatic renewal, predominantly within the Catholic Charismatic renewal.<sup>39</sup> However, perhaps it should come as no surprise that the most active segment of European Charismatic Christianity is in fact *migrant* Christianity. This phenomenon is dubbed *reverse mission*,<sup>40</sup> which encompasses the missionary striving of Global South migrants to convert Europe – in majority of cases by the way of African or Latin American Charismatic Christianity.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Johnson and Ross, “Atlas of Global Christianity 1910–2010,” 103.

<sup>37</sup> GloPent, “Europe,” accessed July 26, 2024, <https://www.glopent.net/global-pentecostalism/europe>.

<sup>38</sup> William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, eds., *European Pentecostalism* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 403.

<sup>39</sup> Burgess and van der Maas, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 815.

<sup>40</sup> Matthews Ojo, “Reverse Mission,” in *Encyclopaedia of Mission and Missionaries*, ed. Jonathan Bonk (New York: Routledge, 2007), 380–382.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Burgess, “Bringing Back the Gospel: Reverse Mission among Nigerian Pentecostals in Britain,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 4, no. 3 (2011): 429–49, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187489211X593499>; Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2014), 110–34; Eric Morier-Genoud, “‘Reverse Mission’: A Critical Approach for a Problematic Subject,” in *Bringing Back the Social into the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Veronique Altglas and Matthew Wood (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 169–88; Richard Burgess, “Megachurches and ‘Reverse Mission,’” in *Handbook of Megachurches*, ed. Stephen Hunt (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 243–268.

## Charismatic Christianity in Slovenia

Turning our attention now to Slovenia, very little is known about any kind of Slovenian Charismatics. Only a few theological and biographical accounts about Pentecostalism and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal are available, and no social-scientific studies of Slovene Charismatics have been undertaken.<sup>42</sup> In light of this, my PhD study is dedicated to producing the very first sociological account of Charismatic Christians in Slovenia.

Between January 2023 and May 2024, I conducted a field study within three Charismatic communities. Relying on participant observations, semi-structured interviews with leaders and members, as well as a survey, I conducted my study in the following communities: the Pentecostal church Emanuel in Maribor; the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which is not geographically limited; and the Neocharismatic community Christian centre. Overall, I conducted 41 interviews, 30 official participant observations, including three conducted in similar communities in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, and collected 189 survey responses across all three communities. However, the survey sample is not representative, as the breakdown of responses across communities is as follows: 121 Catholics responded, in comparison to 40 Pentecostals and 28 Neocharismatics. While considering these numbers, one should keep in mind the vast differences in sizes of studied communities. Nevertheless, I believe the data gathered can help provide sufficient scientific estimates, if not hard conclusions. I will draw upon some survey results later in this study.

Slovenia can be considered a paradigmatical example of European Charismatic Christianity. Although Pentecostals first appeared in what is now Slovenia in 1933, their growth has been somewhat modest, primarily limited to the more Protestant northeastern areas of a country

---

<sup>42</sup> Anton Marinko, "Nekaj misli o prenovi," in *Jezus me je poklical za svojo pričo*, ed. Emiliano Tardif (Župnijski urad Ljubljana-Črnuče, 1986), 85–87; Mihael Kuzmič, *Prvih sedem let: Binkoštno gibanje v Sloveniji v letih 1933-1941* (Ljubljana, Osijek: Duhovno obzorje; Evangeoski teološki fakultet, Institut za protestantske studije, 2003); Simona Ficko, "Religijska Konverzija," *Religija i Tolerancija* 20, no. 38 (2022): 251–272, <https://doi.org/10.18485/rit.2022.20.38.4>.

that is otherwise predominantly Catholic.<sup>43</sup> As explained to me by Andrej Bojanec, a well-known Pentecostal pastor, their growth had been stifled by both the socialist regime of former Yugoslavia and inner preoccupation with Holiness codes of conduct up until the 1990s. According to Mihael Kuzmič, there were 4250 Classical Pentecostals in Yugoslavia at the time of its collapse.<sup>44</sup> Spurred by the liberalisation of the Slovenian religious field and a shedding of more conservative codes of conduct, they have enjoyed a relative uptick in popularity. Currently, there are thirteen Pentecostal churches, which constitute the association of Slovene Classical Pentecostals, which is itself member of the Pentecostal European Fellowship and the aforementioned Assemblies of God union. There are no official statistics on church membership, so the best estimates put the number of Pentecostals at around 4000.<sup>45</sup>

Catholic Charismatics, on the other hand, are more numerous. The Slovenian Catholic Charismatic Renewal traces its roots to the early 1970s, when Anton Marinko, a Catholic priest, first witnessed speaking in tongues while on a trip to Ohio. Impressed by the experiential dimensions of the Holy Spirit, he began organising regular prayer meetings in Ljubljana in 1972, which, in the next 10 years, gave rise to the official Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Slovenia.<sup>46</sup> However, it was not until the 1990s, that is, after Slovenia gained independence and liberalised its religious field, that the Catholic Charismatics experienced a lift off, reaching its peak in terms of sheer numbers in the beginning of the 21st century at around 40 thousand Catholics.<sup>47</sup> However, due to the combination of the precarious position within the Catholic Church

---

<sup>43</sup> Mihael Kuzmič, *Prvih sedem let: Binkoštno gibanje v Sloveniji v letih 1933–1941* (Ljubljana, Osijek: Duhovno obzorje; Evangeoski teološki fakultet, Institut za protestantske studije, 2003); Štefan Kuzmič, “Kratka zgodovina binkoštnega gibanja v Sloveniji,” in *Plamen, Ki gori*, ed. Štefan Kuzmič and Sabina Maučec Scobie (Ljubljana: Podvig, 2023), 10–25.

<sup>44</sup> Kuzmič, *Prvih sedem let*, 12.

<sup>45</sup> The only available scientific estimation put the number at 973, which I believe to be overly conservative. See Burgess and van der Maas, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 648.

<sup>46</sup> Anton Marinko, *Očetova obluba: Karizmatično binkoštno gibanje v luči Nove zaveze in sedanjega izkustva* (Leskovec: Župnijski urad Leskovec pri Krškem, 1978); Marinko, “Nekaj misli o prenovi”.

<sup>47</sup> For similar estimations see also Burgess and van der Maas, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 658.

in Slovenia, as well as the inability to hand over the reins to younger generation, and the COVID-19 epidemic, their number drastically declined to about 8 to 10 thousand Catholic Charismatics, making about a half of all Charismatic Christians in Slovenia. Besides taking part in common Catholic rites, Catholic Charismatics weekly gather in small prayer or worship groups, which consist of up to 20 unofficial members. According to the official website, there are currently 90 prayer groups operating across Slovenia.<sup>48</sup>

Similar factors contributed to the rise of the Evangelical movement in Slovenia in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which in turn paved the way for the emergence of Neocharismatics. There are no official statistics when it comes to the Evangelical movement; however, there are some useful estimates. According to one such estimate, there are 43 Evangelical churches (including Classical Pentecostals) in Slovenia, as well as 13 non-church organizations.<sup>49</sup>

Although it is impossible to draw precise borders, Slovenia is home to a number of vibrant evangelical Neocharismatic churches, such as the Calvary Christian Church, which serves as a local representation of the well-known global Calvary Chapel movement, and the International Christian Community, which is led by former Michigan Assemblies of God missionary pastor Steve Telzerow. It is challenging to pinpoint the precise number of Neocharismatic churches in Slovenia because Neocharismatics often consist of Evangelical groups that underwent pentecostalization. Among these is the Christian Centre, a local affiliate of the International Network of Churches, a Neocharismatic church that originated in Australia and has its European headquarters in the UK. In Slovenia it was founded by Klemen Vidic, who became a Christian in the Pentecostal church in Ljubljana and was formally recognised as a religious community in 2003. Its largest communities are in Novo mesto and Ljubljana, though they also operate in Šentjur and Prevalje. In sum, I would estimate that there are about 700 Neocharismatics, with half of them belonging to the Christian centre.

---

<sup>48</sup> Prenova v Duhu, "Molitvena Občestva," accessed August 9, 2024, <https://prenova.rkc.si/>.

<sup>49</sup> Podvig, "Imenik Evangelijskih Cerkva in organizacij (Podvig, 2020)"; Evangelij.si, "Evangelijski," accessed July 21, 2024, <https://evangelij.si/>.

Overall, it is reasonable to assume that there are roughly 15,000 Slovenian Charismatics of all creeds, making them a small religious minority in a country of 2 million people. Despite the fact that the communities' sizes and member demographics differ significantly, they nevertheless have several fundamental traits in common. Due to the formal constraints of this paper, let me point out just one of them, which is particularly relevant in the light of the primal spirituality thesis under consideration: according to data gathered, the vast majority of Slovenian Charismatics are middle aged ex-Catholic converts. A typical religious narrative of my interviewees follows this pattern: first, they were socialised as Catholics, receiving all primary Catholic sacraments, and perceiving their faith as important, yet somewhat distant; second, they distanced themselves from the Church and their faith, only to experience a type of life crises, which, third, spurred a spiritual quest, eventually leading them to one of the Christian Charismatic communities.

Having briefly outlined my own research in Slovenia, let me now switch back to predominant studies of Charismatic Christianity before focusing on the primal spirituality thesis.

### Studying Charismatic Christianity

The patchy scholarly focus on Charismatics in Slovenia stands markedly at odds with the broader global scientific pursuits. Charismatic Christianity quickly became an interesting scholarly point of departure – first for theologians, quickly followed by numerous social scientific studies, predominantly undertaken in the Global South. Amongst most popular objects of investigation one can find the relationship between gender and the Charismatics;<sup>50</sup> the relationship between Charismatic Christianity and the neoliberal restructuring of societies of Latin

---

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Brusco, *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity," 131–137; Bernice Martin, "The Pentecostal Gender Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for the Sociology of Religion," in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion*, ed. Richard K. Fenn (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 52–66, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998571.ch3>.

America and sub-Saharan Africa;<sup>51</sup> and lastly, the question of religious embodiment amongst Charismatics.<sup>52</sup> No matter how important these studies have been in deepening our understanding of Charismatic Christianity, they are overshadowed by the number of those studies that try to explain why exactly have Charismatics been so successful in their missionary zeal. Such studies typically investigate the underlying factors contributing to the Charismatic surge within the context of broader social dynamics, particularly focusing on the various consequences of social modernisation in the Global South.

Charismatic Christianity is often perceived as the religion of the poor,<sup>53</sup> as the disposed masses either navigate the precarious realities of contemporary lives by seeking refuge in Charismatic communities or see them as levers of social mobility. The first group of studies see theories of deprivation and existential security as best equipped to explain the popularity of Charismatics;<sup>54</sup> while the second, the most popular of the two, is marked by neoweberian theories of affinity between capitalist development and doctrinal content of Charismatic Christianity.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> David Maxwell, “‘Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?’ Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. 3 (August 1998): 350, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1581574>; Isabelle V. Barker, “Charismatic Economies: Pentecostalism, Economic Restructuring, and Social Reproduction,” *New Political Science* 29, no. 4 (December 2007): 407–427, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393140701688305>.

<sup>52</sup> Wolfgang Vondey, “Embodied Gospel: The Materiality of Pentecostal Theology,” in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 102–19, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004344181\\_007](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004344181_007); Michael Wilkinson, “Pentecostalism, the Body, and Embodiment,” in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 15–35, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004344181\\_003](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004344181_003); Naomi Richman, “Machine Gun Prayer: The Politics of Embodied Desire in Pentecostal Worship,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35, no. 3 (September 2020): 469–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2020.1828506>.

<sup>53</sup> Cecília Loreto Mariz, *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 35; Paul Freston, “Pentecostalism in Latin America: Characteristics and Controversies,” *Social Compass* 45, no. 3 (September 1998): 341–342, <https://doi.org/10.1177/003776898045003002>; Robbins, “The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity,” 123–124.

<sup>54</sup> Christian Lalive d’Epinay, *Haven of the Masses: A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile*, World Studies of Churches in Mission (London: Lutterworth Publishing, 1969); Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992).

<sup>55</sup> Emilio Willems, *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); R. Andrew Chesnut, *Born*

While their implications diverge significantly, these two groups of approaches share a common functionalist tendency, wherein the social scientific explanation takes into consideration the specific beliefs of distinct Charismatic groups and seeks to understand how these beliefs align with their social conditions.<sup>56</sup>

While such studies have their fair share of critics,<sup>57</sup> discussing their merits in detail is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, what should be pointed out about sociological studies of Charismatic Christianity is the following: they rarely take Charismatic Christianity seriously in and of itself. They see it as a religion fitting into their scientific presuppositions of religion as a social phenomenon. I share these observations with authors such as sociologist Michael Wilkinson, who wrote that sociologists tend to reduce Charismatic Christianity – as any other religion – to a “sort of delusional behaviour, sectarian stance, material deprivation or market demand.”<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is anthropologists who took up the torch of taking Charismatic Christianity seriously as a specific kind of religion.<sup>59</sup> In particular, they point to the clear lack of social scientific rituals studies, which is quite peculiar, since Charismatic rituals – a

---

*Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Peter Berger, “Max Weber Is Alive and Well, and Living in Guatemala: The Protestant Ethic Today,” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 8, no. 4 (January 2010): 3–9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2010.528964>; Benjamin Kirby, “Pentecostalism, Economics, Capitalism: Putting the Protestant Ethic to Work,” *Religion* 49, no. 4 (October 2019): 571, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2019.1573767>.

<sup>56</sup> Trad Nogueira-Godsey, “Weberian Sociology and the Study of Pentecostalism: Historical Patterns and Prospects for the Future,” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 25, no. 2 (2012): 51–70; Trad Nogueira-Godsey, “First Impressions: American Sociology’s Early Encounters with Pentecostalism,” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 25, no. 1 (2012): 31–50.

<sup>57</sup> Birgit Meyer, “Pentecostalism and Neo-Liberal Capitalism: Faith, Prosperity and Vision in African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches,” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 20, no. 2 (2007): 5–28; Paul Gifford and Trad Nogueira-Godsey, “The Protestant Ethic and African Pentecostalism: A Case Study,” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 24, no. 1 (September 2011): 5–22, <https://doi.org/10.4314/jst.v24i1.70018>; Kirby, “Pentecostalism, Economics, Capitalism,” 578–588.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Wilkinson, “Sociological Narratives and the Sociology of Pentecostalism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, ed. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr and Amos Yong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 226, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCO9780511910111.016>.

<sup>59</sup> Cecil David Bradfield, “Deprivation and the Emergence of Neo-Pentecostalism in American Christianity,” *South African Journal of Sociology* 20 (1979): 36–47; Robbins, “The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity”.

particular Charismatic enactment of religion – can be thought of as the religious innovation they have managed to cultivate in different social settings.<sup>60</sup> In this light, Joel Robbins claims that rituals are not merely one of the most obvious features of Charismatic Christianity, “it is in social scientific terms the most important one.”<sup>61</sup> Indeed, there are also theologians who see Charismatic rituals as the core distinctive feature of Charismatic Christians. Even though particularly Protestant Charismatics usually guard against speaking of rituals as any sort of effective human action, rituals such as Sunday meetings or prayer and worship meetings nevertheless develop the necessary conditions for the cultivation of one specific Charismatic religious experience: the experience of God’s presence, which is commonly described as entering God’s presence or feeling the workings of the Spirit.<sup>62</sup>

This is why some speak of a *theology of encounter* when describing Charismatic Christianity as a religion, which in its core relies on a certain kind of experience. While such encounters may be described in terms of common features such as the baptism in the Spirit, they can also pertain to a type of experiences that are usually felt during intense concert-like worshipping sessions. The acknowledgement of Charismatic Christianity, both theologically and, in some instances, anthropologically, as a notably experiential religion leads me to engage in a discussion regarding its classification as a form of primal spirituality, as suggested by the theologian Harvey Cox.

### The primal nature of Charismatic Christianity

It should come as no surprise that theologians were the first to pay attention to the theological innovations introduced to the field of Christianity by the Charismatics. For example, the Pentecostal

<sup>60</sup> Martin Lindhardt, ed., *Practicing the Faith: The Ritual Life of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians* (Berghahn Books, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780857450487>.

<sup>61</sup> Joel Robbins, “The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism: Ritual and Pentecostal Globalization,” in *Practicing the Faith*, ed. Martin Lindhardt (Berghahn Books, 2011), 65, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780857450487-002>.

<sup>62</sup> Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal / Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1999); Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T & T Clark, 2008).

pastor-turned-researcher Walter Hollenweger, regarded as the founding father of Pentecostal studies, analysed five Christian roots of Pentecostalism: the Black root, the Catholic root, the Evangelical root, the critical root, and the ecumenical root.<sup>63</sup> Among them, it was the Black root, which, according to Hollenweger, was crucial in shaping Pentecostalism as a transcultural religious phenomenon. The Black root consists of the following elements: oral liturgy; narrativity of theology, and witness; maximum participation of believers; inclusion of dreams and vision into personal and public forms of worship; the correspondence between body and mind.<sup>64</sup> However, I should stress that Hollenweger went out of his way to say that the Black root – or any other root – does not correspond to any particular doctrine. Indeed, Hollenweger was convinced that that in terms of doctrine, “Pentecostalism is not a consistent whole.”<sup>65</sup> It was the Pentecostal religious *experience* that surpassed the importance of any theological formulae. Thus, what Hollenweger had in mind, when discussing the reasons for the Charismatic worldwide ascension, is rather something that can be best described as a particular *tone* of Christianity.<sup>66</sup>

The notion that we should look past doctrine in order to understand the rise of Charismatic Christianity brings us nicely to the work of the influential American theologian and Harvard religion professor Harvey Cox. In the 1960s, Cox became well known for his deliberation on the interplay between the secular and sacred, and the decline of organized, institutional religion in a contemporary urban setting, which he presented in *The Secular City*.<sup>67</sup> Though Cox vehemently opposed the so-called death of God theologians of the 1960s, he nevertheless attempted to develop a theology of the post-religious age, whose onset was then predicted by the majority of sociologists. After carefully setting out a theological view of the secularisation of religion, he was

---

<sup>63</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997).

<sup>64</sup> Hollenweger, “After Twenty Years’ Research on Pentecostalism,” 405–406.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 405.

<sup>66</sup> Joshua R. Zieffe, “The Charismatic Renewal: History, Diversity, Complexity,” in *Handbook of Global Contemporary Christianity*, ed. Stephen J Hunt (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 134.

<sup>67</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400848850>.

taken aback by the worldwide rise of Charismatic Christianity during the second half of the 20th century, which he dubbed the “unanticipated reappearance of primal spirituality in our time.”<sup>68</sup> Puzzled by this phenomenon, he set out to thoroughly analyse Charismatic Christians in the 1990s, publishing his results in the now-famous landmark study *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first century* (1995).<sup>69</sup> Writing in the early 1990s, Cox embarked on a study of the reasons behind what he described as a “religious renaissance” or a “renewed religious vitality”, whose one “particularly dramatic example” is Charismatic Christianity.<sup>70</sup>

Cox presented his argument regarding the factors contributing to the popularity of Charismatic Christians as follows. Charismatic Christianity is able to address “the spiritual emptiness of our time,” by reaching beyond “creed and ceremony” to what he termed “the core of human religiousness.”<sup>71</sup> This core is where one could find “primal spirituality,” which Cox dubbed as the “largely unprocessed nucleus of the psyche in which the unending struggle for a sense of purpose and significance goes on.”<sup>72</sup> It is this primal spirituality that Charismatics “restored,” by which they enable to recover three dimensions of this “elemental spirituality,” which Cox labelled as *primal speech*, *primal piety*, and *primal hope*.<sup>73</sup>

The first refers to the perhaps most well-known element of Charismatic Christianity – speaking in tongues. Cox claims that praying in the Spirit is a “language of the heart”, which Charismatics learn to speak in contrast to the “ultraspecialized terminologies and contrived rhetoric” of common contemporary parlance. The second dimension encompasses the more ecstatic elements of Charismatic collective gatherings – such as trance, dance, singing and healings, which Cox dub “archetypal religious expressions.”<sup>74</sup> Liking it to Chomsky’s theory of

---

<sup>68</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 71.

<sup>69</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

universal syntax, Cox claims that these pious expressions represent a “universal spiritual syntax.”<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, Cox believes that the emergence of primal piety is tied to the failure of “rationalistic assumptions of modernity” and the “strategies religions had used to oppose them.”<sup>76</sup> Finally, there is primal hope, which is corollary to the Pentecostal and Neocharismatic millennial anticipation of the Second coming of Jesus Christ. According to Cox, this outlook that “a radically new world age is about to dawn” is a transcendental type of hope. Thus, primal hope encompasses the eschatological fervour of the movement – especially of the early Classical Pentecostals.

Cox believes that to view Charismatic Christianity as a primal spirituality allows for its contextualisation within the broader history of human religion. This is crucial for his analysis of the reasons behind the worldwide surge of Charismatics. From this point of view, says Cox, the “contemporary reemergence” of primal speech, primal piety, and primal hope “becomes a little less baffling.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, it should come as no surprise to find a reference to the notion of *homo religiosus* in Cox’s argument. As a theologian, he claims that reappearance of primal spirituality “transcends all merely social or psychological explanations.”<sup>78</sup> Why is this so? According to Cox, primal spirituality in the form of Charismatic Christianity should remind us that “somewhere deep within us we all carry a *homo religiosus*,” making Charismatics a part-and-parcel of a human religious history.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, this latest episode speaks to the “spiritual crisis of our era,” consisting of “the ecstasy deficit.”<sup>80</sup> In this light, Cox identifies the emphasize on experience – as opposed to doctrine *per se* – as one of the reasons behind Charismatic popularity, since they seem to address the “ecstasy-deficient generation.”<sup>81</sup> According to Cox, primal spirituality as seen in elaborate and long-lasting worshipping

---

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

sessions was there throughout history, but was “suffocated by centuries of western Christian moralism and rationality.”<sup>82</sup>

It is the letter that dovetails nicely with the discussion of merits of Cox’s approach of which two will be emphasised – his willingness to take Charismatic Christianity seriously in itself as well as the tying of the emergence of Charismatic Christianity to religious change – not decline. This, however, does not shield Cox from ahistorical assertions and falling trap to taking the claims of Charismatics too seriously as I explain below, where I will claim that what is lacking in Cox’s approach is an appropriate theory of religion. Additionally, it is yet to be determined to what extent the dimensions of primal spirituality are implemented in practice or simply asserted by declarations of beliefs.

### Discussing the merits of the primal spirituality thesis

Engaging with Charismatics themselves, Cox claims that we ought to understand Charismatic Christianity as a certain kind of *experiential spirituality*. It is worth pointing out that his was not a default scholarly point of view at the time of his writing, when social scientific studies of Charismatics were only beginning to gather pace, making Cox’s contribution extremely valuable. Only later did renowned scholars of religion begin to write in a similar vein. For example, David Martin, famous for his study of Pentecostals in Latin America, wrote in 2002 that Pentecostals should be understood as a type of spirituality “bearing resemblance to New Age spirituality.”<sup>83</sup> Margaret Poloma also wrote that Charismatic Christianity should be understood as a “distinct type of ‘spirituality’ rather than ‘religion,’”<sup>84</sup> as did the anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann, who noticed that Charismatic Christianity – much like New Age spiritualities – offers an “intense spiritual experience.”<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>83</sup> David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, Religion in the Modern World (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003), 3.

<sup>84</sup> Poloma, *Main Street Mystics*, 22.

<sup>85</sup> Tanya M. Luhrmann, “Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary U.S. Christianity,” *American Anthropologist* 106, no. 3 (September 2004): 518, <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2004.106.3.518>.

Furthermore, Cox related the emergence of Charismatic Christianity onto the world scene to the struggle between two types of religiosities – fundamentalism and experientialism.<sup>86</sup> Setting fundamentalism aside, he found the common bases of experiential religious movements such as certain Charismatics, Buddhists, Hindus, and New Agers in their restoring of experience as the core of their religion. By doing so, he laid the groundwork for emerging sociological studies of the religion of the heart, while also contributing to existing studies of the spiritual turn.<sup>87</sup>

That said, it is worth taking a look at the empirical evidence either supporting or opposing Cox's claims about the nature of primal spirituality. In terms of primal speech, the speaking in tongues is less common than one might expect reading Cox's thesis. According to the *Spirit and Power* study conducted by the Pew Research Center, only up to 51% of Pentecostals and 68% of Charismatics in the US claim to have spoken in tongues; the same holds for 50% of Pentecostals and 26% of Charismatics in Brazil. The trend continues elsewhere – up to 76% of Pentecostals and 32% of Charismatics in Nigeria claim to never speak in tongues.<sup>88</sup> Though less pronounced, the same can be said about Charismatic Christians in Slovenia. Among Pentecostals, 25% of believers say they have not experience praying in tongues, even though 90% of them have experienced baptism in the Spirit. Similar figures can be seen amongst Catholic Charismatics – 26% of them never spoke in tongues, even if 93% of them were baptised in the Spirit. Interestingly, nearly the same can be said about Neocharismatics in my study – 22% of them have not received the gift of speaking in the Spirit, while 93% of them have been baptised in the Spirit.<sup>89</sup> Based on such data, the importance of primal speech dimension of Charismatic Christianity as

---

<sup>86</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 299–323.

<sup>87</sup> Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers, “The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46, no. 3 (September 2007): 305–20, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2007.00360.x>; Galen Watts, *The Spiritual Turn: The Religion of the Heart and the Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

<sup>88</sup> Pew Research Center, *Spirit and Power, A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals* (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2006), 17.

<sup>89</sup> These figures should be understood as heuristic orientations, less so as undeniable scientific facts as the size of the sample varies significantly.

primal spirituality might be overstated. This might be due to its doctrinal importance, which does not translate to actual practice. I will return to this point later.

Let us turn our attention to primal piety, which encompasses distinctive characteristics of Charismatic communal gatherings such as “trance, vision, healing, dreams and dance.”<sup>90</sup> Referring again to the *Spirit and Power* study, we can firstly see the shades of this notion in Charismatics’ church attendance – the vast majority of them attend religious services at least once per week, making them by far the most communally engaged Christians.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, we can see that amongst the dimensions proposed by Cox, it is faith healing that is the most commonly witnessed and experienced practice of primal piety: up 62% of Pentecostals and 46% of Charismatics in the US have witnessed or experienced divine healing; the same can be said about 77% of Pentecostals and 31% of Charismatics in Brazil, and 79% of Pentecostals in Nigeria. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, experiencing divine healing is more common among Slovenian Charismatic Christians. For example, 95% of Pentecostals claim to have experienced a healing of an illness or injury; the same is true for 85% of Charismatic Catholics and 88% of Neocharismatics. These results seem to back up Cox’s claim about primal piety.

However, I believe it is in *worshipping* sessions that one can observe the most pronounced case of primal piety. When asked how important worshipping is to them on a scale from very unimportant to very important, 87% of Slovenian Charismatics say that it is very important. While worshipping is usually linked to communal sessions, it is something that should not be relegated to the separate religious sphere, even if it is the most common space, where worshipping takes place. For example, 87% of Charismatics in Slovenia say they worship at home; and 82% of them worship God in their car. While worshipping at the church, 96% of Charismatics sing; 80% of them clap, and about half of them pray silently or out loud and speak in tongues silently or out loud. Such data – in combination with field observations – does justice

---

<sup>90</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 82.

<sup>91</sup> Pew Research Center, “Spirit and Power,” 20.

to Cox's claims about primal piety to a much larger extent than in the case of primal speech.

Lastly, let us turn to primal hope. During my study amongst Slovenian Charismatics, the eschatological fervour very rarely came to light. Not one interviewee, either a representative or a member, spoke about the anticipation of Jesus' second coming. The same is true for my year-and-a-half-long fieldwork participant observations. The belief in the imminent rapture was a never a topic of preaching. International studies paint a somewhat more complicated picture. Belief in the rapture is very common amongst Pentecostals – but less so amongst Charismatics. On average, at least 90% of Pentecostals believe in the rapture in the US, Brazil, and Nigeria. The number of Charismatics sharing their beliefs is around 70 percent – in some cases, like in Brazil, considerably lower at 48 percent.<sup>92</sup> Excluding Pentecostals, the *Spirit and Power* study shows that the belief in the rapture is indeed higher among Charismatics than other Christians, but barely. Taking these figures into account, primal piety seems to be the least pronounced dimension of primal spirituality, holding mainly for Classical Pentecostals, which is in line with their traditional theology.

What can be said about Charismatic Christianity as primal spirituality in the light of empirical data? It is certainly true that Charismatics are primarily experiential Christians, which could be framed as a certain type of (primal) piety. However, the importance of speaking in tongues as a form of primal speech and especially the prominence of primal hope seems to be heavily influenced by doctrinal statements – and less so by actual practice.<sup>93</sup>

However, it is Cox's theoretical presuppositions, which are most problematic from a scientific point of view. There are two reasons for it. Firstly, even though he correctly acknowledges the lack of theological coherence among Charismatics, he nevertheless takes doctrinal statements of Classical Pentecostals as having precedence over actual practice when formulating his approach; secondly, his central claim vis-à-vis

---

<sup>92</sup> Pew Research Center, "Spirit and Power," 26.

<sup>93</sup> See Menzies and Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, 1993; Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*, 1997.

history of religion is based on the presumption of a *homo religiosus*, which should be treated with great scepticism. Before elaborating, let me take a sidestep.

Writing in the early 2000s in *The Future of Faith* (2009), Cox set out a three-part history of Christianity, consisting of the “age of faith”, “age of belief” and the “age of the Spirit.”<sup>94</sup> The first one refers to the earliest Christianity, which was followed by the age of belief, which covers the formation and the consolidation of various Christian orthodoxies up to the beginning of the age of Spirit, associated with the emergence of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements during the 20th century. Cox asserts that the Charismatic reemergence of primal spirituality represents the future of Christianity, a future that is intrinsically linked to its past due to notable similarities with the age of faith. Indeed, he sees in Charismatic primal piety and primal speech, which many take as “deviations or unwarranted innovations,” as “retrievals of elements that were once accepted feature of Christianity.”<sup>95</sup> Cox writes that the Charismatic “animated worship” as well as the “concern for the downtrodden and left-out people of the world” provide a glimpse of the “transition of the Age of Belief” into the age of the Spirit. This was also his position back when writing *Fire from Heaven*. He described early Charismatics as “praying that God would renew and purify a Christianity they believed was crippled by empty rituals” as Christianity “lapsed into writing meticulous creeds and inventing lifeless rituals.”<sup>96</sup> It is noteworthy that the belief that the future of Christianity must mirror its past is a prevalent perspective among Charismatics themselves. For example, one of the leading figures of the Catholic Charismatic renewal claimed during our interview that the Catholic Church can only survive as a *charismatic* Catholic Church. By this he meant that the Catholic Church needs to put the religious charismatic experience of encountering God at the very heart of its practice:

Personal experience can speak to people because there is no objection to it. This is what God has done for me, this is what I have experienced, this is

---

<sup>94</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Future of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>96</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 56, 58.

my faith, and this is why I believe. I can tell you this, you can accept it or not, but you can't say that it didn't happen to me [...] God is concrete in my life.

Furthermore, he is convinced that the Church today should follow the example of the first Apostolic church, which spread by means of testimony: "How did the first church spread, if not like that?" he asked, adding: "the Church today must be a Church of witnesses." Cox must have taken similar statements and positioned them at the core of his theory of primal spirituality, rendering it normative rather than merely theoretical or empirical.

This notion dovetails with the final, and perhaps most fundamental, drawback of Cox's theory – his emphasis on the notion of *homo religiosus*. Cox asserts that the rise of Charismatic Christianity, or "the unforeseen eruption of spiritual lava," should remind us that "somewhere deep within us we all carry a *homo religiosus*."<sup>97</sup> As such, Charismatics are seen as part-and-parcel of the "larger and longer history of human religiousness."<sup>98</sup> In this view, Charismatic Christianity is successful because it reaches back and taps into a core religiosity, which remained "latent beneath centuries of western Christian moralism and rationality."<sup>99</sup> Thus, Cox not only argues for a notion of inherent human religiosity to be found in the notion of *homo religiosus*, but also argues that at the heart of it lies experiential spirituality. The notion of *homo religiosus* is in itself dubious and should be regarded as a result of "speculation in faith than rational reasoning."<sup>100</sup> While the advances in cognitive science of religion do show that the evolutionary cognitive development of humans provide necessary cognitive tools for some kind of religiosity in terms of developing beliefs in supranatural agents, it hardly makes religiosity an innate human characteristic.<sup>101</sup> It is even more of a leap

---

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>100</sup> Sławomir Szajter, "The Concept of Homo Religiosus and Its Philosophical Interpretations," *Anglojęzyczny Suplement Przeglądu Religioznawczego*, no. 1 (2013): 17.

<sup>101</sup> Paul Bloom, "Religion Is Natural," *Developmental Science* 10, no. 1 (January 2007): 147–151, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7687.2007.00577.x>; Justin L. Barrett, "Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4, no. 1 (January 2000): 29–34, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613\(99\)01419-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613(99)01419-9); Scott Atran and Joseph Henrich, "The Evolution of Religion: How Cognitive By-Products, Adaptive Learning Heuristics, Ritual

to claim that a certain kind of experiential religiosity lies at the core of *homo religiosus*, which Charismatics successfully tap into.

What should then be made of the primal spirituality thesis? Evaluating the merits of the primal spirituality thesis, one can say the following: the overwhelming benefit of Cox's approach lies in his readiness to consider Charismatic Christianity as a form of spirituality rather than a specific theological doctrine. This ability leads to Cox's main contribution to scholarly discourse: the reenforced recognition of fundamental religious change – not decline – as tied to the emergence of experience, rather than belief or doctrine based religious movements.

Although empirical evidence does not support the assertion regarding the significance of primal speech and primal hope, it is evident that Charismatics exhibit a distinct form of piety that frequently remains neglected by social scientific researchers of Charismatic movements. The notion of primality appears to be more of a normative assertion than an empirical observation. However, I contend that it is unnecessary to consider both claims together. One can – as Cox does – recognize in Charismatics a distinctive type of spirituality or piety without recourse to the somewhat speculative notion of innate human religiosity.

The question which remains unanswered, however, is why this type of religiosity has become so prominent over the last 100 years. While Cox does not claim to provide a definitive answer to this question, his work nevertheless offers a valuable starting point for further inquiry.

### Conclusions

Even after decades of studies, the characteristics of Charismatic Christianity and the reasons for its popularity remain unclear to the scholarly eye. In the introductory pages of the now-famous edited collection of essays *Pentecostals after a Century* (1999), Harvey Cox wrote that Charismatic Christianity represents a “quiet revolution” of the

---

Displays, and Group Competition Generate Deep Commitments to Prosocial Religions,” *Biological Theory* 5, no. 1 (March 2010): 18–30, [https://doi.org/10.1162/BIOT\\_a\\_00018](https://doi.org/10.1162/BIOT_a_00018).

global religious landscape.<sup>102</sup> If we are to understand the reasons behind this “spiritual resurgence”, I believe social scientists must pay greater attention to what Cox wrote about their experiential inclinations – all the while casting aside Cox’s normative stances on the history of human religiosity. On the other hand, paying greater attention to the distinctive features of Charismatics as Cox did, pushes social scientists beyond their theoretical presuppositions about what constitutes contemporary religions. Examining the evolving characteristics of modern religions, it is essential to evaluate our analytical frameworks. Failure to address this may result in overlooking the fundamental aspects of movements like Charismatic Christianity, consequently hindering both empirical and theoretical engagement with the phenomenon.

Thus, while Cox’s contribution may be imperfect, it should stand as a worthwhile signpost in our analytical endeavours.

## B i b l i o g r a p h y

Albrecht, Daniel E. *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality*. Sheffield: Academic Press, 1999.

Anderson, Allan. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Anderson, Allan. “Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity.” In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*, edited by Lamin Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond, 653–663. Hoboken, Wiley, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118556115.ch49>.

Anderson, Allan. “Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions.” In *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, edited by Allan Anderson and Michael Bergunder, 13–29. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

Anderson Allan, and Walter Hollenweger, eds. *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999.

Anderson, Robert Mapes. *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992.

---

<sup>102</sup> Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 9.

Atran, Scott, and Joseph Henrich. "The Evolution of Religion: How Cognitive By-Products, Adaptive Learning Heuristics, Ritual Displays, and Group Competition Generate Deep Commitments to Prosocial Religions." *Biological Theory* 5, no. 1 (March 2010): 18–30. [https://doi.org/10.1162/BIOT\\_a\\_00018](https://doi.org/10.1162/BIOT_a_00018).

Barker, Isabelle V. "Charismatic Economies: Pentecostalism, Economic Restructuring, and Social Reproduction." *New Political Science* 29, no. 4 (December 2007): 407–427. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393140701688305>.

Barrett, Justin L. "Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4, no. 1 (January 2000): 29–34. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613\(99\)01419-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613(99)01419-9).

Berger, Peter L. "Max Weber Is Alive and Well, and Living in Guatemala: The Protestant Ethic Today." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 8, no. 4 (January 2010): 3–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2010.528964>.

Berger, Peter L. *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*. Berling: De Gruyter, 2014.

Bergunder, Michael. "Constructing Pentecostalism: On Issues of Methodology and Representation." *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 27, no. 1 (April 2007): 52–71. <https://doi.org/10.1179/jeb.2007.27.1.005>.

Bloom, Paul. "Religion Is Natural." *Developmental Science* 10, no. 1 (January 2007): 147–151. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7687.2007.00577.x>.

Bradfield, Cecil David. "Deprivation and the Emergence of Neo-Pentecostalism in American Christianity." *South African Journal of Sociology* 20 (1979): 36–47.

Brusco, Elizabeth Ellen. *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1995.

Burgess, Richard. "Bringing Back the Gospel: Reverse Mission among Nigerian Pentecostals in Britain." *Journal of Religion in Europe* 4, no. 3 (2011): 429–449. <https://doi.org/10.1163/187489211X593499>.

Burgess, Richard. "Megachurches and "Reverse Mission." In *Handbook of Megachurches*, edited by Stephen Hunt, 243–268. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Burgess, Stanley M., and Eduard van der Maas, eds. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007.

Caldwell, William. *Krst v Svetem Duhu*. Ljubljana: Kristusova binškožna cerkev, 1976.

Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty*. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

Cox, Harvey. *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*. Paperback ed. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1995.

Cox, Harvey. *The Future of Faith*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009.

Cox, Harvey. *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Dayton, Donald W. *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1987.

Droogers, André. "Essentialist and Normative Approaches." In *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, edited by Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, and André Droogers, 30–50. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

Evangelij.si. "Evangelij.si." Accessed July 21, 2024. <https://evangelij.si/>.

Ficko, Simona. "Religijska Konverzija." *Religija i tolerancija* 20, no. 38 (2022): 251–272. <https://doi.org/10.18485/rit.2022.20.38.4>.

Freston, Paul. "Pentecostalism in Latin America: Characteristics and Controversies." *Social Compass* 45, no. 3 (September 1998): 335–358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003776898045003002>.

Garrard-Burnett, Virginia. "Neopentecostalism and Prosperity Theology in Latin America: A Religion for Late Capitalist Society." *Iberoamericana* 42, no. 1–2 (February 2013): 21. <https://doi.org/10.16993/ibero.32>.

Gifford, Paul, and T Nogueira-Godsey. "The Protestant Ethic and African Pentecostalism: A Case Study." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 24, no. 1 (September 2011): 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.4314/jsr.v24i1.70018>.

GloPent. "Europe". Accessed July 26, 2024. <https://www.glopent.net/global-pentecostalism/europe>.

Hollenweger, Walter. "After Twenty Years' Research on Pentecostalism." *Theology* 87, no. 720 (November 1984): 403–412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X8408700602>.

Hollenweger, Walter. *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997.

Houtman, Dick, and Stef Aupers. "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46, no. 3 (September 2007): 305–320. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2007.00360.x>.

Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Johnson, Todd M., and Kenneth R. Ross. "Atlas of Global Christianity 1910–2010." Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

Johnson, Todd, and Gina Zurlo. "Status of Global Christianity 2024." 2024.

Kaufmann, Eric P. *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth? Demography and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Profile, 2010.

Kay, William K., and Anne E. Dyer, eds. *European Pentecostalism*. Boston: Brill, 2011.

Kirby, Benjamin. "Pentecostalism, Economics, Capitalism: Putting *the Protestant Ethic* to Work." *Religion* 49, no. 4 (October 2019): 571–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2019.1573767>.

Kuzmič, Mihael. *Prvih sedem let: Binkoštno gibanje v Sloveniji v letih 1933–1941*. Ljubljana, Osijek: Duhovno obzorje, Evangeoski teološki fakultet, Institut za protestantske studije, 2003.

Kuzmič, Štefan. "Kratka zgodovina binkoštnega gibanja v Sloveniji." In *Plamen, ki gori*, edited by Štefan Kuzmič in Sabina Maučec Scobie, 10–25. Ljubljana: Podvig, 2023.

Kwiyani, Harvey. *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2014.

Lalive d'Épinay, Christian. *Haven of the Masses: A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile*. London: Lutterworth Publishing, 1969.

Laurentin, René. *Catholic Pentecostalism*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977.

Lindhardt, Martin, ed. *Practicing the Faith: The Ritual Life of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians*. Berghahn Books, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780857450487>.

Luhrmann, Tanya M. "Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary U.S. Christianity." *American Anthropologist* 106, no. 3 (September 2004): 518–528. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2004.106.3.518>.

Marinko, Anton. "Nekaj misli o prenovi." In *Jezus me je poklical za svojo pričo*, by Emiliano Tardif. 85–87: Župnijski urad Ljubljana-Črnuče, 1986.

Marinko, Anton. *Očetova obljuba: Karizmatično binkoštno gibanje v luči Nove zaveze in sedanjega izkustva*. Leskovec: Župnijski urad Leskovec pri Krškem, 1978.

Mariz, Cecília Loreto. *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

Martí, Gerardo. "The Global Phenomenon of Hillsong Church: An Initial Assessment." *Sociology of Religion* 78, no. 4 (January 2018): 377–386. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx059>.

Martin, Bernice. "The Pentecostal Gender Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for the Sociology of Religion." In *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion*, edited by Richard K. Fenn, 52–66. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998571.ch3>.

Martin, David. *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003.

Martin, David. *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

Maxwell, David. "‘Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?’: Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. 3 (August 1998): 350. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1581574>.

McGuire, Meredith. *Pentecostal Catholics: Power, Charisma, and Order in a Religious Movement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.

Menzies, William W., and Stanley M. Horton. *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*. Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1993.

Meyer, Birgit. "Pentecostalism and Neo-Liberal Capitalism: Faith, Prosperity and Vision in African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 20, no. 2 (2007): 5–28.

Morier-Genoud, Eric. "‘Reverse Mission’: A Critical Approach for a Problematic Subject." In *Bringing Back the Social into the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Veronique Altglass and Matthew Wood, 169–188. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

Nogueira-Godsey, Trad. "First Impressions: American Sociology’s Early Encounters with Pentecostalism." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 25, no. 1 (2012): 31–50.

Nogueira-Godsey, Trad. "Weberian Sociology and the Study of Pentecostalism: Historical Patterns and Prospects for the Future." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 25, no. 2 (2012): 51–70.

Ojo, Matthews. "Reverse Mission." In *Encyclopaedia of Mission and Missionaries*, edited by Jonathan Bonk, 380–382. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Pew Research Center. *Spirit and Power, A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals*. Washington, D.C.: The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2006.

Poloma, Margaret M. *Main Street Mystics: The Toronto Blessing and Reviving Pentecostalism*. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2003.

Quebedeaux, Richard. *The New Charismatics: The Origins, Development, and Significance of Neo-Pentecostalism*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1976.

Richman, Naomi. "Machine Gun Prayer: The Politics of Embodied Desire in Pentecostal Worship." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 469–483. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2020.1828506>.

Robbins, Joel. "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, no. 1 (1 October 2004): 117–143. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.32.061002.093421>.

Robbins, Joel. "The Obvious Aspects of Pentecostalism: Ritual and Pentecostal Globalization". In *Practicing the Faith*, edited by Martin Lindhardt, 49–67. Berghahn Books, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780857450487-002>.

Robeck, Cecil M. *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement*. Nashville, Tennessee: Emanate Books, 2017.

Robeck, Cecil M., and Amos Yong. "Global Pentecostalism: An Introduction to Introduction." In *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, edited by Cecil M. Robeck and Amos Yong, 1–10. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Podvig. "Imenik evangelijskih Cerkva in organizacij". Accessed September 21, 2024. <https://evangelij.si/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Imenik-evangelijskih-cerkva-Skrajsan.pdf>.

Prenova v Duhu. "Molitvena občestva." Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://prenova.rkc.si/>.

Samarin, William John. *Tongues of Men and Angels: The Religious Language of Pentecostalism*. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Synan, Vinson. "Pentecostalism: Varieties and Contributions." *Pneuma* 9, no. 1 (1987): 31–49. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157007487X00047>.

Szajter, Slawomir. "The Concept of Homo Religiosus and Its Philosophical Interpretations." *Anglojęzyczny Suplement Przeglądu Religioznawczego*, no. 1 (2013): 17–27.

Vondey, Wolfgang. "Embodied Gospel: The Materiality of Pentecostal Theology." In *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, 102–19. Leiden: Brill, 2017. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004344181\\_007](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004344181_007).

Wagner, C. Peter. *Churchquake! How the New Apostolic Reformation Is Shaking up the Church as We Know It*. Ventura, Calif: Regal, 1999.

Wagner, C. Peter. *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Publications, Vine Books, 1988.

Warrington, Keith. "Darovi Duha." In *Binkoštniki v 21. stoletju: Identiteta, vera, praksa*, edited by Corneliu Constantineanu and Christopher J. Scobie, 193–217. Ljubljana: Podvig, 2016.

Warrington, Keith. *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter*. London: T & T Clark, 2008.

Watts, Galen. *The Spiritual Turn: The Religion of the Heart and the Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Wilkinson, Michael. "Pentecostalism, the Body, and Embodiment." In *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, 15–35. Leiden: Brill, 2017. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004344181\\_003](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004344181_003).

Wilkinson, Michael. "Sociological Narratives and the Sociology of Pentecostalism." In *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, edited by Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, and Amos Yong, 215–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCO9780511910111.016>.

Wilkinson, Michael, and Peter Althouse. *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*. DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014.

Willems, Emílio. *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967.

Yong, Amos. "A Typology of Prosperity Theology: A Religious Economy of Global Renewal or a Renewal Economics?" In *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement*, edited by Katherine Attanasi and Amos Yong, 15–34. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Zieffle, Joshua R. "The Charismatic Renewal: History, Diversity, Complexity." In *Handbook of Global Contemporary Christianity*, edited by Stephen J Hunt, 123–143. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

---

## A B S T R A C T S

Sara Hajdinac

*Religious Identity as the State's Tool in Modification of Public Space and Its Identity:  
The Yugoslavian Concept of the Two Squares in Maribor*

In 1934, after several years of struggle, the Orthodox community of Maribor was awarded a lot to construct a new sacral building on General Maister Square (then Yugoslavia Square) in Maribor, at the site of the recently removed monument dedicated to Vice Admiral Wilhelm Tegetthoff. The square boasts a rich symbolic history, wherein the very names of the square have clearly indicated the identity of the city over time. The new government sought to modify public space in accordance with the new state – these spaces had to be given not only a Slovenian, but also a Yugoslavian identity. The first modification was changing the square's name to Yugoslavia Square, after which a Serbian Orthodox church was built in the Serbian national architectural style by architect Momir Korunović (1883–1969), who designed all three Serbian sacral buildings in the province of Dravska Banovina (in Maribor, Ljubljana, and Celje). The Church of St. Lazarus was to be ideologically connected to the monument dedicated to King Aleksandar Karađorđević on Liberty Square, which would provide a clear Yugoslavian identity to the city district.

*Keywords: art and politics, Orthodox architecture, identity, Maribor.*

Aleksandra Zibelnik Badii

*State of Governance of Religious Communities in Former Yugoslavia and the  
Developments of the Bahá'í Community and Jehovah's Witnesses*

Yugoslavia officially recognized major religious communities, including the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the Islamic community, while around fifty smaller, unrecognized groups also existed by the 1960s. This study examines state laws and the development of two such communities – Jehovah's Witnesses and the Bahá'í community. Despite a legal framework that guaranteed religious freedom, including the separation of church and state and protection from coercion, the reality was shaped by tensions between government policies and religious groups. This analysis explores how national identity, legal compliance, and

ideological alignment with the state influenced the treatment of smaller religious communities within Yugoslavia's broader framework of religious freedom.

*Keywords: religious community, church, conversion, Yugoslavia, communism, persecution, acceptance.*

Todor Lakić, Boris Vukićević, and Saša Knežević  
*The Dynamics of Atheization in Postwar Communist Montenegro*

This article presents the concept and dynamics of secularization policies and the atheization process in Montenegrin society following World War II. The process of secularization began with the Communist Party's rise to power and had its most significant manifestations until the mid-1950s. In this research, in addition to the specific secularization policies of the communist authorities, an analysis of the relationship of the state, that is, the communist authorities, towards the religious communities in Montenegro is given. Montenegro was the Yugoslav republic in which the process of atheization and secularization took place most intensively in relation to the federal level. The research presented in the article also includes an analysis of the results of the secularization of the three largest religious communities in Montenegro.

*Keywords: secularization, communism, Montenegro, religious communities, atheism.*

Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja  
*The Prohibition of Women's Veiling in the Region of Gora*

This paper examines the application of the Act on the Removal of the Veil (*Zar and Feredža*) in the Gora region in the mid-20th century. Gora is a mountainous area located between the peaks of Šarplanina, Koritnik, and Korab. In administrative terms, it includes the borough of Dragaš and 18 villages.

The Act on the Removal of the Veil came into effect in the People's Republic of Serbia in 1951 and can be seen as an extremely radical step by the communist government. Its application involved the prohibition of wearing garments that

Muslim women used to cover their heads and bodies. With this Act, two ideals of communist governance were promoted – the emancipation of women and the achievement of gender equality. According to the memories of the people from Gora, the Act had a very traumatic effect on many women in the Gorani community. It primarily disrupted the continuity of a centuries-old tradition of wearing headscarves and *terlik*, which also expressed the marital status of women within the Gorani community.

This paper starts from the assumption that the ban on covering represents a strategy for promoting secular political ideologies, while highlighting the limitation of religious freedoms. The Act on the Removal of the Veil is analysed within the framework of a state-imposed process of secularization in the local community.

*Keywords: Act on the Ban of Wearing the Veil, Muslims, Gora region, Gorani people, secularization.*

Jure Ramšak

*The Problem with Courtesy: Wooing the Catholic Church in Late Socialist Slovenia*

Particularly in comparison with the neighbouring republic of Croatia, where the ethnicization of religion, beginning in the early 1970s, was rather pronounced, relations between the Catholic Church and state authorities in Slovenia – the northernmost republic of Yugoslavia – remained relatively calm and cooperative throughout the late socialist period. Based on an analysis of a wide range of public and archival documents, this paper demonstrates how Slovenian religious policy was proposed as a sophisticated example of how believers could be successfully integrated into modern socialist society, and was presented as such to Vatican diplomats, international experts, and foreign journalists. Up until 1990, the communication between Party officials and the Church hierarchy conveyed a distinct tone of courtesy, and local priests generally encountered a supportive or at least unobstructive attitude when, for instance, proposing the construction of new churches. At the same time, however, the more independent intellectuals, Catholics and Marxists alike, who urged the Party to abandon its orthodox Marxist-Leninist understanding of religion in favour of a genuine dialogue, were marginalized. Thus, a proper debate about a topic so essential for socialist secular society never took place, and the late socialist religious policy left behind an ambiguous legacy.

*Keywords: Church-State relations, Yugoslavia, Slovenia, self-management socialism, civil rights of believers.*

Petar Dragišić

*Serbian Press and Eastern Orthodoxy in Serbia in the 1980s*

The paper examines Serbian press coverage of the resurgence of Eastern Orthodoxy in Serbia during the 1980s. It is based on an analysis of the most influential daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers and magazines printed in Serbia between 1980 and 1990. The research aims to reconstruct perceptions of the revival of religiosity in Serbia during this period and to identify its root causes. The research showed a close causal connection between the change in public perception of religion, that is, the revival of religiosity in Serbia, and the changed political environment in former Yugoslavia in the 1980s. The research suggests that the escalation of tensions in Kosovo triggered the ethnic mobilization of Serbian society and consequently strengthened the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbia in the late 1980s.

*Keywords: Serbia, religiosity, 1980s, Yugoslavia, Eastern Orthodoxy.*

Igor Jurekovič

*Charismatic Christianity as Primal Spirituality? Some Observations from Slovenia*

The global emergence of Charismatic Christianity ought to be regarded as one of the most consequential phenomena in contemporary history. With estimates reaching as high as 700 million adherents, Charismatics from various denominations have heralded the emergence of Global Christianity. Their considerable popularity has prompted numerous scholarly analyses aimed at elucidating the factors contributing to the emergence of Charismatic Christianity. Social scientists often elaborate on functionalist explanations, suggesting that the popularity of Charismatics can be understood through varying responses to social modernisation. Such explanations, however, frequently neglect the theological innovations inherent to Charismatic Christianity, which garners greater focus from theologians. Among them, Harvey Cox notably asserted that the widespread appeal of Charismatic Christianity can be attributed to its embodiment of experiential primal spirituality. Cox elaborated on three dimensions of Charismatic Christianity as a manifestation of primal spirituality: primal speech, primal piety, and primal hope. The objective of this article is to elucidate Cox's argument and to examine the advantages of this approach while also offering insights derived from fieldwork conducted among Charismatics in Slovenia. The article posits that Cox's approach

merits appreciation among social scientists, as it identifies unique characteristics of Charismatic spirituality, while also acknowledging its limitations.

*Keywords: Charismatic Christianity, primal spirituality, religion, Slovenia, religious change.*



---

## P O V Z E T K I

Sara Hajdinac

*Verska identiteta kot orodje države pri spreminjanju javnega prostora in njegove identitete: jugoslovanski koncept dveh trgov v Mariboru*

Po večletnih prizadevanjih je bilo leta 1934 mariborski pravoslavni skupnosti dodeljeno zemljišče za gradnjo nove sakralne stavbe na takratnem Jugoslovanskem trgu (današnjem Trgu generala Maistra) v Mariboru, na mestu nedavno odstranjenega spomenika viceadmiralu Wilhelmu Tegetthoffu. Trg ima bogato simbolno zgodovino, saj je že z imenom jasno odražal vsakokratno identiteto mesta v različnih zgodovinskih obdobjih. Nova oblast je skušala ta javni prostor preoblikovati po podobi nove države in mu dati ne samo slovensko, temveč tudi jugoslovansko identiteto. Tako je bil najprej preimenovan v Jugoslovanski trg, nato pa je na njem zrastle srbska pravoslavna cerkev. Stavbo je v srbskem narodnem slogu projektiral arhitekt Momir Korunović (1883–1969), ki je zasnoval vse tri srbske sakralne stavbe v Dravski banovini (v Mariboru, Ljubljani in Celju). Cerkev sv. Lazarja je bila zamišljena kot ideološka povezava s spomenikom kralju Aleksandru Karađorđeviću na Trgu svobode, s čimer naj bi ta predel mesta dobil jasno jugoslovansko identiteto.

*Ključne besede: umetnost in politika, pravoslavna arhitektura, identiteta, Maribor.*

Aleksandra Zibelnik Badii

*Status verskih skupnosti v nekdanji Jugoslaviji ter razvoj Skupnosti Bahá'í in Jehovovih prič*

Poleg največjih verskih skupnosti, tj. rimokatoliške in pravoslavne cerkve ter islamske skupnosti, ki so bile uradno priznane, je v Jugoslaviji v šestdesetih letih 20. stoletja obstajalo okoli 50 manjših verskih skupin, ki niso uživale tega statusa. Avtorica v raziskavi preučuje pravni okvir, ki je v socialistični Jugoslaviji urejal versko svobodo, in razvoj dveh tovrstnih skupnosti – Jehovovih prič in Skupnosti Bahá'í. Čeprav je ustava formalno zagotavljala svobodo veroizpovedi, vključno z ločitvijo med cerkvijo in državo ter zaščito pred prisilo, je v praksi prihajalo do napetosti med vladnimi politikami in verskimi skupnostmi. V članku je razčlenjeno, kako so nacionalna identiteta, pravna skladnost in usklajevanje z državno

ideologijo vplivali na obravnavo manjših verskih skupnosti v širšem okviru verske svobode v Jugoslaviji.

*Ključne besede: verska skupnost, cerkev, konverzija, Jugoslavija, komunizem, preganjanje, sprejemanje.*

Todor Lakić, Boris Vukićević in Saša Knežević  
*Dinamika ateizacije v povojni komunistični Črni gori*

V članku sta predstavljena koncept in dinamika politik sekularizacije in procesa ateizacije črnogorske družbe po koncu druge svetovne vojne. Proces sekularizacije se je začel s prihodom Komunistične partije na oblast in se najizraziteje manifestiral do sredine petdesetih let 20. stoletja. V raziskavi je poleg konkretnih politik sekularizacije, ki jih je izvajala komunistična oblast, obravnavan tudi odnos države oziroma komunističnih oblasti do verskih skupnosti v Črni gori. Proces ateizacije in sekularizacije je namreč v Črni gori v primerjavi z drugimi jugoslovanskimi zveznimi republikami potekal najintenzivneje. V članku predstavljena raziskava vključuje tudi analizo rezultatov sekularizacije treh največjih verskih skupnosti v Črni gori.

*Ključne besede: sekularizacija, komunizem, Črna gora, verske skupnosti, ateizem.*

Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja  
*Prepoved zakrivanja žensk na območju Gore*

Prispevek obravnava izvajanje Zakona o prepovedi nošnje zara in feredže v Gori sredi 20. stoletja. Gora je hribovita pokrajina, ki se razteza med vrhovi Šar planine, Koritnika in Koraba. Upravno gledano, zajema mestno občino Dragaš in 18 vasi.

Zakon o prepovedi uporabe zara in feredže je v Ljudski republiki Srbiji začel veljati leta 1951 in šteje za izjemno radikalen korak komunistične vlade. Njegovo izvajanje je vključevalo prepoved nošnje pokrival, s katerimi so si muslimanske ženske zakrivala lase, obraz in telo. Z njim je komunistična oblast spodbujala prizadevanja za dva ideala: emancipacijo žensk in enakost spolov. Toda sodeč po spominih ljudi iz Gore, je ta zakon zelo travmatično vplival na številne ženske v goranski skupnosti, saj je prekinil večstoletno tradicijo nošnje naglavnih rut in *terlika*, črnega ogrinjala, ki je v goranski skupnosti označeval tudi zakonski stan žensk.

Izhodišče prispevka je predpostavka, da je bila prepoved zakrivanja strategija za spodbujanje sekularnih političnih ideologij in obenem izraz omejevanja verskih svoboščin. Avtorica v njem razčleni Zakon o prepovedi nošnje zara in feredže v okviru procesa sekularizacije, ki ga je lokalni skupnosti vsilila država.

*Ključne besede: Zakon o prepovedi uporabe zara in feredže, muslimani, regija Gora, Goranci, sekularizacija.*

Jure Ramšak

*Težava z vljudnostjo: dvorjenje Katoliški cerkvi v poznosocialistični Sloveniji*

V nasprotju zlasti s sosednjo Hrvaško, kjer je bila etnicizacija religije, ki se je začela v zgodnjih sedemdesetih letih 20. stoletja, precej izrazita, so Katoliška cerkev in državne oblasti v Sloveniji skozi celotno poznosocialistično obdobje ohranjale razmeroma mirne in sodelovalne odnose. Članek na podlagi analize številnih javnih in arhivskih dokumentov prikazuje, kako je bila slovenska religijska politika vatikanskim diplomatom, mednarodnim strokovnjakom in tujim novinarjem predstavljena kot zgled uspešnega vključevanja vernikov v moderno socialistično družbo. Do leta 1990 je komunikacija med partijskimi funkcionarji in cerkveno hierarhijo potekala v izrazito vljudnostnem tonu in na splošno so bili lokalni duhovniki, kadar so, denimo, predlagali gradnjo novih cerkva, deležni vsaj ne-nasprotovanja, če že ne odkrite podpore. Istočasno pa so bili potisnjeni na rob neodvisni intelektualci – tako med katoličani kot marksisti –, ki so partijo pozivali, naj opusti ortodoksno marksistično-leninistično razumevanje religije in se zaveže za pristen dialog. Tako do prave razprave o tej temi, ključni za socialistično sekularno družbo, nikoli ni prišlo, zapuščina poznosocialistične religijske politike pa ostaja dvoumna.

*Ključne besede: odnosi med Cerkvijo in državo, Jugoslavija, Slovenija, samoupravni socializem, civilne pravice vernikov.*

Petar Dragišić

*Srbski tisk in vzhodno pravoslavje v Srbiji v obdobju 1980–1990*

Na podlagi analize najvplivnejših dnevnik, tedenskih in mesečnih časopisov in revij, ki so v Srbiji izhajali med letoma 1980 in 1990, avtor v članku preučuje, kako je srbski tisk poročal o ponovnem vzponu vzhodnega pravoslavja v Srbiji v tem obdobju. Cilj raziskave je bil rekonstruirati dojemanje ponovne obuditve religioznosti v Srbiji v osemdesetih letih 20. stoletja in odkriti temeljne razloge zanj. Izsledki študije so pokazali tesno vzročno povezavo med spremenjenim političnim okoljem v nekdanji Jugoslaviji osemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja in spremembo v javnem dojemanju religije oziroma oživitvijo religioznosti v Srbiji. Iz raziskave izhaja, da je stopnjevanje napetosti na Kosovu konec osemdesetih let sprožilo etnično mobilizacijo v srbski družbi in posledično okrepilo vpliv Srbske pravoslavne cerkve v Srbiji.

*Ključne besede: Srbija, religioznost, 1980–1990, Jugoslavija, vzhodno pravoslavje.*

Igor Jurekovič

*Karizmatično krščanstvo kot prvinska duhovnost? Nekaj opažanj iz Slovenije*

Svetovni razmah karizmatičnega krščanstva bi morali razumeti kot enega najpomembnejših pojavov v sodobni zgodovini. S skupnostjo karizmatikov različnih religij, ki po nekaterih ocenah šteje kar 700 milijonov pripadnikov, se namreč napoveduje pojav globalnega krščanstva. Njihova množičnost je spodbudila številne analize, s katerimi znanost poskuša osvetliti dejavnike, ki so prispevali k vzponu karizmatičnega krščanstva. Družboslovci pogosto razvijajo funkcionalistične razlage, v katerih predpostavljajo, da je priljubljenost karizmatikov mogoče razumeti kot enega od raznolikih odzivov na modernizacijo družbe. Pri tem pa pogosto zanemarjajo teološke inovacije, neločljivo povezane s karizmatičnim krščanstvom, ki se jim bolj posvečajo teologi. Med njimi je zlasti Harvey Cox mnenja, da gre vsesplošno privlačnost karizmatičnega krščanstva pripisati njegovemu utelešenju izkustvene prvinske duhovnosti. Cox podrobneje obravnava vse tri dimenzije karizmatičnega krščanstva kot manifestacije prvinske duhovnosti: prvinsko govorno izražanje, prvinsko pobožnost in prvinsko upanje. Cilj tega članka je pojasniti Coxovo utemeljitev in preučiti prednosti takšnega pristopa, hkrati pa predstaviti spoznanja, pridobljena s terenskimi raziskavami med karizmatiki v Sloveniji. Avtor

v članku zagovarja, da bi si Coxov pristop med družboslovci zaslužil večjo veljavo, saj osvetljuje edinstvene značilnosti karizmatične duhovnosti, obenem pa priznava tudi njegove omejitve.

*Ključne besede: karizmatično krščanstvo, prvinska duhovnost, religija, Slovenija, religijske spremembe.*



---

## ABOUT AUTHORS / O AVTORICAH IN AVTORJIH

### SARA HAJDINAC

Sara Hajdinac graduated in 2022 with a double master's degree in history and history of art at the Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor. Since then, she has been working as a Young Researcher at the ZRS Koper Institute of Historical Studies, focusing on the Glagolitic phenomenon in northwestern Istria. She also studies 20th-century political, cultural, and art history, with a focus on the World War I (1914–1918) and the interwar (1918–1941) period in Slovenia and the wider European area.

Sara Hajdinac je leta 2022 pridobila dvojni magisterij iz zgodovine ter umetnostne zgodovine na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Mariboru. Od takrat dela kot mlada raziskovalka v Znanstveno-raziskovalnem središču Koper, kjer se raziskovalno posveča glagolici in glagoljaštvu v severozahodni Istri. Preučuje tudi politično, kulturno in umetnostno zgodovino 20. stoletja s poudarkom na prvi svetovni vojni (1914–1918) in medvojnem obdobju (1918–1941) v slovenskem in širšem evropskem prostoru.

### ALEKSANDRA ZIBELNIK BADIJ

Aleksandra Zibelnik Badij, a doctoral student at the Department of History at the University of Ljubljana with a degree in translation from the same institution, focuses her research on religious studies, women's rights, interreligious dialogue, and new religious movements. She is dedicated to applying academic insights practically, actively engaging in interreligious collaboration and advocating for women's rights through organizing national and international events. Her work bridges theory and practice, aiming to foster understanding across religious communities and support women's roles within and outside of this context. Through her research and community involvement, Aleksandra advances inclusive approaches in both historical and contemporary religious studies.

Aleksandra Zibelnik Badij je doktorska študentka na Oddelku za zgodovino na Filozofski fakulteti UL. Na isti fakulteti je pred tem diplomirala tudi iz prevajal-

stva. Raziskovalno se osredotoča na religijske študije, pravice žensk, medverski dialog in nova religijska gibanja. Svoja znanstvena spoznanja uresničuje tudi v praksi, pri čemer je dejavno vključena v medversko sodelovanje in organizacijo nacionalnih in mednarodnih dogodkov v podporo pravic žensk. Pri svojem delu povezuje teorijo in prakso s ciljem doseganja večjega razumevanja med verskimi skupnostmi in podpiranja vloge žensk v tem kontekstu kot tudi širše. Tako v zgodovinskih kot v sodobnih religijskih študijah zagovarja uporabo vključujočih pristopov.

### TODOR LAKIĆ

Todor Lakić is a teaching assistant at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Montenegro and a Ph.D. candidate in Russian geopolitics. His fields of research are Russian geopolitics of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Russian foreign policy, as well as political and social phenomena in Montenegro.

Todor Lakić je asistent na Fakulteti za politične vede Univerze v Črni gori in doktorand študija ruske geopolitike. Med njegovimi raziskovalnimi področji so ruska geopolitika na prehodu iz 19. v 20. stoletje, ruska zunanja politika ter politični in družbeni pojavi v Črni gori.

### BORIS VUKIĆEVIĆ

Boris Vukićević is a full professor at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Montenegro. He is a professor in the field of international relations and diplomacy and dean of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Montenegro. The focus of his research is contemporary international relations, diplomacy, and the functioning of the Holy See, as well as history of diplomacy.

Boris Vukićević je dekan Fakultete za politične vede Univerze v Črni gori, kjer kot redni profesor predava o mednarodnih odnosih in diplomaciji. Raziskovalno se posveča področjem sodobnih mednarodnih odnosov, diplomacije in delovanja Svetega sedeža, pa tudi zgodovine diplomacije.

### SAŠA KNEŽEVIĆ

Saša Knežević is a full professor at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Montenegro. He is a professor in the field of international relations and diplomacy and former dean of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Montenegro. His academic research areas include the foreign policy of Mon-

tenegro, the foreign policy of Great Britain, the history of diplomacy, the theory of diplomacy, and overall international relations in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Saša Knežević je nekdanji dekan Fakultete za politične vede Univerze v Črni gori, kjer kot redni profesor predava o mednarodnih odnosih in diplomaciji. Raziskovalna področja, na katera se osredinja njegovo akademsko delo, so zunanja politika Črne gore, zunanja politika Velike Britanije, zgodovina diplomacije, teorija diplomacije ter mednarodni odnosi v 19. in 20. stoletju.

### JADRANKA ĐORĐEVIĆ CRNOBRNJA

Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja works at the Ethnographic Institute of SASA in Belgrade. Her research focuses primarily on minority communities in Serbia, migration processes in the present, the Serbian community in Slovenia, issues regarding intangible cultural inheritance, childhood and the field of legal ethnology and anthropology. She is the author of three monographs: *The Kinship In The Region of Vranje* (2001), *Inheritance: In Between Customs and Law* (2011), and *We never cut ties with Gora. Ethnicity, community and transmigrations of Gorani people in Belgrade* (2020), as well as a number of academic publications.

Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja je zaposlena na Etnografskem inštitutu Srbske akademije znanosti in umetnosti v Beogradu. Raziskuje predvsem manjšine v Srbiji, sodobne migracijske procese, srbsko skupnost v Sloveniji, vprašanja v zvezi z nesnovno kulturno dediščino in otroštvom ter posamezne teme s področja pravne etnologije in antropologije. Je avtorica monografij *Srodniški odnosi u Vranju* (2001), *Nasledivanje između običaja i zakona* (2011) in *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom. Etnicitet, zajednica i transmigracije Goranaca u Beogradu* (2020) ter številnih strokovnih člankov.

### JURE RAMŠAK

Jure Ramšak is a Senior Research Associate at the Science and Research Centre of Koper and a former Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Vienna. His main research interests lie in the intersection of intellectual, political, and economic histories in postwar Slovenia and Yugoslavia. Applying this research approach and a plurality of sources, he has published two monographs (2015, 2019) and over two dozen research articles in journals such as *The International History Review*, *Journal of Church and State*, and *Religion, State and Society*. Since 2023, Ramšak

has been engaged in an ERC-AdG project entitled 'Open Borders – Cold War Europe beyond Borders. A Transnational History of Cross-Border Practices in the Alps-Adriatic Area from World War II to the Present,' while serving as Principal Investigator in the research projects 'Rendering a Globalization Otherwise' and 'Being European and Decolonial: Utopian Realism of the Yugoslav Nonaligned Internationalism.'

Jure Ramšak je višji znanstveni sodelavec na Znanstveno-raziskovalnem središču Koper in nekdanji podoktorski raziskovalec na Univerzi na Dunaju. Njegovo osrednje raziskovalno področje zajema preplet intelektualne, politične in ekonomske zgodovine povojne Slovenije in Jugoslavije. S pomočjo tega raziskovalnega pristopa in uporabe mnogoterih virov je napisal in objavil dve monografiji (objavljeni v letih 2015 in 2019) ter več kot dvajset strokovnih člankov v mednarodnih revijah, kot so *The International History Review*, *Journal of Church and State* ter *Religion, State and Society*. Od leta 2023 Ramšak sodeluje v projektu ERC-AdG z naslovom »*Open Borders – Cold War Europe beyond Borders*«, obenem je tudi glavni raziskovalec v raziskovalnih projektih »Vzpostavljanje drugačne globalizacije« ter »Biti evropski in protikolonialen: utopični realizem jugoslovanskega neuvrščenege internacionalizma«.

#### PETAR DRAGIŠIĆ

Petar Dragišić is Principal Research Fellow at the Institute for Recent History of Serbia in Belgrade (*Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije*). He obtained his Ph.D. in History from the University of Vienna, Department of East European History (*Institut für Osteuropäische Geschichte*). Dragišić has authored six monographs and over 60 journal articles and book chapters. His research focuses on the history of Yugoslavia during the Cold War era.

Petar Dragišić je znanstveni svetnik na beograjskem Inštitutu za novejšo zgodovino Srbije (*Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije*). Doktoriral je iz zgodovine na Oddelku za vzhodnoevropsko zgodovino Univerze na Dunaju. Dragišić je avtor šestih monografij in več kot 60 strokovnih člankov in poglavij v zbornikih. Njegove raziskave se osredinjajo na jugoslovansko zgodovino v obdobju hladne vojne.

## IGOR JUREKOVIČ

Igor Jurekovič holds a PhD in sociology of culture and is employed as a researcher at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. In his doctoral dissertation, he conceptualised the body in the sociological study of Charismatic Christianity. His research interests include cognitive and sociological theories of the body and embodiment, material theories of religion, and the studies of Charismatic Christianity.

Igor Jurekovič je doktor sociologije kulture, zaposlen kot raziskovalec na Oddelku za sociologijo Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani. V svoji doktorski disertaciji je konceptualiziral telo v sociološkem preučevanju karizmatičnega krščanstva. Raziskovalno se ukvarja s kognitivnimi in sociološkimi teorijami telesa in utelešenosti, materialnimi teorijami religije in preučevanjem karizmatičnega krščanstva.



---

P O L I G R A F I

doslej izšlo / previous issues:

- Hermetizem • Religija in psihologija – Carl Gustav Jung*  
*Mislec neskončnosti Giordano Bruno • Logos in kozmos*  
*Panteizem*
- O Božjem bivanju • 2000 po Kristusu • Mesijanska zgodovina*  
*Sebstvo in meditacija • Religija in umetnost podobe*  
*Protestantizem • Nikolaj Kuzanski*  
*Renesančne mitologije • Ples življenja, ples smrti*  
*Ars magna • Antični mit in literatura*  
*O ljubezni • Ameriška filozofija religije*  
*Poetika in simbolika prostora • Mistika in literatura*  
*Solidarity and interculturality • Šamanizem*  
*Ženske in religija • On community*  
*Mediterranean lectures in philosophy • Svoboda in demokracija*  
*Človekove pravice*  
*Ethical gestures • Krogotok rojstva in smrti*  
*Natural history • Modeli sveta*  
*Bodily proximity • Država in moralnost*  
*Living with consequences • Mistika in misel*  
*Duhovnost žensk na Slovenskem • Poesis of Peace*  
*Čuječnost: tradicija in sodobni pristopi • Trpljenje*  
*Identiteta Evrope • “borders/debordering”*  
*Islam and democracy • Religions and Dialogue*  
*Religija in družbena pravičnost • Ontologies of Asylum*  
*Meeting East Asia • Ženske v medreligijski izgradnji miru*  
*Krščanstvo in marksizem • Contemporary Muslim-Christian Encounters*  
*Understanding Ethnic, Religious and Cultural Minorities in Turkey • Religija in narava / Religion and Nature*  
*Transplanted Buddhism in and from Southeast Asia • Religijska in mitološka simbolika v vzhodnoazijski umetnosti*  
*Revisiting Dreams • Air and Breath in Religions and Philosophies*  
*Material Religion and the Digital • Negotiating Religious Plurality – Pandemic and the Digitisation of Religious Life*
-

---

BETWEEN REVIVAL AND  
ATHEIZATION: STATECRAFT,  
IDENTITY, AND RELIGIOUS  
TRANSFORMATION IN FORMER  
YUGOSLAVIA

Gašper Mithans, Urška Bratož: *Introduction: Between Revival and  
Atheization: Statecraft, Identity, and Religious Transformation  
in Former Yugoslavia*

Sara Hajdinac: *Religious Identity as the State's Tool in Modification  
of Public Space and Its Identity: The Yugoslavian Concept of the Two  
Squares in Maribor*

Aleksandra Zibelnik Badii: *State of Governance of Religious  
Communities in Former Yugoslavia and the Developments  
of the Bahá'í Community and Jehovah's Witnesses*

Todor Lakić, Boris Vukićević, Saša Knežević: *The Dynamics  
of Atheization in Postwar Communist Montenegro*

Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja: *The Prohibition of Women's Veiling  
in the Region of Gora*

Jure Ramšak: *The Problem with Courtesy: Wooing the Catholic Church  
in Late Socialist Slovenia*

Petar Dragišić: *Serbian Press and Eastern Orthodoxy in Serbia  
in the 1980s*

Igor Jurekovič: *Charismatic Christianity as Primal Spirituality?  
Some Observations from Slovenia*

