

DOSSIER "MANDUŠEVAC":
THE RITUAL MANIPULATION OF MONEY IN CONTEMPORARY
ZAGREB

INES PRICA
Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku
Zvonimirova 17/4
41000 Zagreb

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The paper is conceived as an interpretation of events connected with the excavation of a little fountain from the 19 century, which can be seen today on the east side of the Republic Square () in Zagreb. The story illustrates how depreciation of human work and life, caused by enormous inflation of money that characterized Yugoslav recent economy and, on the other side, the feeling of collective helplessness and faithlessness that rehabilitate the past as the place of hope, could give rise to irrational behavior with the characteristics of ritual creation.*

In an intimate history of Zagreb the Manduševac fountain will figure as "the only fountain in the world in which paper money was thrown". This definition, originating in the local mass-media, reflects the ambiguity of public attitude towards this "spring from the past". Namely, it contains that familiar promotion of local things as the *only in the world....*, but it is at the same time permeated with irony. After the *divine* fountain from the 19 century finally gained its right to survive (that is - not to be covered up again shortly after being discovered), the heaps of wet bank-notes that this *happy place* produced day after day, were soon declared absurd. "A coin would be good enough to make a wish", was how the city government unsuccessfully tried to explain the mechanism of every normal fountain of fortune.

But it was not only the technical problems of drying money or unclogging the drains - it was something else in this scene of thousands of people throwing thousands of millions of dinars into the hole, during the inflation of several hundred percents, that provoked an official initiative to do something practical with it.

But, let us start from the beginning.

The end of summer 1986. The very center of the town, The Republic Square, has been completely dug up for months. Through heavy dust screen and deafening noise of

(*) In the autumn of 1991. the square was renamed to the Ban Josip Jelačić Square.

machines the tiny silent queues of people blazing their trails. The slogan *Everybody at the seaside!* became an ordinary fiction in the middle of the running economic crisis. But in spite of all that the propaganda of local newspapers managed to create an object of hope, a point in the future worth living for. It was the "Universiade games", the international student's sport games, that would paint the facades in pastel colours, tidy up the city parks and turn the marsh of nearby neglected lake into a beautiful bathing place. In short: make Zagreb a good place to live. Although the public opinion was rather ironical toward the absurdity of the cultural politics (or political culture) that only the situations like *the-guests-are-coming-soon* can provide a blessing from authorities and mobilize all the energy and the money available - the former experiences showed that effects could justify the cause, that such timid respect toward *the guests from the world* is to be used properly. The nearest example that caused the significant revitalization of city life were the 1984 Olympic Games in Sarajevo.

There were certainly many things in such a quick tidying up that produced suspicion. Things were fixed not to endure but mostly to hide what was not to be seen. There was even something touching in the way the miserable little houses in less presentable parts of the town suddenly disappeared behind the fancy scenery of advertising paper walls.

But the matter of the Republic Square seemed to be quite different. The "deep ploughing" that was undertaken promised a serious and solid result despite permanent disputes between few institutions engaged in beautifying the city center, criticized for decades for its ugliness and desolation.

Nobody, however, had in mind that such an "archeological" enterprise could engender real findings, and especially nobody expected that the piece of stone from the past could cause such an euforic atmosphere, as the residues of Manduševac did.

The 19th century fountain was excavated in September 1986. and its discovery was from the very beginning followed by sensational and highly allegorical newspaper reports. It was "the spring of life", "the well of hope", "the historical tap", with the "martyr's" historical fate, because, after being built in 1852., the beautiful fountain with candelabrum was in 1892 leveled to the ground. Both its building and its "burial" was due to Franz Jozef's visit to a little town in the province of his Empire. In honour to his first arrival the fountain was decorated with a candelabrum, bought for this occasion in the World Exhibition in London. Many years later, it was in such a bad condition that it had to disappear - in the Emperor's honour again. It is extraordinary how the existence of this fountain had continually depended on this, let's call it, hospitality phenomenon.

After its appearance from "the darkness of the past" Manduševac permanently produced uncertainty and suspicion. For the next few months nobody seemed to know whether the fountain would "live" or not. In the official explanation, that "there are no financial resources", which was a permanent excuse, we could also look for the explanation of the recent flood of money on the place of excavation. The struggle for the fountain that followed can be understood only by realizing the important role, in the critical social state of crisis and changes, of everything connected with the past, especially in post-communist or "pre-post-communist" ideologies overcome by the feeling of the *deprived history*.

Initiating the story called "two different architectural conceptions of the Republic Square", this sudden discovery simultaneously stimulated the coming to light of another important sacred spot at the Republic Square. It was the statue of Ban Jelačić - the controversial historical person from the 19 century - that was displaced from the main city square in 1945, by the postwar ideology considered as too "contaminated" with the Croatian national mythology.

Namely, following the historical development of the Square, the experts started to speak of two possibilities: the first was baroque conception of the ellipse with two focuses (the fountain on one side and a chapel on the other), and the second was symmetrical classic composition with the bronze statue of a horseman in the center. It is up to us to choose whether it is going to have one or two centres, they said, but the worst solution was the one with no fountain, no chapel, no bronze horseman and no anything, as it is now.

Although a story of the two conceptions, their advantages and disadvantages became a neverending one, it is important as a precedent of such unlimited respect toward "past solutions" instead of new ones, which were ideological favourites, and such previously unimaginable public promotion of historical taboos (emanated in the figure of "the horseman").

What kind of atmosphere was caused by an uncertain fate of the excavated object can be seen through the headlines of the Croatian newspapers from February to July 1987: "*Manduševac Disputable*", "*Ping-Pong with Manduševac*", "*The Square without Manduševac*", "*Manduševac Stays!*", "*The Citizens Expect the Truth!*", "*Manduševac Springs*", "*The Legend Lives*", "*The Legend Garlanded with Bronze!*"

In the next seven days the fountain was so full of money that a special commission had to be founded, consisting of the representatives of the militia and the municipality. They were supervising the collection of money in assistance of numerous curious people. It was already then obvious that the simple and world-popular custom of throwing a coin into a fountain "for good luck" wouldn't be so ordinary in this case. The notable journal "Vjesnik" had soon published the first, shy and careful, request for abstention from throwing paper money into the fountain. But in the same time, it was also necessary to commend people willing to help their town become nicer. Namely, the city officials pushed by delicate question of what to do with heaps of nobody's money that "spring" every day from the center of the town, promptly decided to name the purpose of this waste: it would be given on to the account of "Universiade Games" and used for redecoration of the city. But, everybody knew that the money wasn't thrown for such a rational, good-citizen's sake. It was embarrassing, persistent and a very visible collective superstition that invoked "the spirits of the past" and produced the tons of slimy and worthless inflated money - and this was openly said only some time later (after the guests went home). In the meanwhile, people were simply "besieging" the little (and quite ordinary looking) fountain, throwing the money left over from the shopping at the nearest market or sometimes really remarkable amounts - mostly those working abroad invoking their luck, or whatever they thought they were doing, very gallantly and in D marks. Most of the time, they were just standing in silence and

staring: the colourful heap of money, the water, at each other. Suddenly a dash of wind would blow a bank-note out of the circle, but it was immediately put back to the proper place. It was a spontaneous ritual creation, a sacred situation, but what was *beyond* was cloudy, vague and still an unclear meaning.

On the other side, the ones that were not in a festive mood towards this uninvited money-making, crowd-making and trouble-making thing that came up in the middle of the rush with foreign guests, tried to take some practical steps. They created a little ceremony of collecting the money, which was done by a men dressed in livery, exactly at noon and marked with by firing the cannon . It was imagined to be "a future tradition" of our town like every other European town has one. It lasted very briefly. The next attempt was a total debacle: the citizens reacted with turbulent protests on the suggestion of installing "few tasteful cash-boxes" around the fountain. It would prevent the trouble of drying money that had become unbearable, and unclogging the water-pipes, as well as the unpleasant odour that was spreading from the boiled paper money in summer temperatures. But it was furiously rejected because it, of course, deceived the "magic" purpose of this activity. Here are some more head-lines that illustrate the decrease of enthusiasm for "the spring of hope" that came from the reasonable part of those involved: "*The Money Overburdened the Hearth*", "*The Worthless Wishes*", "*The Bank Wants Dry Money*", "*Money Not Enough For the Square*". In two years the inflation had "eaten" the offered sacrifice, placed - in cash - in the fountain of fortune planned to "operate" with the symbolic values of coins. The fountain arose from the "better times" - it was, at least, the opinion of the members of the society who recognize their future in what is only left: their past. The attempts that came from the dominant cultural pattern and that went for the rationalizing and utilizing that ritual energy, this time turned out to be entirely useless, which was a clear signal of future changes that would soon strike the Yugoslav society.

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DOSSIER "MANDUŠEVAC":
RITUALNO MANIPULIRANJE NOVCEM U SUVREMENOM ZAGREBU

Sažetak

Članak je deskripcija događaja koji su se pleli oko ponovno iskopanog zdenca Manduševac na centralnom zagrebačkom trgu (tada Trgu Republike, danas Trgu Bana Josipa Jelačića*), u svom najintenzivnijem obliku tijekom 1986. i 1987. godine. Brzinsko uređivanje grada pred svjetsku sportsku priredbu (Univerzijada 1987.) koje je, prema dotadašnjim iskustvima, uključivalo uglavnom površne zahvate maskiranja nereprezentativnih djelova, stjecajem okolnosti je otišlo "predeboko". Iskopavanja što su tijekom cijelog ljeta 1986. činila život u gradu nesnošljivim, otkrivaju skromne ostatke zdenca Manduševac iz 19. stoljeća. Kolebanja gradskih vlasti oko sudbine kamene kocke što je bila jedini ostatak zdenca-fontane (a koja su uključivala mogućnost da se mjesto otkopavanja, zbog nedostatka za uređenje i ostalih praktičnih razloga, jednostavno ponovno zatrpa), izazvat će nizanje događaja što će u lokalnoj povijesti ostati zabilježeno kao "slučaj Manduševac". Ono što istraživaču zakonitosti kulture daje mogućnost promišljanja tog "slučaja" odnosi se na skup radnji s izrazito ritualnim karakterom. Podržavano senzacionalizmom medija, mjesto postaje masovno skupljalište građana. Spočetka poprište žučljivih diskusija okupljenih, poprima karakter javnog građanskog foruma. Kasnije, kada popuštanjem odgovornih ipak nastaje bazenčić-fontana, prizorom nijeme mase zagledane u vodu podsjeća na hipnotičko mjesto nekog nepoznatoga kulta. Najimpresivniji je, ipak, način na koji je Manduševac postao tako neobična fontana sreće - umjesto novčića, gotovo godinu dana on je bio neprestano zatrpavan gomilama papirnatog novca, pa je uskoro u novinskim člancima proglašen "jedinom fontanom na svijetu u koju se ubacuju novčanice". Bezazleni običaj koji potpada pod klasičnu etnološku interpretaciju magije simboličke žrtve, a koji u njegovom suvremenom obliku uglavnom vezujemo za turističku kulturu, ovdje doživljuje zanimljivu mutaciju. Sam postupak je, u prvom redu, hipertrofirana - količina novca koja se dnevno ubacivala u omanji prostor fontane, čini da ona, isprva dočekana kao "izvor života", "zdenac nade", "povijesna česma", ubrzo postane neprijatni i apsurdni gradski problem. Drugu mutaciju - ubacivanje papirnatog novca - možemo označiti i parodijom običaja *novčić za sreću*. Prizore razdraganog građanstva koje učestvuje u kreiranju identitetnog simbola svoga grada, u gradskim novinama vremenom zamjenjuju opisi nelijepe gomile na ljetnoj temperaturi doslovce skuhanog novca, iz kojeg se širi težak zadah. Gradski nadležnici, uz pomoć medija kojim kanaliziraju općenje s građanima, pokušavaju uobličiti stihijsku atmosferu oko malene rupe s vodom u centru grada. Jedan od najizrazitijih primjera nametnutog (koji je, kao i ostali, uglavnom bio neuspješan) ritualnog obrasca, htio se vezati uz samo vađenje novca iz fontane. To je (doduše, samo nekoliko puta) obavljao službenik u livrecji, stavljaio novac u posebnu škrinju, a sve tu uz udarce topa s Griča. To je trebala biti, sudeći po novinskim napisima, "buduća tradicija našega grada". Isto tako, težnja da se novac namjenski usmjeri kao novac za uređenje grada, bila je u djelimičnoj koliziji s katarzičnim karakterom pražnjenja džepova. Tako propadaju svi pokušaji da novac nekako suh i neoštećen stigne do banke, čime bi se spriječio težak posao sušenja

* Rad je pisan početkom 1990. godine, što objašnjava sve anakronizme u naslovima i ostalom.

(!) i otčeplivanja odvoda, a naročito ljutito se odbija ideja postavljanja "kasica" oko fontane. Istina koja je stalno visjela u zraku, ali koja se javno izgovara tek kad gradski nadležnici bivaju već dokraja izmučeni ovim neobičnim problemom, jest činjenica da se, uz službenu inflaciju od oko 800 posto, radilo o bezvrijednom novcu. Ovo, barem djelimice, objašnjava i to zašto se on tako nemilice bacao, i to u banknotama. U interpretaciji ovog "podivljalog" običaja važno bi bilo izdvojiti tročlanu strukturu učesnika (građani, medij, gradske vlasti), odnosno činjenicu da se proces ritualnog scenarija odvijao po rubovima njihove komunikacije. On, dakle, nije ni posve spontan niti uspješno "kultiviran". Iracionalno *pollach* ponašanje možemo smjestiti u kontekst društvenoekonomske stanja obezvrijedenosti ljudskog rada i novca, a smisao ritualnog toposa vidimo u svjetlu vjere u "bolju prošlost", izokrenute dinamike koja pogađa zalaz jednog ideološkog sustava i u kojoj fontana "izronila" iz prošlosti dobija ogromni simbolički potencijal izgubljenog i ponovno vraćenog identiteta.