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# Folk Piety in the Sanctuary of the Holy Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Kloštar near Kobaš

*Every year on the Feast of the Assumption (14 and 15 August) the sanctuary consecrated to the Mother of God in Kloštar is a place of pilgrimage and pronounced folk piety of believers from nearby places. Thousands of people come to "pledge to Our Blessed Lady" doing strictly religious rites. The faithful also participate in some folk customs that follow this holiday. The position where the church is placed is a possible holy ground from the early past. Through this work, the concealed mythical structure connected with this sanctuary is being revealed.*

**Keywords:** folk piety, pilgrimages, beliefs, Slavonski Kobaš, Kloštar

Through this work, folk piety and customs in Kobaš connected with the Feast of the Assumption holiday will be researched. Holistic comparative approach of several scientific disciplines – ethnology, history, archaeology, linguistics and art history is taken as a basic methodological starting point.

In the first part of the work there is a contemporary ethnographical record taken at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the book of the Kobaš parish priest, reverend Mijo Dukić "Kloštar u Kobašu", as well as telling of Manda Ferić from the neighboring village Kut.

In the second part, with the help of historical and archaeological sources, the emergence of this sanctuary will be defined and the history of its closer surroundings will be shown.

In the third part, the sanctuary and its surroundings will be shown in older mythological-religious context, mythical area will be reconstructed and compared to facts from the first two parts.

## Folk tradition

According to folk tradition, the Feast of the Assumption holiday has always been celebrated in the same pattern. It starts three weeks before the holiday itself<sup>1</sup>, which is confirmed by Manda Ferić, and it shows the tradition of Kobaš citizens, as well as those who moved away earlier and live somewhere else. From the Kobaš parish church the procession, in which all parishioners participate, most commonly the young and children (about 300 people), walk to Kloštar<sup>2</sup>. The way is about three and a half kilometres long, and a lot of people take personal vows to the Lady of Kloštar. The procession comes to the church in Kloštar and after going round it once, enters the church where believers in front of the altar sing invocations to the Lady. The old and sick, who cannot participate in the procession wait in front of the church. The Kobaš people, participants in the procession, stay on the graves of their deceased<sup>3</sup> for an hour. After that, at the sound of bell ringing, they gather again in the church and pray the litany of the Mother of God, go round the altar, sing the welcoming song to the Lady and return to the Kobaš parish church. This folk piety takes place between 2 and 5 o'clock p.m. (Dukić, 2002: 67, 68).

Events on the eve of the Feast of Assumption in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> and the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were described by storyteller Manda Ferić. Beside the vow procession three weeks earlier, the Kobaš people have their own vow procession on the eve of the Feast of Assumption holiday, in which Manda Ferić used to participate as a young girl. After breakfast, she would walk with her family to the sanctuary seven kilometres away. They would walk through field paths, saying one's beads and singing religious songs. Upon the arrival, pilgrims go round the altar, pray and confess their sins. At 7 p.m. there is a mass, and after the mass the Kobaš procession goes round the church accompanied with pilgrims and processions from other places. They also used to come on foot (some of them barefoot), dressed in folk costumes, carrying pictures and statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They would spend the night sleeping on the cemetery up to the beginning of the 1990s. Today it happens very rarely. According to Manda Ferić, sleeping on the graves under the warm summer sun was nice.

At dawn, pilgrims would wash their faces in the river Orłjava, about twenty metres away from the church and the cemetery and attend an early mass - Galitian<sup>4</sup> (Greek Catholic) and also a big Catholic mass (teller Manda Ferić).

<sup>1</sup> That is 25 July, on St Jacob's day

<sup>2</sup> The residence of the parish from the village Kloštar (non-existing today) was moved in 1698 to the village Kobaš. Then the church of the Mother of God in Kloštar became the branch-church of St. John the Baptist in Kobaš (Dukić, 2002:28).

<sup>3</sup> The church of Mary's Assumption in Kloštar is placed in the middle of Kloštar cemetery where the deceased of the villages Kuti and Bebrina east of Kobaš were buried by the year 1789

<sup>4</sup> "Galitians" – people living in the villages of western Brodska Posavina who moved from Galicija and Bukovina at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries at the time of the Austrian Hungarian Monarchy. Ethnically they belong to the Polish and Ukrainian people. The Polish are Roman Catholics and the Ukrainians are Greek Catholics. In the context of the teller's story the name "Galitians"

According to Manda Ferić's story, after the mass the faithful would stay near the sanctuary for awhile, eat in the shade of a tree, buy some gingerbread ware and go back home through field paths.

Folk ceremony in tents with food and music players was a part of the folk piety for a long time. After the Croatian War of Independence, when folk music from the east stopped being performed, playing music in tents stopped and the number of people attending the holiday ceremony considerably declined.

Some ten years ago a well was dug by the church and it was enclosed by a chapel in which there is a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes.

The cemetery of the Kobaš village is also very interesting. With almost two thousand citizens living there it seems rather small. We can see that burying is done north from the church, and there is no burying on the western and eastern sides, apart from maybe one or two cases from before. South from the church there are no graves. This is because every family has their own little cemetery strictly limited within the mutual cemetery, which is placed in front of the sanctuary. Therefore all the members of a family are buried one on top of the others so there is no cemetery extension which is the case in other neighboring villages (storyteller Manda Ferić).

The phenomenon of scratching church walls is connected with the folk tradition, which is clearly visible on one outer wall. There is a belief that if a believer takes an object or a piece of this holy place and keeps it always by his side will be protected by Our Lady the whole year. Mrs Manda Ferić says that Bosnian people used to touch the walls, go round the church kneeling, scratch the stone of outer walls and carry it away with themselves (comp. Čapo Žmegač, 1998: 295).

As it is the case with all Mary's sanctuaries, this one also has its miracle. Asked why so many people respect this place and what had happened there, the teller told the story about the painting stolen by the Bosnian people, which returned by itself during the night. While it was crossing the river Sava upon the way back, there was the sound of bell ringing in the river. When the believers came to the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Kloštar, the painting was in its place. According to folk tradition, the beginning of pilgrimage to Kloštar is connected with this event.

There are actually a couple of paintings connected with this tradition. Therefore the histories and stories about each of them will be presented. These are three pictures painted in oil on canvas from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The first one is the oldest votive picture painted on both sides, carried by the Kobaš people in the procession. It was painted in 1764 as an expression of gratitude for avoided death from plague (APPENDIX 1), showing, on one side, the Sacred Family with

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are the Ukrainian Greek Catholics who mostly live in the villages Andrijevci, Sibirj, Slobodnica, Kaniža and Šumeće. Most of them live in Kaniža and Šumeće where they make one third of total population.

soldiers of the Military Border in uniforms making their pilgrimage to the church in Kloštar and, on the other side, St. Roko and St. Sebastian.

The other painting with brighter colours presents the assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the heavens and is connected with the legend about returning the painting from Bosnia. It became miraculous. The third picture, which also presents the assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the heavens, is artistically more valuable than the previous one (APPENDIX 2). Art historians place this miraculous picture to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, while in the archive documents of the Kobaš parish it dates back to thirties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: *“In the year 1832 the chapel placed on the mutual cemetery in Kloštar was plastered. The altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary had been unpainted for forty years. The altar painting was made by painter Antun Keller from Zagreb. The painting was blessed by subarchdeacon Antun Vukasović. In the procession the painting was moved from the parish church to its earlier prepared altar. While the painting was being painted the parish priest was feeding the painter for free.”* (APPENDIX 3). (The memorial of the Kobaš parish, 1824-1960:8, the list of registered monuments in the Administration for the protection of cultural heritage, Art-conservation department in Osijek, reg. number 15 – Inventory of the Holy Mother chapel, Dukić 2002: 50-59).

The legend about the miraculous painting, written by the Kobaš parish priest, tells how the Turks took it to Bosnia to the mountain Motajica, and it kept coming back to Kloštar several times. At the place where it was crossing the river (Sava) there was the bell ringing sound, and on the mountain there was the trail in the woods. The second version of this story tells that the painting was brought by the Franciscan friars while they were running away from the monastery in Jajce (Dukić, 2002:54). We find the folk legend about the returning of the painting from the mountain Motajica more interesting. In the last section of this work we will say something about the legend of the returned painting again.

Now let us go back to the first and by origin the oldest painting. We said that it was painted on both sides. On one side, St. Roch and St. Sebastian, the protectors from plague and leprosy (APPENDIX 4). On the other side the painting presents, apart from the Sacred Family and soldiers of the Military Border making their pilgrimage to the Kloštar church, some other details as well. The image of the Holy Family is placed in the upper half of the painting. The lower half of the painting is made of three parts.

The part in the lower left angle of the painting presents the prayer of priests and soldiers of the Military Border dressed in red trousers and blue blouses with red braids round their collars and sleeves. Among the soldiers, one of them has a blue blouse bordered with fur, and trousers with golden motives embroidered. That is probably a Kobaš military commanding officer. Standing beside him is probably his wife in a blue blouse and white-yellow long dress. Beside her, there are other women dressed in white dresses and wearing white head scarves on their heads. They are cloaked in long red cloaks (APPENDIX 5).

In the right lower angle there is a framed inscription in Latin "... PAROCH. KOBASS PRO. VITAREM MORTAS I. ITATE 1764."<sup>5</sup> which is translated by the Kobaš parish priest like this: "...*The Kobaš parishioners, in order to avoid the danger of the plague, take vows to the Mother of God in the year 1764.*" (APPENDIX 1) (Dukić, 2002: 58).

Above that inscription there is the third part of the lower half of the painting. It shows the church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary round which there is the procession of soldiers dressed in earlier mentioned uniforms. There are also women dressed in white dresses with head scarves and red cloaks. On the left side there are ruins of the fortress on the mouth of the rivers Orljava into Sava already seen by Luka Ilić Oriovčanin (Ilić Oriovčanin, 1874: 72). In the background there is the Bosnian mountain Motajica. It is interesting to note that on the right side of the church, across the river Orljava, there is a big tree with a dry top. According to the branches and the crown it could be some old oak-tree (APPENDIX 6) (Dukić, 2002: 59). We certainly must be careful before making a conclusion and leave a possibility that the painter used his artistic freedom and painted a tree which actually did not exist at all. We will see in the further text what different historical and archaeological sources tell us about the sanctuary itself.

## Historical facts

The first settlements in this area date back to the Palaeolithic period (50 000 years ago). Some remains of trails of the earliest human were found north from the Nova Kapela in a half-cave Kamenik (Marković, 1994).

In the last phase of the prehistory in the middle Europe, the Iron Age started and it is divided into two phases: the early iron Halstadt culture (800 – 450 BC) and the late iron La Tene culture starting from the 450 BC. The exponents of the so-called La Tene culture in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC are the Celts. The Celts met the Illyrian tribes Oseriati, Breuci and Amantini (Zaninović, 2003: 444-448). The Celts did not burn their deceased like the Illyrians. The amulets carried by the Breuci and Oseriati were ornamented by the motives of the Sun, snake, bird, deer or horse.<sup>6</sup> These are admirers of heliolatric cult that is followed by the motives of swamp birds, deer, horse, concentric circles and similar. La Tene culture stops with the arrival of the Romans and so does the Celtic domination over the Illyrians in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Marković, 1994: 37-39).

Not far away from the medieval church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the south, in the locality of *Kremenice-Brežani* one kilometre away, the remains of the Sopot culture were found. The place on which the church in Kloštar and the cemetery are placed is

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<sup>5</sup> Latin name, taken from the photographed painting, difficult to read and therefore the correctness of its transcription should be considered carefully.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting that the motives of deer (most of them), people, swastika, pentagram, cross, bird, point, two-headed fish are engraved at several places in outer stone blocks of the Gothic church of St. Demetrius in Brodski Drenovac (Oriovac – Prilozi za povijest mjesta, 1971).

on the hill called *Greda* and it is never flooded by the river Sava. Some two hundred metres east from the church there is the locality called *Tribež*. On the right side of the river Orljava there is the locality called *Dvorine*.

On this place there used to be the Roman station Urbate at which there was the crossing over the Sava. This place is mentioned in the Peutinger's table describing places on the way from the settlement Siscia to Sirmium. It was placed on the mouth of the river Orljava into Sava, and the most recent archaeological findings in 2000 confirmed that. The fact that the Romans buried their deceased in the area of Kloštar is testified by the record of the Kobaš parish priest Martinašević who had given the tombstone in 1820 to the Požega district prefect Čoka with the inscription in Latin: „*TI. IVLIANUS AVREL. VETERANVS LEG. II ADIV. AN. LX VIVO SIBI ET HONORIAE CONVIGI PIENTISSIME V.S.P.*“ (*Julian Aurelius, the veteran of the II. Adiutrix legion in the year 60 to himself and to Honoria, the most beloved wife – Rest in peace.*) Digging the new Orljava river channel in 1829, as it was recorded by Luka Ilić Oriovčanin, a lot of building stone was found beside the Kloštar itself (Ilić Oriovčanin, 1852.-1856.; Dukić, 2002: 18).

The first and the oldest mention of the church in Kloštar is brought by Luka Ilić Oriovčanin who writes that on the tower of the Kloštar church he saw two years engraved – 1020 and 1053.<sup>7</sup> (Ilić Oriovčanin, 1852.-1864.). The first known owners of the church in Kloštar, and probably the monastery beside it as well, were the templars who in 1210 got the land in Požeška county (Buturac, 1995 and the Memorial of the Kobaš parish from 1824 to 1961). When the order of the templars was abolished in 1312, their possession of Kloštar was taken by the Cistercians, who had land property on the Sava from the year 1232 in Kutjevo (Vukičević-Samaržija, 1986). Whether Kloštar had been in their possession before the abolition of the templar order is not known. Their stay in this area is best testified in the well preserved Gothic church in Kloštar from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Ivanušec, 2004). With the arrival of the Turks in Bosnia, the Cistercians moved north, and their properties were taken by the Franciscans who restored the monastery. The Turks finally took over Slavonia in 1532 and crossed the river Sava in Kloštar. Then they pulled down the church and the monastery.

## Mythological context

The last part of the work has to do with possible mythological toponyms which are surmisable from earlier traditions and toponyms scattered around. First we will mention those (place-names, oronyms and hydronyms) which show in the closest way the mythical occupation of the area, and then those which might be connected with the mythical occupation of the area, but which are too distant by their meaning to be taken into consideration as reliable in reconstruction. Therefore we will determine the

<sup>7</sup> The tower collapsed in 1951. In the year 1958 today's tower was built (Dukić, 2002: 39).

etymology of some toponyms in closer and further surroundings of Kloštar, which might lead to some hypothesis about the frames in which the mythical show was taking place.

1. Toponyms indicating possible mythical occupation of the area:

a) Gradina

Skok: 1. *grad* – ie. \**gherdh* - “fence off”, Proto-Slavic \**gordъ* – “fence, garden” consisted of long, thin wood,

2. *vrt*, *gradina* – “garden” from Latin *hortus* > Greek χόρτος., Old-Slavic *gradъ* “fenced off place, vrtal”.

b) Dvorine

Skok: *dvor* – ie. \**dhuoros*, Old-Persian *duvarayā-maiy* “at my door”, Ak. *duras*, Sanskrit *dvāram* “door”, Lot. *dvaras*, Lit. *dvaras*.

Also the form: *dvari*, *dveri* – ie. \**dhw̄rjos*, Armenian *z-durs* “out”, Latin *foris*, Greek δύρα , German *Tür*, Got. *daúr*, Lot. *duris*, Lit. *dúrys*.

Silić: *dvor* – ie. \**dhworom*, Latin *forum* – square, Proto-Slavic \**dvorъ* – yard, Russian *dvor*, Polish *dwór*.

c) Kobaš

Skok: *koba* – Pan-Slavic and Proto-Slavic \**kobъ* mythological term from fortune-telling of birds flight: 1. good sign, 2. encounter, 3. bad premonition, 4. outer appearance. The original mythological fortune-telling by the birds flight.

Also in the Old-Czech *koba* – “raven”, Hungarian *kaba* – “sparrow-hawk”, Old-German *habuh*, Modern German *Habicht*, Latin *capus* = *capys* Etruscan. Therefore may be the name of the bird and before ie. a word.

Also in *-ište*, *kobište* (Martić) = *kobnište*, where *to fight* in a non-friendly manner means “*to crash*”.

Silić: a) *kob* – ie. \**kob*, Old-Irish *cob*: victory, English *happen*: to happen, Russian *kob*: magic, Old-Czech *koba*: success.

d) Tribež<sup>8</sup> (Kobaš – Toponym about 200 metres east from the church of St. Mary)

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8 Although Georg Holzer in 2005 warned about the possibility that the toponym *trebišća* has nothing to do with the Proto-Slavic expression \**trěba* “sacrifice”, but it marks the cleared ground, the field made at the time of feudalism (according to Belaj, 2006: 27), one telling from the district Klana in Kastavština reassures us about this claim. In addition to this there is the inscription from the village Klana telling about young, unmarried men who go away for six days, in spring before plowing, to the top *Tribež* and there they honor the god Ozrin. The whole text has a lot of pagan elements (<http://www.klana.net/pjesmice/starine.htm>, 15/7/2009)

Exactly the same toponym near the church of St. Mary in Slavonia and the village Klana in Kastavština, *tribež!* That this is not accidental is clear from the text. In the same meaning in Posavina dialects of old štokavian accentuation, there are the living expressions: *otribiti* – clear up, *tribiti* – clear, when the peasants

Skok: *treba* – “pagan sacrifice”, Old-Russian *trěba* – “altar”, *trebnik* – “altar”, but it also can be “cleared land”.

Silić: *Proto-Slavic* - \*terbiti, *Old-Slavic* trěbiti: clear, *Russian* terebit’.

e) Jurin konak – top (369 m) south-east from the top Gradine in Bosnia, about six kilometres away (Military topographic map 1:50 000, 1961).

f) Crna kaļjuga<sup>9</sup> – valley right under the top Jurin konak (The big atlas of Croatia to the scale 1:100 000, 2002).

2. Toponyms that might be connected with mythical occupation of the area, but their meaning is too distant:

a) Motajica

Skok: *mesti* – Proto-Slavic *motovilo*, *motouzica* compound word < *mot* + *uzica* = *motuz* “rope”, Czech *motouz*, Slovak *mot(v)oz*, Polish *motwaz*, Russian *motovjaz*. Also *motka* = switch.

Silić: *motati* – wrap, turn, circle, twist – Proto-Slavic \**motati* (Russian *motát’*, Polish *motać*) ~ put, throw.

b) Pratuš

Skok: 1. *prati* – ie., Baltic-Slavic, Panslavic, Proto-Slavic \**prati*, *perjo*, > “hit, wash clothes”, “hit clothes with a piece of board to wash them” Ie. \**per* - “hit”. The one who hits, throws, beats the lightning – “washes” < Perun.

c) Vlaknica

Skok: *vlakno* - ie. \**volq-*, Sanskrit *valkám*, *valkás*, Panslavic, Proto-Slavic \**volkno*. Etymologically compatible with *wool*, *blade*, *hair*. The term *vlakno* is connected with cotton yarn and hemp spinning.

*vuna* – ie. \**wel-* “pasture ground, meadow, the ground of the dead”.

d) Kamenita glava – top (516 m)

e) Kamenčić – top (213 m)

The folk tradition from Kobaš, about taking the painting across the Sava to the top of the Bosnian mountain Motajica, and its miraculous return has been mentioned in the text for several times. The trail it left on the mountain and the sound of the bell on the place where it was crossing the river, together with the etymology of some

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in neighboring villages (Kuti, Kobaš) clear the grains and leguminous plants from the outer shell. As the old štokavian dialect contains some remains of the čakavian dialect (Ivšić, 1913; Pavičić, 2000), it is clear where completely the same name of the toponym *Tribež* comes from.

<sup>9</sup> Possible comparison with the toponym *Črne mlake* near Ivanec which is in the same relation to the top Ivanščica (Belaj, 2007:427).



toponyms encourage us for the reconstruction of something maybe much older than everything presented so far.

Bosnian mountain Motajica looked at from the east to the west has three almost the same tops behind which the sun sets. The highest top is called *Gradina* (652 m). The other two tops that make “three heads” and extend towards south from the top *Gradina* are called *Bajlazi* (614 m) and *Lipaja* (641 m). The top *Gradina* is exactly 5 km away to the south-west from the church in Kloštar. Under the top *Gradina* there are lower tops towards the river Sava opposite the sanctuary Kloštar. These are the tops *Kamenita glava* (516 m), a little lower *Pratuša* (476 m), and even lower *Rastova kosa* (305 m). The lowest top towards the Sava is *Kamenčić* (230 m). Under that top there is a village *Vlaknica*. On the other side of the Sava, Slavonian, between the tops *Kamenčić* and *Rastova kosa* there is the locality *Dvorine*. North-east from the *Dvorine* across the river Orljava there is the locality and the sanctuary Kloštar (APPENDIX 6). South-east from the top *Gradine*, six km away there is the top *Jurin konak* (369 m), and under that top is the valley *Crna kaljuga*.

We will try to move from the tradition about the “travel” of the painting across the Sava to the Motajice top and compare that story with the reconstruction when we put other terms in this structure of the story and when we use the imagination. Unfortunately, due to non-existing mythological toponyms the story will have two varieties with pale outline of possible mythological fragments.

### *The first construction*

“On the south side of the river Sava there is *Gradina* – “a fenced place, a garden” where “the one from up above has his seat”. On the other, north side of the river, in the wet and muddy valley there is the home “of the one from below”. At one moment “the one from below” (the village *Vlaknica*, creek *Vlaknica*, swampy ground *Vlaknica*, *Dvorine*), grabbed “wife” (Mokoš?) from “the one from up above” and left across the river Sava to “the one from up above”. There was the fight of “the one from up above” and “the one from below” somewhere near *Gradina*. Probably at the *Kamenita glava* “the one from up above” struck with the lightning for the first time.”The one from below” ran away towards the river. At the *Pratuša* “the upper one” hit him badly, “the lower one” somehow dragged himself away, below, near the river, and “the upper one” finished him with a smaller lightning milled at the *Kamenčić*. He hid in *Vlaknica* (village, the creek and swampy ground) in the valley where he lived. He crossed the water across the “river” Sava at *Dvorine* (the door and crossing from his world to Mokoši’s world) where he usually crosses when he goes “up” to *Gradina*, as well. Along the way where the fight took place there was the trail on the mountain, and at the place where “the one from up above” was crossing the river, he struck with the lightning, just in case.?” (compare Belaj, 1998: 42, 53-54, 70-72, 77, 80-81, 96, 185).

### *The second construction*

The second construction is even more vague. "Behind the *Gradina* (the garden of the lightning-maker) far on the south, on the top *Jurin konak* (369 m)<sup>10</sup>, the lightning-maker's son was sleeping. He had been sleeping before he came to his own father (not knowing that this one was his father) and got the hand of his sister (not knowing that she was his sister). Or, he maybe did it after going away from his father from the *Gradina* and came here to sleep." (compare Belaj, 2007: 232-233).

It has already been mentioned that on the locality *Kremenice-Brežani*, not far away to the Kloštar sanctuary, the remains of the Neolithic, the so called Sopot culture were found. Neolithic cultures were followed by the cult of the Great Mother. Illyrians, and later Romans only adjusted the existing sanctuaries to their pantheon.<sup>11</sup> We have the proof that Romans buried their deceased on the locality of the Kloštar sanctuary.<sup>12</sup> With the arrival of Slavs in this area it is possible that they occupied it and adjusted it to their religious needs. For now, there are no exact evidence to this claim, which would tell us about the area and the sanctuary in Kloštar. It is most probable that at this place the cult of Mother the Great remained, in Slavic culture more famous as Mokoš. Her name is etymologically connected with the words "moisture, wet". She was the ruler of fertility, water, female affairs and destiny. Worshipping Mokoš, despite the Christianization in some east Slavic areas, continued to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> Numerous folklore works in the Russian and south Slavic tradition testified to her identification with Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mary (Belaj, 2007: 381). Therefore, after the baptizing The Slavs could worship her in the area of Kloštar through the Cristian folk piety as the Blessed Virgin Mary – the Mother of God.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> In Bosnia, right under the top *Jurin konak*, towards the top *Gradina*, we have the toponym for the valley *Crna kaljuga*, after that follows the top *Kamenita glava* (434m), and in the middle towards the top *Gradina* is the top *Jovanovo brdo* (561m).

<sup>11</sup> In religious pre-Indoeuropean systems the cult of the Great Mother dominated, or the cult of fertility. Such a cult also existed in the Illyrian culture. Its different forms went through changes in different Illyrian areas, but these changes did not significantly change its content. Then, with the arrival of Indoeuropeans from the Balkans, there comes the solar cult in the Illyrian culture. The deer as a sacrificial animal is the symbol of the Sun in this area in the Bronze Age already (Stipčević, 1989: 145-149). We find an argument for this in the nearest, only a couple of kilometres far, mediaval church of St. Demetres. On its southern counterfore we have primitively and strictly stylised and in the stone engraved the drawing of a deer (Gvozdanović, 1972: 216). Hundreds of years-long Roman rule gradually substituted the Illyrian divinities by the Roman ones. (Stipčević, 1989: 154-157).

<sup>12</sup> Semantically matches the connection between the Roman Venus, to whom Friday belonged (Latin dies Veneris) and the Slavic Mokoš to whom also Friday belonged (in eastern orthodox cult it is St. Petka) (Belaj, 2000: 122).

<sup>13</sup> The eastern orthodox source Nomokanon from the 16<sup>th</sup> century in which the confessor asks a woman "Have you visited Mokoš?" (<http://humnauke.blogger.ba/arhiva/2005/03/18#24219>, 31/5/2008)

<sup>14</sup> Although not easily sustainable and argued hypothesis that Mokoši's home was in the area of a swampy and wet field, maybe somewhere around the area of the toponym Vlalnica, and the sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary was Veles's home, the god connected with peasants, peasants' property, cattle, diseases and death (comp. Belaj, 2007: 84), there is a possible explanation that over time, when it came to substitution of their pagan names with the Christian ones, there happened the change of places of Veles and the Blessed Virgin Mary (Belaj, 2009: 170-171). Then the structure of the mythical occupation of

On the basis of everything said so far we have certainly confirmed the following:

1. The trail suggesting the mythical action concealed in the story about stealing the painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary and taking it away across the river Sava to the mountain top, its return, and the painting leaving the fire trail in the woods followed by the bell ringing while crossing the river.
2. Toponyms that might indicate the mythical occupation of the area or might have the mythical background (Gradina, Dvorine, Trebišće, Kobaš, Jurin konak, Crna kaljuga, the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary).
3. Toponyms that might indirectly indicate the mythical background, and only in the context show that there are more concrete toponyms indicating mythical background. Therefore, these toponyms must be taken carefully in the reinterpretation (Motajica, Pratuša, Vlaknica, Kamena glava, Kamenčić).
4. The water (the river Sava) which divides the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the toponym Vlaknica (creek, village, swampy field) and the top Gradina.

On the basis of presented facts (mythological toponyms, historical literature and inscriptions, archaeological evidence, the teller's story) we managed to offer the reconstruction of the Slavic mythological area occupation. The lack of concrete mythical toponyms we compensated with a number of historical and archaeological facts connected with the sanctuary itself and its closer surroundings, comparing them with the confirmed and accepted scientific perception from ethnology, archaeology and history. Through their chronological exhibition and systematic interpretation, factually and first of all semantically, we proved not only the concealed Slavic mythical component, but also religious and cultural presence of pre-historical and historical cultures and peoples who lived around the today's sanctuary and on that "sacred place" fulfilled their religious needs.

The fact is that the area in which happened the mythical occupation of the area is today divided between two countries, Croatia and Bosnia, and because of objective circumstances the field-research in another country was not possible to carry out. Additional problem is the fact that this area was exposed to Turkish occupation, big migrations of people, which resulted in gradual disappearance of the earliest settled Croatian inhabitants who brought the old beliefs and mythically occupied the area. Numerous ethnical and linguistic occupation of the area took place especially on the Bosnian side of the research area, where the existence of the Turkish, Vlach and Serbian

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the area would match the biggest so far revealed and confirmed places like that. We could have the longest line that connects "the one from up above" to "the one from below". The female point would be somewhere down by the water, but it is not easy to determine it, except if the trail that it existed was not indicated by the toponym Dvorine (comp. Juraj Belaj, 2009: 91, compare Pleterski, 1996). Although this hypothesis was not easy to prove, and it matches only semantically, according to the existing scientific evidence the case that the Blessed Virgin Mary substituted Veles's place is familiar, the one on the Pelješac (comp. Belaj, 2009: 193). The argument to this hypothesis is the fact that in the area of the sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary was Veles's place, is the cemetery, where the pre-Christian Slavs used to give in the bodies of their deceased to Veles's Underworld (Belaj, 2009: 175).

ethnic element is discerned in toponyms.<sup>15</sup> The consequence of this is the lack of concrete mythological toponyms for the exact confirmation of the observed structures.

Although small, the number of concealed mythological toponyms cannot prove the mythical action in the area as it is the case with the western and southern areas in Croatia. It indicates the conclusion that the Slavs (Croats) in this area (sanctuary in Kloštar) carried out their pagan rites all the way to baptizing, as well as the peoples who had lived there before them.

## Conclusion

Observing the sanctuary of the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary through narration, historical sources, etymological-mythical-spatial analysis, we put it in some other context from the one which it was in before (religious). This approach to the research revealed some unknown and new facts about this micro space.

Apart from that, this work helped us read and notice a number of elements for carrying out a research with another method, cultural-anthropological, which would reflect the culture of pilgrims, the culture of the event itself during the pilgrimage, which would, in fact, be necessary.

In the end, the sanctuary in Kloštar got a new dimension through this work, unknown so far to our cultural and scientific community. Finally, we can read the entire text in several levels. The first level shows that the “sacred places” have the continuity of “long lasting”, for thousands of years, and their structure remains firm, almost unchangeable. The second level, the object of folk worship, the structure that was changing through time (The Big Mother, Mokoš, The Mother of God). The third structure, most liable to changes, are the human communities which have settled in the area around Kloštar in the past three thousand years.

*Translated by Tomislav Redep*

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Kurbegova kosa – indicates Turkish presence, Elinska kosa – from Jelin, Jelinka-Greek presence (according to Skok, 1971: 772) – indicates the Vlach presence or Jovanovo brdo – indicates Serbian presence, etc.