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Uskrсни krijes

Vuzmenka/vazmenka/vuzmenjak

*Turpe est, scribere incipientum veniam petere.*¹

U ciklusu godišnjih običaja, naročito u proljetnom i ljetnom razdoblju, istaknuto mjesto zauzima običaj paljenja vatri kao svojevrsni izraz "pučke pobožnosti", a datumski (u pravilu) vezan uz kršćanski liturgijski kalendar. Kao tradicija baštinjena iz različitih kulturnih miljea i obrazaca, različitih ishodišta i vremena postanka običaj je i danas prisutan u nekim varijantama obredne prakse.

Godišnje vatre (pokladne, jurjevske, uskršnje, ivanjske etc.), ognji, kresovi, simbolikom i impresivnošću izraza kao kontrapunkta bogatog kulturnog mozaika "vječna" su vatra i izvor u istraživačkom radu.

Poznate, ali još uvijek nedovoljno istražene u teorijskom i metodološkom smislu takve su vatre vuzmenke, vazmenke, vuzmice... i o njima je ovdje riječ.

Ključne riječi: uskršnji običaji, uskrсни krijes, sjeverozapadna Hrvatska

Jaskansko, Svetojansko prigorje na južnim podbrežjima Plešivice. Svitanje 16. travnja 2006. godine. *Slepočki k vuzmenki, slepočki k vuzmenki ... vuzmenka gori, vuzmenka gori ...* odzvanjali su dječji glasovi dok su se na modrosivom obzorju pojavljivali prvi znaci svjetlosti rađanja novoga dana. Atmosfera napetog, nestrpljivog iščekivanja. Skupine mještana okupljene na posebnim mjestima unutar i na rubovima sela i ambijent u kojem se osjeća naboj

¹ Ružno je da onaj koji počinje pisati traži milost.

svečanog, naizgled posve profanog čina utopljenog u (ne)svakidašnje okruženje, ali u kome se čuti doživljaj sakralnog toposa. Vrijeme je da se zapali uskrсни krijes – *vu-zmenka, vuzmenjak, vazmenka*.

Prvi su sati prve nedjelje nakon punog mjeseca (uštapa) proljetne ravnodnevnice (ekvinocija). U kršćanskoj (ovdje rimokatoličkoj) liturgijskoj godini to je završetak Svetog trodnevlja. Uskrs. Vuzem. Vazam.

Uskrs je najveći kršćanski blagdan. Ne ulazeći u detalje mnogobrojnih rasprava o korjenima uskrsnog slavlja u vjerovanjima i religijskim idejama koje su mu prethodile (od asirsko-babilonskog štovanja boginje Ištar, feničanske Astarte, te mnogih staro-civilizacijskih kultova o ritualnoj smrti i uskrsnuću vegetacijskih bogova, židovskih blagdana kojima su obilježavani različiti datumi iz njihove povijesti i ranokršćanskog povezivanja židovske Pashe s Isusovom mukom i uskrsnućem), kratko ću iznijeti nekoliko, uglavnom poznatih činjenica.

Polazišta su u «evoluciji» Uskrsa prijevori iz 2. stoljeća Kristove ere između kršćana židovskog i neznabožačkog (poganskog) porijekla o danu i datumu Pashe i Isusova uskrsnuća, te nepoklapanju aleksandrijskog i rimskoga kanonskoga proljetnog ekvinocija, a time i datuma Uskrsa.

Uskrs se slavio 14. dana židovskog mjeseca Nisana ili u nedjelju poslije Pashe koju su Židovi slavili prvog sabata nakon punog mjeseca (uštapa), iza proljetnog ekvinocija, da bi se na Nicejskom koncilu 325. godine, na kome je Crkva prihvatila i julijanski kalendar, donijela odluka o slavljenju Uskrsa prve nedjelje nakon uštapa i proljetne ravnodnevnice (ekvinocija).

Kao pomični blagdan koji pada u različite datume, u julijanskom kalendaru datum Uskrsa izračunava se pomoću Viktorijevih i Dionizijevih kanona (koji su u katoličkim zemljama vrijedili do kraja 16. stoljeća, u protestantskim do kraja 18. stoljeća, a u nekim pravoslavnim Crkvama vrijede još i danas), a prema gregorijanskom kalendaru pomoću Claviusovog kanona, te različitih tablica i formula na temelju astronomskih mjerenja. Tako se blagdan Uskrsa pomiče u rasponu od pet tjedana. Prema gregorijanskom kalendaru najranije može biti 22. ožujka, a najkasnije 25. travnja, a prema julijanskom 4. travnja, odnosno 8. svibnja. No, ne može biti u isti dan kada i židovska Pasha.

Osvrnimo se nakratko i na spomenute nazive za ovaj najveći kršćanski blagdan. Naime, u novoštokavskim idiomima i standardnome hrvatskom jeziku raširena je upotreba naziva Uskrs, dok su nazivi Vazam i Vuzem karakteristika čakavskog i kajkavskog narječja (a otuda prihvaćeni i kao moguća jezična inačica u standardnom jeziku). Kao crkveni termini, a iz teoloških razloga, imaju i šire značenje kojim se obuhvaća vrijeme Velikog tjedna i Svetog trodnevlja povezujući tako dva vida kršćanskog otajstva: korizmeni – trpni i uskrsni – slavljenički). Međutim, postoje indicije da je u Dubrovniku bio u upotrebi i naziv Uzem koji je znan i novoštokavskim ikavcima u dijaspori.

Etimologija riječi Uskrs općeprihvaćena je kao izvedenica od glagola uskrsnuti povezujući ga s kršćanskom istinom Kristova uskrsnuća.² U etnološkoj literaturi najrazložnijim i najuvjerljivijim smatra se tumačenje riječi Vuzem/Vazam kao izvedenice od glagola *vzeti*, *vazeti* (възѣтъ, *vuzeti* – s praslavenskim korijenom: Gavazzi, 1988:44; Belaj, 1988:128-129) gdje se inzistira na nastanku naziva kao jasne opreke nazivu *Mesopust* gdje su *Pust* i *Vazam* granični datumi četrdesetodnevnog uskrsnog posta – Korizme.³

Međutim, teolozi nude i neka druga objašnjenja (*interpretatio christiana*). Na primjer, prema jednom tumačenju *Vazam* je izvedenica iz grčke riječi *azima* – što bi doslovno značilo «beskvasni kruh», a skraćeno se upotrebljava za židovsku Pashu. Pasha se pak dovodi u vezu i s grčkom riječi *pathein* (trpjeti). Teolog, prevoditelj i bibličar fra Bonaventura Duda mišljenja je da su riječ *Vazam* u hrvatski jezik «uveli» Sveta braća Ćiril i Metod slavenizirajući židovski naziv *Pesah* (u latiniziranom obliku *Pasha*) gdje se izvorno značenje riječi *pesah* (izlazak, prijelaz) odnosi na izlazak iz egipatskog ropstva. Iako je navedene pojmove teško dovesti u bilo kakvu semantičku vezu s nazivima Vuzem/Vuzam kao sinonimima za Uskrs (uskrsnu nedjelju), u crkveno-liturgijskom smislu ti nazivi imaju, kao što je rečeno, širi kontekst.

Običaj paljenja vatri uoči nekih crvenih blagdana ili na sam blagdan, njihova rasprostranjenost i nazivi (na primjer, u Hrvata: krijes, kres, kris; svitnjak, koleda, vatra; vuzmenka, vazmenka, vuzmenjak, vuzmica itd.), dobro su poznati i dokumentirani gotovo kod svih europskih naroda kao prožimanje religijskog i običajno-pučkog, a sam ritual, iako se «naslanja» na blagdane, ne mora nužno biti (ili, u pravilu, nije) izvorno povezan s kršćanskom liturgijskom godinom, odnosno Uskrsom.

Izuzetak su crkveno-narodne tradicije paljenja vatre pred crkvom (*ignis pashalis*) na Veliku subotu s ciljem njezina blagoslova i obnove kućne vatre (Gavazzi, 1988:31-33; Černelić, 1994) i vatre koje se pale kod crkve na datum titulara crkve ili sveca zaštitnika sela, a nisu predmetom ovog teksta.⁴

² Hrvatski jezikoslovci riječ Uskrs povezuju s glagolom *krsmuti* sa značenjem *oživjeti*, *dići se*. Etimolog Petar Skok, čije mišljenje prihvaća i Gavazzi, smatra da je u korijenu te riječi *krijes-* (крьсѣ) koja je u staroslavenskom označavala sunce u ljetnom suncostaju (solsticiju), izvedeno od (o)kretati. Prema novoj etimologiji, koju zagovara Belaj, *krijes* se izvodi iz indoeuropskog glagola *kre-s-* nastala od *ie.* korijena *ker(ʷ)* – «rasti, hraniti» povezujući to s latinskim *creo* – «stvaram», *cersco* – «rastem» i imenom rimske boginje plodnosti Ceres i starovisokonjemačkim *hirsō* – «proso» što običaje i obrede u vezi s *krijesom* stavlja u kontekst mita o rastu vegetacije. Identičan je slučaj i sa staroslavenskim *vkrosnotiō* – «uskrsnuti» (Belaj, 1998:129, 223).

³ Svakako je zanimljiv i Belajev pokušaj tumačenja: «Treba, ipak, reći da se ispod ovog jasno razumljivog značenjskog sloja možda nalazi i jedan stariji. U praslavenskoj je, naime, *vzeti* značilo ne samo «uzeti» nego i «započeti». Ostanemo li kod pretpostavke da je Uskrs zamijenio praslavensku Novu godinu, onda nije posve nemoguće reći da riječ Vuzem/Vazam u sebi nosi trag pretkršćanskog naziva za p o č e t n i dan godine ...» (Belaj, 1998:129).

⁴ Postoji niz teškoća u relevantnom razgraničenju tradicija paljenja uskrsnih vatri svjetovnog i religijskog karaktera. Prema Zenderu (1980), franački biskup Bonifacije 751. godine tražio je od pape objašnjenja o slavljenju Velikog tjedna i posebno o liturgijskom običaju blagoslova vatre. Iz njegova se odgovora dade zaključiti da ga je franačka liturgija poznavala, a rimska nije. Isto tako, Zender izražava uvjerenje o povezanosti svjetovnih uskrsnih vatri u Europi s prvomajskima, također poznatim od toga vremena.

Potaknut istraživanjima o obrednim vatrama koje se pale tijekom godine na južno-slavenskim i širim europskim prostorima, kao tradiciji koja nema isključivo crkveno-religijski karakter, zainteresirao sam se i za paljenje «uskrasnih vatri, krijesova». Kako su mi primarni izvori podataka bile upitnice Etnološkog atlasa (tema *Godišnje vatre*) i vlastita terenska istraživanja o stanju na kraju 20. i početku 21. stoljeća te, prema sjećanju kazivača, u ranijim razdobljima, pokušao sam, oslanjajući se na skromne zabilježbe u literaturi, kartografski prikazati rasprostranjenost svjetovnih uskrasnih vatri koje se pale izvan crkvenih prostora, najčešće rano na sam dan Uskrsa ili na Veliku subotu uvečer, te raširenost naziva *vuzmenka*, uključujući i varijante tog naziva.

Deskripcija sadašnjeg stanja temelji se na neposrednom iskustvu i utiscima koje sam dijelom stekao u potkalničkim selima i posebno u okolici Jastrebarskog. No, za Plešivičko prigorje (većina naselja u blizini Jastrebarskog na južnim obroncima Plešivice) još je 1908. godine Vatroslav Rožić zapisao: «*Vuzam* je najveće vesele za dečke i pastire. Mâm po polnëci idedu k «vuzmëñaku», kega su već na Veliku sibotu napravili de na bregu. Zabili su četirti kolca nametali štrafalkov, bôrovica i sikakvega klëca i graña. Kaj je već kup, više se veselidu, kak bu girelo. Sâki dineše sôbu jajac, slanina i vina, pak si peëedu mësi i pijedu, a predi već zapalidu vuzmëñak š četiri strani; ëe vuzmëñak jako girï, ëe je velik plavan unda se si veselidu. Pri vuzmëñaku ostânedu, dok sa ne zgori – se di zërje. Negda je vuzmëñakov bilo na sâkim brëgu, i ëiji je predi priël girëti i ëiji je bil najveëi, unëga su više preštima vâli; dënas malo gdôj vuzmëñak pali.» (Rožić, 1908:242).

Gavazzi je pak ustvrdio da je «paljenje uskršnjih kresova rašireno po sjeverozapadnoj Hrvatskoj (bez Primorja i otoka, Korduna i Like) gubeći se prema granicama Slavonije», a da ih «ne poznaju ni Srbi ni Bugari», ali «da ovakve vatre (*vazmeni ognji*) pale, kad je *goristajenje* (uskrsnuce) i Gradišćanski Hrvati, no neda se pouzdano reći, da li su taj običaj u Gradišće donijeli iz stare domovine, ili su ga pak tek tu poslije doseljennja prihvatili. Uskrasne se vatre naime dobro i obilno potvrđuju u Slovenaca – a onda i u alpskih pa i dijela ostalih Nijemaca (i još nekih naroda Evrope). To, kao i drugi pokazatelji, upućuje da Hrvatima uskrasne vatre zacijelo nisu bile poznate iz davnine, niti im se područje suzilo na današnji opseg, već da se taj običaj raširio u sjeverozapadnim hrvatskim krajevima, uglavnom kajkavskim, preko susjednih slovenskih zemalja kao vrlo značajan i ekspanzivan srednjeevropski običaj.» (Gavazzi, 1988:34-36).

Današnji terenski pokazatelji i karte u prilogu potvrđuju Gavazzijevo mišljenje, kao i slične konstatacije Moje Mediça iz 1915. o rasprostranjenosti uskrasnih vatri, iako je u proteklih skoro sedamdeset godina od prvog izdanja Gavazzijevih «Godinu dana hrvatskih narodnih običaja» te sto godina od Mediçevog priloga došlo do nekih promjena. Danas se ta tradicija dijelom i nekonzistentno raširila južnije i na jugoistok. Vatre uz Uskrs manje se pale u Sloveniji (prema podatcima iz upitnica EA), a čini se da su dijelom i potisnute od prvomajskih kresova.

Općenito, u najvećoj su mjeri izostali i obredi pretjerivanje stoke preko zgarišta, odnošenje ugaraka i pepela u vinograde i polja ili vjerovanja «da sve dotle neće zle

sile (vještice, demoni) imati vlasti, dokle dopre svijetlo (ili dim) tih kresova».⁵ *Tempora mutantur*.

Činjenica je da se u novije doba vuzmenke manje pale (a pogotovo to više ne čine pastiri), iako je posljednjih desetak godina uočljiva tendencija oživljavanja tog običaja. Regionalno je raširen na jugozapadu do blizine Karlovca, Ozlja i Duge Rese, te istočno od Zagreba u dugoselskom području, pa na sjeveroistoku kroz Zagorje, u Podravini, Međimurju i području Bilogore. U tome sve više sudjeluje, osim samoorganiziranih suseljana mlađe ili srednje životne dobi, i omladina okupljena u različitim kulturno-umjetničkim i folklornim društvima te ekološkim i sportskim udrugama. Iz perspektive suvremenika zainteresiranih za istraživanje etnološke baštine zavičaja o *vazmenicama* u jednom dijelu Hrvatskog zagorja, Ivanka Kunić (što je također s vremenske distance od šest desetljeća usporedivo s dobrim opisom Viktora Pintera), donosi kraći odlomak: «Nekoliko dana prije Uskrsa djeca su sakupljala granje i suharke i nosili ih na najviši brijeg odakle će se plamen daleko vidjeti. Pri tome su pazili da im djeca iz drugih zaselaka ne odnesu prikupljeno. Na Veliku subotu *vuzemnica se oblikuje*. Uz oveći kol naslagali su jelovinu, smrekovinu, šiblje i granje, kukurozovinu i oblikovali oveći stožac. Neki slažu kao piramidu sastavljenu oko 3 ili 4 glavna stupa (“ražnja”) obložena drvenim kladicama, *sokima* koji se slažu par na par poprečno s ispunom od crnogoričnih grana. Na vrhu, “frljuncu” stupove povežu i okite ga raznobojnim “pantlikama” i šarenim papirom – “kinčom”. Sav taj nakit naziva se “pahe-ta”. Uz manje vatre pored vuzemnice bdiju i čuvaju je da je ne zapali neko drugi, a pali se u različito vrijeme, a najčešće u “cik zore” na dan Uskrsa.” (Kunić, 2001).⁶

⁵ «Na Vuzem rano pale *vuzmejnku* (*vuzmejnak*). Dan prije nanosi se kup borovice, a na Vuzem se zapali: puste blago van i kada ogran pogasne, potjeraju ga kroz ognište, da mu ne bi mogle one godine coprnice nauditi.» (Kotarski, 1917:198).

⁶ U Hrvatskom zagorju najčešći su nazivi *vuzmenica* i *vuzemnica*. Posebno su impresivne one u Ivanečkom kraju s konstrukcijama (ponekad dvostrukim) visokim i do dvadeset metara. Lokalni iPortal.hr bilježi: “Posao oko gradnje vuzemnice započinje i dva mjeseca prije Uskrsa. U tom se vremenu pripremaju drva, prikuplja granje i jelovina, a sama *vuzemnica* se gradi na Veliku subotu. Nekad su se vuzemnice gradile na najvišem brijegu iznad sela kako bi se plamen mogao vidjeti što dalje, a danas se obično grade na pristupačnijim mjestima, livadama i čistinama uz naselja. Dva su glavna tipa vuzemnica koje se grade u nas. Neka mjesta grade vuzemnice u obliku stošca od drvlja i granja oko centralnog stupa, a u drugim mjestima se oko tri ili četiri uspravna stupa slažu “*soki*” (klade). Gradnja vuzemnice je značila i nadmetanje sa susjednim selom, a u tom nadmetanju je bilo i nepodopština. One bezazelnije su značile samo krađu drva od susjednog sela, a bilo je i paljenja vuzemnica prije roka što je bila velika sramota. Zato su se drva, a posebno već sagrađene vuzemnice dobro čuvala. Vrijeme paljenja vuzemnica ovisilo je o običaju u pojedinom selu. Obično su se vuzemnice palile u cik zore, a danas je to u mnogim mjestima prilagođeno mlađim mještanima kojima je teško probdjeti cijelu noć pa se vuzemnice često pale u ponoć ... Vuzemnica u Kamenici nekad se je gradila na brdu iznad Kamenice. Sve se radilo ručno, pa je i izrada trajala znatno duže nego danas. U tom razdoblju su obično i školska djeca popustila u učenju. Drva su se prikupljala dobrovoljnim prilozima od svih mještana, a u izgradnji smo se takmičili s Grdima i Crkovecem. Vuzemnica se palila u 5 sati ujutro, a mi djeca smo udarali u lonce i trčali selom vičući: vuzemljica geri, vuzemljica geri ... – ispričao nam je profesor **Antun Rodek**.” (Vidjeti: http://www.iportal.hr/clanak_.asp?ID=2180; članak “Narodni običaj paljenja vuzemnica” od 18.4.2006. godine). Pinter (1934) je pak spominjao i *uskršnje kresove* (“obični kupovi granja i drvlja”) koje razlikuje od *vuzemnice*, a palili su se na južnim brežuljcima Bednjanske doline u predvečerje Uskrsa. Posljednjih se godina

Obilazeći potkalnička sela i naselja (Selanec, Čučevac, Mikovec, Gornje i Donje Borje, Šopron, Kamenica, Kalnik, Sv. Petar Orehovac, Šiljevec, Finčevac) na Veliki petak i Veliku subotu 2005. godine, nailazio sam na skupine mještana koji su predano obavljali pripreme ili bili u različitim fazama gradnje *vuzmica*. Uz *hute* (kolibe) od kukuruzovine i granja, u dobrom raspoloženju, uz vino i prigodni roštilj (ponegdje i janje na ražnju), te uz vatru koju su ložili u blizini mjesta gdje podižu *vuzmice*, provodili su najmanje jednu noć prije nego li bi ih zapalili.

Vuzmica se gradi u piramidalnom obliku do visine oko dvanaest metara tako da se oko tri ili četiri stupa ukopana u zemlju slažu cjepanice između kojih se ubaci i poneka stara automobilska guma («da bolje gori»). Potencira se natjecanje čija će vuzmica biti veća, uz glasno dovikivanje i komentiranje. Pali se u ranim večernjim satima (oko 21 sat) na Veliku subotu. Dok gori, uz nju se okuplja većina suseljana u veselom raspoloženju čekajući da izgori, a potom se razilaze.

Tijekom nekoliko dana koji su prethodili uskršnim blagdanima 2006. godine boravio sam na terenu u okolici Jastrebarskog. U više prigradskih naselja i sela (Cvetković, Čabdin, Domagović, Volavje, Petrovina, Donja Kupčina, Brlenići, Brezari, Krupače, Čačkovina, Krašić, Hrženik, Pribić, Svrževo, Dol, Puškarov jarak) tih se dana osjećala neuobičajena aktivnost – pripremala se *vuzmenka* (okolica Krašića), *vazmenka* (okolica Pribića), *vuzmenjak* (Cvetković).⁷

Pripreme su, po kazivanju mještana, nekada trajale i više od mjesec dana, a u posljednje vrijeme tjedan ili dva (od Glušne nedjelje koja prethodi Cvjetnici). Borovicu s kojom «zidaju» *vuzmenku/vazmenku* danas nabavljaju iz Parka prirode Žumberak. Kako ju je sve teže nabaviti, nadomještaju je borovim granama. Na vrhu vuzmenke, visoke oko deset do dvanaest metara, konstrukcijske stupove od *grabrovine* povezuju *sirobatom* (likom, pavetinom, bršljanom) i stavljaju *kokot*, *kokotić* od izabраниh najljepših grana borovice. Drva, cjepanice, najviše od jalše, pripremaju danima ranije, a «stožine» od *grabrovine* za *vuzmenjak* usijeku i dovlače na Veliki petak iz šuma s područja Crne Mlake (najčešće s lokaliteta Glogovac).

Uz krijes obvezno grade i improviziranu «kućicu» od «debeline», «debelišća», kukuruzovine (Brlenići), granja, ostataka borovice i dasaka. Boravak na mjestu podizanja

na mrežnim stranicama različitih udruga, turističkih zajednica, lokalnih i županijskih novina mogu naći informativni i zanimljivi podaci o različitim aktualnim kulturnim događanjima. Kao svojevrsan kuriozum, navodimo sljedeći događaj: "Vijesti od 22.04.2000. (subota): Danas u 21 sata pod organizacijom mladeži SDP - ogranak Kotoriba održan je narodni običaj paljene "Vuzmenke". Okupilo se mnogo mladih koji su došli na taj tradicionalni običaj. Za dobar štimung i dobru muziku pobrinula se ekipa radio Međimurja a tko je bio žedan mogao si je naručiti i neku od osvežavajućih pića na šanku." (<http://www.mnovine.hr>). Sličnim "nepodopštinama" u različitim prigodama nisu odoljele ni druge političke stranke bez obzira na njihovu "ideološku" obojenost i opcije. To, međutim, nije "specijalitet" samo našeg podneblja. Naime, i na susjednom ozemlju nalazimo podatak da je političar Janez Podobnik, predsjednik Slovenske ljudske stranke, 24. lipnja 2004. ("Ivanjsko navečerje"), "v spremstvu *kresnic* prižgal kres v počastitev 13. obletnice naše samostojnosti"... "Kresnice" su bile ogrnute bijelim svilenim tunikama i s bengalskim bakljama u rukama pored kresa. *O tempora, o mores.*

⁷ Zajedno s kolegicom Tanjom Bukovčan, uz sudjelovanje grupe studenata s Odsjeka za etnologiju i kulturnu antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu, dokumentirano je više sati audio-vizualne grade.

vuzmenke u mnogome je identičan onome u potkalničkim selima. Okupljeni pripremaju kotlovinu, janje (čak i tele u Krašiću) na ražnju. Svi redovito ističu potrebu čuvanja vuzmenke da je ne bi netko drugi zapalio i tako ih osramotio.⁸

Prije nego što će zapaliti *vuzmenjak*, djeca s bakljama trče kroz selo uzvikujući: *Slepočki k vuzmenki ...* U većini sela zapale je na Uskrs ujutro, između četiri i pet sati, a u Čabdinu i Domagoviću oko ponoći. Djeca jednoglasno viču: *Vuzmenka gori ...* a okupljeni oko nje vesele se čekajući da najveći dio izgori, i tada se razilaze.

Kako većina sudionika u gradnji vuzmenke nije nazočila večernjoj misi na Veliku subotu, blagoslovu vatre i Službi svjetla (što svećenici baš i ne odobravaju), oni koje nije svladao umor od rada i bdijenja polaze na prvu jutarnju misu.

Možda treba napomenuti da je zamjetljiv nedostatak zbivanja iz «folklornog repertoara» kao što su neki karakteristični napjevi i ophodi koji su u bliskoj vezi s drugim danima kada se također pale vatre. Datumski, a u nekim slučajevima prostorno, to su jurjevski kresovi (ophod *jurjaša, durdara*), prvomajske vatre (ophod *filipovića, drva*), spasovske vatre (ophod *križara, krstara*), duhovske vatre (ophod *kraljica, ljelja*), ivanjski kresovi (ophod *ivančica, ladarica*).

Zanimljivo je da običaj paljenja uskršnjih kresova nije, makar i u nekim svojim transformiranim oblicima, prihvaćen i u gradskim sredinama kao što je to slučaj s jurjevskim i ivanjskim kresovima koji su praćeni različitim sadržajima suvremenih bakljada, vatrometa i estradizacije događanja, ali i s nekim povijesnim reminiscencijama.⁹

Zaključak

Ne ulazeći posebno u nedovoljno razjašnjeno pitanje porijekla i starosti paljenja uskršnjih kresova, kao ni moguća pretenciozna tumačenja zasnovana na spekulacijama, a na osnovi poznatih, dostupnih i ovdje predstavljenih činjenica, nameće se nekoliko konstatacija.

Ovaj običaj, ograničeno raširen u sjeverozapadnom kontinentalnom dijelu Hrvatske, po starini je srednjovjekovnog porijekla, a širio se na ove prostore unosom iz sjevernijih europskih područja.

⁸ Neki prave i manje, «lažne vuzmenke» koje zapale kao prave kako bi isprovocirali promatrače iz drugih sela ili zaseoka da prije njih zapale svoju. Tako bi njihova duže gorjela. U Krašiću pale Stepinci, Peničarci, Brebrići, Šimanci, Matošinci, Prstaci, Seljanci (Čuk), Židani, a u Cvetkoviću Sredanci, pri Vrčici, Vuličari i Dolenjci (Dolenji kraj). Stariji se sjećaju da su nekada palili i ivanjski krijes, posebno ispred kuća u kojima je živio netko s imenom Ivan.

⁹ U Firenci se, na primjer, stanovnici svake godine na Uskrs okupljaju na Piazza del Duomo da bi gledali lansiranje rakete zvane *Colombina*, pri čemu se spaljuju kola s kojih je lansirana. Sam običaj kombinacija je povijesnih religijskih artefakata i suvremenih pirotehničkih vještina, a vatra se ritualno pali s kremnom iz Svetoga groba. Paljenje kola tradicionalno je posvećeno sjećanju na legendarnog firentinskog viteza Pazzino de Pazzu, križara koji se prvi popeo na zidine Jeruzalema 1099. godine.

Čini se da su nazivi *Vuzem/Vazam*, nastali pod utjecajem Crkve. Na primjer, franjevac Jakov Pletikosa, opisujući lokaciju zvanu *Galgala* u Svetoj zemlji, u putopisu iz 1752. godine navodi: »Kad priđe puk Izraela priko Jordana po suhu, ovdje najprije utaboriše se i čerge razapeše; i ovdje činiše i čataše *Vazam*.» Bit će da je Pletikosa tim nazivom označio židovski blagdan Pashe kojim se obilježava uspomena na izlazak iz egipatskog ropstva, nikako Uskrs.

Uz već spomenuta teološka tumačenja navedenih naziva, prisjetimo se i naziva *Uzam* u srednjovjekovnom Dubrovniku (Belaj, 1998:128) koji dugujemo Nikši Ranjini, autoru zbirke odlomaka iz Biblije – *Ranjinina Lekcionara*.¹⁰

U trajanju nekih običaja nisu nepoznata razdoblja njihove regresije ili pratećih obreda, kao ni njihovo ponovno oživljavanje, u više ili manje izmijenjenoj formi, u određenim novonastalim okolnostima.

Podatak koji navodi Rožić («dènas malo gdòj vuzmèñak pali») govori nam da je već početkom 20. stoljeća opadao običaj paljenja uskrasnih kresova koje su najviše palili pastiri po brežuljcima. Vremenski bliski *jurjevskim kresovima*, vjerojatno su dijelom i od njih potiskivani, iako su i jedni i drugi u uskoj vezi s proljetnim buđenjem vegetacijskog ciklusa.

Gotovo neizostavno, suvremeni kazivači ne propuštaju napomenuti da je okupljanje i paljenje vuzmenki u razdoblju socijalizma bilo nepodobno, ponekad opstruirano i sprečavano.

Sporadično se spominje da ni Crkva na to ne gleda baš blagonaklono. Ali, jačanjem uloge Crkve u društvu devedesetih godina prošloga stoljeća i kolektivnim nazorom o religijskoj pozadini običaja, on se manifestira kao jedan oblik pučke pobožnosti, iako se tako ne doživljava i ne tumači.

Isto tako, prekinulo se ili znatno smanjilo spaljivanje starih automobilskih guma. To se pak povezuje s razvojem «ekološke svijesti».

Prateći oduševljenje, zanos i nemali trud, pa čak i izlaganje opasnosti prisutno u pripremi i gradnji vuzmenki, ali bez ikakvih «starih» obreda, te gotovo žurni odlazak «sa scene» prije nego li kriješ dogori, neutralan sudionik događanja s pravom se pita koliko u svemu tome ima disteleološkog ponašanja na granici apsurdna. U svakom slučaju, pokazuje se da neke tradicije s određenim «samorazumljivim» vrijednostima, iako upitne s razine vjerodostojnosti i sadržaja u formalnom izražavanju, djeluju vrlo funkcionalno. Egzistiraju kao samopotvrđivanje i identifikacija skupina ili pojedinaca s određenim svjetonazorom i činom emitirajući poruku *drugima* o vlastitom kulturnom ili socijalnom identitetu.

¹⁰ Dubrovački vlastelin, član Velikog vijeća i više puta knez Republike, Nikša Andreć Ranjina (1494.-1582.) autor je kronike *Annali di Ragusa* i sakupljač renesansnoga hrvatskog pjesništva i petrarkističke lirike u rukopisu poznatom kao *Zbornik Nikše Ranjine*.

Nesvjesnim prihvaćanjem selektivne i kontrolirane memorije kao poželjnog afirmativnog ponašanja, u kome je «determinirana alternativa» obrazac unutar kojega je obredna funkcija sekundarna, običaj je i u ovakvim slučajevima regulativ društvenih odnosa.

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Easter Bonfire

Vuzmenka/vazmenka/vuzmenjak

*Turpe est, scribere incipientum veniam petere.*¹

In the cycle of annual customs, especially in the spring and summer period, an important custom is that of burning fires, which is a form of expression of 'folk piety', and the date of which is usually linked to the Christian liturgical calendar. As a tradition inherited from other cultural areas and patterns, of different origins and periods in which they were created, the custom is today still preserved in different variants of ritual practice.

Annual fires (in Carnival period, around St. Juraj's Day, Easter or St. John's Day), bon fires, kr(i-je)sovi, through their symbolism and impressive form are the elements of the rich cultural mosaic, and can be an 'eternal' source of inspiration for a researcher.

Well-known, but still inadequately researched, these fires, such as vuzmenka, vazmenka, vuzmice...are the topic of this article.

Key words: Easter customs, Easter fire, North-western Croatia

The hilly region of Jaska and St. Jana on the southern slopes of the mountain of Plešivica - April 16, 2006. The break of dawn. *Slepočki k vuzmenki, slepočki k vuzmenki...vuzmenka gori, vuzmenka gori*, the sounds of children voices were rising against the metal gray horizon, as the first signs of light marked the birth of a new day. An atmosphere of suspense and waiting. People were gathered in groups on specific places in the village and on its

¹ It is unfortunate that the one who only started writing should ask for mercy.

outskirts waiting for the beginning of a festive, apparently profane, ritual, embedded in (non)everyday situation, but with a clear indication of its sacral character. It was time to light up the Easter bonfire – *vuzmenka*, *vuzmenjak*, *vazmenka*.

Easter is the greatest Christian holiday. Without the intention to enumerate all the details of the various discussions on the origins of Easter in beliefs and religious ideas that preceded the celebration itself, (Assyrian - Babylonian worship of the goddess Ishtar, Phoenician Astarte and many old civilization cults on ritual death and rebirth of gods of vegetation, Jewish holidays marking different historical dates and the early Christian links between the Jewish Pasha and the Passion and Resurrection of Christ), I will outline a few, mostly known, facts.

The starting points in the analysis of the 'evolution' of Easter are the debates dating from the 2nd century AD on the exact date of Pasha and the Resurrection of Jesus, occurring between the Christians of Jewish and pagan background, and the discrepancy between Alexandrian and Roman canonic spring equinox and therefore, the date of Easter.

Easter was celebrated on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan or on the Sunday after Pasha, which was celebrated by the Jews on the first Sabbath after full moon and after the spring equinox, while at the Niceian Council in 325 AD, when the Church also accepted Julian calendar, it was decided that the Easter will be celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon and spring equinox.

As a moveable holiday which could be celebrated on different dates, in Julian calendar the date of Easter was calculated from the canons of Victorius and Dionysus (which in Catholic countries were used until the end of the 16th and in Protestant countries until the end of the 18th century, while in some Orthodox churches they are still used today), and in Gregorian calendar it was calculated from the canon of Clavius as well as different tables and formulae from astronomical measurements. So, the celebration of Easter can be shifted in a span of five weeks. According to Gregorian calendar, the earliest date on which it could be celebrated is March 22 and the latest April 25, while according to Julian calendar the earliest date could be April 4 and the latest May 8. However, it cannot be celebrated on the same day as Jewish Pasha.

Let us briefly examine the above mentioned names for this greatest Christian holiday. In the new Stokavian dialect and the standard Croatian language the most common name for this holiday is *Uskrs*, while the names *Vazam* and *Vuzem* appear as characteristic for Chakavian and Kaikavian dialects (and are sometimes accepted as possible variants in standard language). In church terminology, and due to theological reasons, they can also cover a wider meaning which includes the Good Week and the period from Good Thursday to Good Saturday, therefore connecting the two aspects of this Christian celebration: the aspect of suffering and endurance – Lent, and the aspect of celebration – Easter. However, there are certain indications that the name *Uzem* was used in Dubrovnik and that the same name was also used by the speakers of the new Stokavian ikavian dialect in certain Diaspora groups.

Commonly accepted explanation for the etymology of the name *Uskrs* is that it was derived from the verb *uskrsnuti* (to resurrect), and is thus linked to the Christian truth of Christ's resurrection.² The etymology of *Vuzem/Vazam* which was, in ethnological literature, considered to be the most convincing and reliable was that it was derived from the verb *vzeti, vazeti* (to take), with the pre-Slavic stem *vōzet, vuzeti* (Gavazzi 1988:44, Belaj 1988:128-129), which supported the premise that this name was created as a clear dichotomy to the name *Mesopust*, with *Pust* and *Vazam* being the starting and ending date of the forty-day long Easter fasting – Lent.³

However, theologians are offering some other explanations (*interpretatio christiana*). For example, according to one interpretation, *Vazam* is derived from the Greek word – *azima*, which would literary mean 'azymous bread' and is also a short name for the Jewish Pasha. Pasha is than linked to the Greek word *pathein* (to suffer). A prominent theologians, translator and Biblical scholar, Fra Bonaventura Duda, thinks that the word *Vazam* was introduced to Croatian language by the Holly Brothers St. Cyril and Methodius, through Slavicization of the Jewish name *Pesah* (*Pasha*, in Latin form), where the original meaning of the word *pesah* (delivery, crossing) denotes the exodus from the Egyptian slavery. Eventhough it would be difficult to bring these idioms in any kind of semantic relation with the names *Vuzem/Vazam* as synonyms for Easter (Easter Sunday), in the context of church liturgy these names have, as it was outlined before, a wider context.

The customs of lightning bonfires on the evening before or exactly on the date of certain church holidays, together with their distribution and different names (for example, among Croatian population: *krijes, kres, kris; svitnjak, koleda, vatra; vuzmenka, vazmenka, vuzmenjak, vuzmica*, etc.) are known and documented among almost all European nations and point to the intertwining of religious and folk customary practices, while the ritual itself, even though it has a religious background, does not necessarily have to be (and is usually not) connected to Christian liturgical year, i.e. with Easter.

The exception are the church-customary practices of lightning of bonfires in front of the church (*ignis pashalis*) on Good Saturday, the purpose of which was the bless-

² Croatian linguists are linking the word *Uskrs* with the verb *krsnuti*, which means to become alive, to rise. Petar Skok, famous etymologist, whose opinion was accepted by Gavazzi, thinks that the stem of this word was the old Slavic *krijes-* (крьсѣ) which denoted the Sun at the period of summer solstice, and was derived from *o(kretati)* – 'to turn, to move'. According to the new etymology, advocated by Belaj, *krijes* is derived from the Indo-European verb *kre-s*, which, in turn, is derived from the Indo-European stem *ker(ʰ)* – to grow, to feed, and linked to the Latin *creo* – 'I create', *creasco* – 'I grow' and the name of the Roman fertility goddess Ceres and old High German *hirso* – millet, thus putting the rites and customs related to *krijes* in the context of the myth on the vegetation growth. The identical situation can be found in the Old Slavic *vzkrosnoti* – to resurrect (Belaj 1998: 129, 223).

³ We should also mention an interesting interpretation provided by Belaj: "It needs to be said that under this rather obvious layer of meaning, we could also find an older layer. In pre-Slavic language, *vzeti* meant not only 'to take', but also 'to start, to initiate'. If we accept the idea that Easter replaced pre-Slavic New Year, than it would not be completely impossible to conclude that the word *Vuzem/Vazam* carries in itself a trace of the pre-Christian name for the first day of the new year..." (Belaj 1998:129).

ing and renewal of the house fires (Gavazi 1988:31-33, Černelić 1994), as well as the lightning of fires near the church on the day of the church titular or the village's patron saint, but which are not discussed in this article.⁴

Intrigued by the research on ritual fires which are lit throughout the year in Southern Slavic, but also broader European regions, and which present a tradition which does not have exclusively church-religious character, I got interested in the lightning of Easter fires and bonfires. As my primary sources of data were the questionnaires of the Ethnological Atlas (topic on *Annual Fires*) and my own field research conducted at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century and, based on the memory of my informants, related to some earlier periods, I tried to, by relying on modest accounts found in literature, give a cartographic presentation of the distribution of the profane Easter fires which are lit outside the church area, usually early on Easter morning or on the evening of Good Saturday, as well as the distribution of the name *vuzmenka*, including its variants.

The description of the current situation is based on my direct observations and impressions I partly gained during my field research in the villages on the slopes of Kalnik Mountain, especially those around the town of Jastrebarsko. However, for the region of Plješivica Mountain (most villages near the town of Jastrebarsko on the southern slopes of Plješivica), Vatroslav Rožić wrote in 1908: *Vuzam* is the greatest festivity for boys and shepherds. Soon after midnight, they would go to the '*vuzmenak*', which they made on the top of the hill on Good Saturday. They would put four long poles into the ground and fill in the space between them with pine branches, twigs, pieces of wood, etc. The bigger the heap, the greater their joy, because the fire would be bigger then. Each participant would bring some eggs, bacon and wine, and they would bake food, eat and drink, next to the *vuzmenak* which they would light up from four sides, if *vuzmenak* burned well and the fire was big then indeed they would all be very happy. They would stay at the *vuzmenak* until it burned down – sometimes till dawn. In the past they would light up the bonfire on the top of every hill, and the greatest honor went to the group whose bonfire caught the fire first and was the largest; today you rarely see people lightning bonfires (Rožić, 1908: 242).

Furthermore, Gavazzi has established that 'the lightning of Easter bonfires is spread throughout northwestern Croatia (without the coastal region with islands, the regions of Lika and Kordun) and is vanishing towards the border with Slavonia' and 'cannot be found among the Serbs or Bulgarians', but that 'similar fires are lit on Easter by the Gradišće Croats, but it remains unclear whether the Croats have brought that

⁴ There are several problems in differentiating Eastern fires of religious and profane character. According to Zender (1980), the Frank Bishop Bonifacius asked the Pope in 751. to explain the origin of celebration of the Good Week and especially of the liturgical custom of blessing the fire. His answer can lead us to conclude that the custom was present in the Frank liturgy, but was not present in the Roman liturgy. Furthermore, Zender claimed that there was a connection between the profane Easter fires and the fires lit on the First of May, which were also documented in Europe from that period onwards.

custom to Gradišće region from their old homeland or whether they have accepted it after arrival to the new land'. Namely, the Easter bonfires were frequently confirmed among the Slovenes – as well as among the Germans in the Alpine region and in other parts of Germany (and among some other European nations). That, together with some other findings, pointed to the conclusion that the Croats did not light Easter bonfires in their old homeland, nor that their original, broader, distribution is now confined to a smaller region, but that this custom spread to the Northwestern regions of Croatia, mostly Kaikawian regions, from the neighboring Slovenian regions as an important and rather expansive Central European custom (Gavazzi, 1988:34-36).

Recent field research and the ethnographic maps in the appendix, confirm Gavazzi's opinion, and so do similar claims done by Mojo Medić in 1915 about the distribution of Easter fires, even though significant changes have occurred in the seventy years that have passed from the first edition of Gavazzi's famous book 'Croatian calendar customs in a year' and a hundred years from the publication of Medić's article. Today this tradition has unevenly spread towards the south and southeast. Easter fires are not so common in Slovenia (according to the data from the questionnaires of Ethnographic Atlas), and it seems that they are partly supplemented by the fires lit on the first of May.

Generally speaking, the rituals of driving the cattle through the ashes, and taking the burnt coals and ashes to the vineyards and fields have also disappeared, together with the belief that 'the evil forces (demons and witches) will have no power in the places which were reached by the light (or smoke) of these bonfires.'⁵ *Tempora mutantur*.

The fact is that in our times *vuzmenke* are not commonly lit (and especially this is not done by the shepherds), however, in the last ten years we can observe a tendency of renewal of this custom. Regionally it is spread in the regions around the towns of Karlovac, Ozalj and Duga Resa, around the village of Dugo Selo situated to the east of Zagreb, and on the northeastern part of Zagorje, reaching to the regions of Podravina, Međimurje and Bilogora. People taking part in this custom are usually self-organized groups of young or middle-aged boys and men as well as the youth gathered in various folklore groups or nature-preservation and sports organizations. From the point of view of a person interested in the research of ethnological heritage of the region she is coming from, Ivanka Kunić (six decades after, compared by a good description provided by Vinko Pinter), described the *vuzmenice* in the following way: 'A few days before Easter children would collect branches and twigs and carry them to the top of the highest hill, from which the flame would be clearly visible. They were especially attentive so that the children from the neighboring village would not steal

⁵ 'On Easter they would light up the *vuzmenjka* (*vuzmenjak*) very early. A day before they would pile up a heap of pine branches, and on Easter morning they would light it up: they would let the cattle out of the stables and when the fire diminished, they would drive the cattle through it, so that the witches would not harm the cattle that year (Kotarski 1917:198).

the collected material. *Vuzmica* was built on the Good Saturday. They would place pine branches, twigs, fir and spruce branches and corn stalks around a tall pole, and form a large cone structure. Some would built a pyramid around three or four main poles ('*ražnji*') connected by wooden logs, *soki*, which were criss-crossed in pairs, and the space between was filled in with pine branches. On the top of the construction, called *frljunc*, they would tie the poles together and decorate them with colored ribbons, *pantlike*, and paper, *kinč*. All these decorations are called *paheta*. The people would light up smaller fires next to the *vuzmica* and stay awake close to them, keeping watch of the *vuzmica*, so that someone else would not light it up, and they light it at different times, most commonly at the 'break of dawn' on Easter' (Kunić 2001).⁶

During my field research in the villages on the slopes of the Kalnik mountain (Selanec, Čučevac, Mikovec, Gornje and Donje Borje, Šopron, Kamenica, Kalnik, Sv. Petar Orehovec, Šiljevec, Finčevac) on the Good Friday and Good Saturday in 2005, I found groups of villagers who were very meticulous in preparation or were already in different phases of the building of *vuzmice*. Next to *hute* (huts), made of corn stalks and branches, in good spirits, with wine and barbeque (sometimes a whole roasted lamb), and next to a small fire they lit close to the site of future *vuzmica*, they spent at least one night before burning the bonfire.

Vuzmice were built in a pyramidal shape, to the maximum height of approximately 20 meters, so that the logs and a few old automobile tires ('for better burning') were inserted between three or four central poles dug into the ground. The competition on whose *vuzmica* will be taller was enhanced by loud yelling and frequent comments. It was lit in the evening of the Good Saturday (around 9 PM). While it was burning, the majority of villagers jovially gathered around the fire waiting for it to burn down, after which they went home.

In 2006, I spent the period just before the Easter doing fieldwork in the region around the town of Jastrebarsko. Unusual activity could be noticed these days in the villages just around Jastrebarsko (Cvetković, Čabdin, Domagović, Volavje, Petrovina, Donja Kupčina, Brleniči, Brezari, Krupače, Čačkovina, Krašić, Hrženik, Pribič,

⁶ The most common names in the region of Hrvatsko Zagorje are *vuzmenica* and *vuzemnica*. Especially impressive are the ones built in the region around Ivanec, with (sometimes double) constructions up to 20 meters high. The local iPortal.hr brought the following description: 'The work around building the *vuzemnica* would start as early as two months before Easter. In this period, people would prepare the wood, collect branches and twigs and the building of the bonfire would start on the Good Saturday. Sometimes *vuzmenice* were built on the highest hill above the village, so that the flame was visible from far away, but today they are build on sites which are more easily approachable, on the meadows and fields near the villages. Two types of *vuzmenice* are built in this region. Some villages build *vuzemnice* in the shape of cone made of wood and braches placed around a central pole, and in other villages logs (*soki*) are placed between three or four vertical poles. The building of bonfire also meant a competition with the neighboring village and some pranks were commonly part of the ritual. The harmless ones included stealing of the collected material, and more serious ones were related to pre-mature lightning up of *vuzemnica*, which was considered to be a great shame. Therefore, the builders would carefully watch over the collected material and over the finished *vuzemnice*. The exact time of lightning the bonfires depended on the customary practices in

Svrževo, Dol, Puškarov jarak) - preparations for the building of *vuzmenka* (around the village of Krašić), *vazmenka* (around the village of Pribić) or *vuzmenjak* (the village of Cvetković)⁷.

In the past the preparations lasted, according to the accounts from the villagers, for longer than a month, and today they last for a week or two (from the Sunday preceding the White Sunday). They find the blackberry branches with which they build the *vuzmenka/vazmenka* in the Nature Park Žumberak. Since blackberry branches are getting hard to find, they use pine branches instead. On the top of *vuzmenka*, from 10 to 20 meters high, they link the construction poles (cut from hornbeam wood) with ivy (*sirobat*), and place a *kokot*, *kokotić*, made of the specially selected, most beautiful, blackberry branches. They prepare wooden logs a few days before Easter and they cut and drag the construction poles (*stožine*) on Good Friday, usually from the woods in the region of Crna Mlaka, more specifically from the locality of Glogovac.

Next to the bonfire, they also build an improvised *house* made from corn stalks (*debelišće*, *debelina*), branches, blackberry leftovers and boards. The activities accompanying the building and watching over the *vuzmenka* were very similar to those described in the regions around the mountain of Kalnik. The gathered villagers prepared meat, like roasted lamb (or even a calf in the village of Krašić). They all emphasized the fact that *vuzmenka* should be carefully watched over, so that someone

different villages. Usually the bonfires were lit in the break of dawn, but today in many localities this is adjusted to young children who have difficulties staying up all night, so the bonfires are frequently lit at midnight... *Vuzemnica* in the village of Kamenica was once built on top of the hill above the village. Everything was done by hand, so the whole process of creating a *vuzemnica* lasted much longer than today. During this period school children would sometimes bring home bad marks. The wooden material was donated by all the villagers and we used to compete in building the bonfire with the villages of Grdi and Crkovec. The bonfire was lit at 5 in the morning and we, the children, would bang in some pots and run through the village yelling: *vuzemljica* is burning, *vuzemljica* is burning... - in a story told by professor Antun Rodek' (See: http://portal.hr/clanak_.asp?ID=2180; the article titled 'Folk customs of burning *vuzemnice*', from April 18, 2006). Pinter (1934), however, mentioned Easter bonfires ('simple heaps of branches and twigs) which he distinguished from *vuzelnice*, and which were lit on the southern slopes of Bednjanska valley on the Easter eve. In the last few years on the web-sites of different organizations, tourist offices, local and county papers we can find very interesting and informative data on various current cultural events. As a specific oddity, we outline the following account: News from April 22, 2000 (Saturday): Today at 9PM, the Social Democratic Party – Branch Kotoriba organized a folk custom of burning *Vuzmenka*. A lot of young people attended this traditional custom. Radio station Međugorje took care of the good atmosphere and played some good music, and those who were thirsty could order and buy themselves a refreshing drink at the bar' (<http://mnovine.hr>). Other political parties also could not resist to pull a similar trick on various occasions regardless of their ideological frameworks and political options. That, however, is not specific only for Croatian region. We have information from our neighbor Slovenia, that the politician Janez Podobik, the president of the Slovene Popular Party on June 24 2004 (Midsummer's Eve), 'in the presence of *kresnice*, lit the bonfires in the celebration of the 13th anniversary of our independence... *Kresnice* were dressed in white silk tunics and they were ceremonially standing by the bonfire with torches in their hands.' *O tempora, o mores*.

⁷ Together with a group of ethnology students and a colleague from the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Tanja Bukovčan, I have documented a few hours of audio-visual material

else would not come and light up their bonfire, thus bringing them great shame.⁸ Before the bonfire was lit, children ran through the village carrying torches in their hands and crying: *Slepočki k vuzmenki...* (*Sleepers to the bonfire...*). In the majority of the villages, *vuzmenka* was lit on Easter morning, between 4 and 5AM, and in the villages of Čabdin and Domagovići around midnight. Children cried: *Vuzmenka gori...* (*The bonfire is burning...*), the rest of the crowd happily waited till the bonfire burnt down and then went home.

Since most of the people who took part in building of the *vuzmenka* were not present at the evening mass on Good Saturday, which included the blessing of fire and light (which was not looked favorably upon by the priests), those who were not overcome by work and staying up all night, went to the first morning mass.

It seems important to mention that the activities from the folklore repertoire were completely missing - such as some characteristic songs or processions which are otherwise commonly related to some other dates when bonfires are lit. These bonfires, according to the dates, or sometimes regions, are the bonfires lit on St. George's Day (procession of *jurjaši, durđari*), May the 1st (procession of *filipovčice, drva*), Holy Thursday (the procession of *križari, krstari*), Whit Sunday (procession of *kraljice, ljelje*) and Midsummer's Day (the procession of *ivančice, ladarice*).

It is interesting to notice that the custom of lightning Easter bonfires is not, even in some transformed variants, accepted in the urban regions, as is the case with St. George's Day and Midsummer's Day bonfires, which are today accompanied by different activities such as lightning of torches, fireworks and show programs, but with certain historical reminiscences⁹.

Conclusion

Without the further analysis of the still unresolved questions on the origin and duration of the custom of lightning Easter bonfires, and without providing some far-

⁸ Some would even built smaller, 'fake' *vuzmenkas* and light them up pretending that they were real, so as to provoke the observers from the neighboring villages to light up their bonfires earlier. Therefore, when they would light up their real bonfire, it would last longer. In the village of Krašići several competing groups lighting the bonfires are: Stepinci, Peničarci, Brebrići, Šimanci, Matošinci, Prstaci, Seljanci (Čuk), Židani and in the village of Cvetković: Sredanci, Vrčići, Vuličari and Dolenjci. The older villagers remember a bonfire lit on the Midsummer's Day (St. John's Day in Catholic calendar), especially in front of the houses where a person named Ivan (John) lived.

⁹ In Florence, for example, people gather every year on Easter day on Piazza del Duomo to watch the launching of the rocket named *Colombina*, when the wagon from which *Colombina* is launched is lit up. The custom is a combination of historical religious artifacts and modern pyrotechnics, and the fire is ritually lit using the flint from the Holy Grave. The lightning of the wagon is traditionally dedicated to the memory of the legendary Florentine knight, Pazzino de Pazzia, the templar knight who was the first one to climb the walls of Jerusalem in 1099.

fetched interpretations based on speculations, but on the basis of the known, available facts presented here, I can reach a few conclusions.

This custom, limited to certain regions of the northwestern continental part of Croatia, is of medieval origin and has spread to these parts from the northern European regions.

It seems that the names *Vazam/Vuzem* were formed under the Church's influence. For example, the Franciscan Jakov Pletikosa, while describing a location called *Galgala* in the Holy Land, in his travel accounts from 1752 stated: 'When the people of Israel crossed over dry Jordan, they made a camp and raised tents and here they did the *Vazam*'. It seems that Pletikosa used this name to denote the Jewish holiday of Pasha, commemorating the delivery from Egyptian slavery, and not the Easter.

Alongside the already mentioned theological interpretations of the above mentioned names, we should also remember the name *Uzam*, found in the medieval Dubrovnik (Belaj 1998:128), and documented by Nikša Ranjina, the author of the collection of Biblical excerpts – *Ranjinin Lekcionar*.¹⁰

In the course of duration of certain customs, the periods of their regression or the regression of the accompanying rituals are not uncommon, as well as the periods of their renewal, in the more or less changed form, in the new circumstances.

The data presented by Rožić (*today the Easter bonfires are not commonly lit*), point to the fact that as early as the beginning of the 20th century the custom of lightning Easter bonfires, commonly lit by the shepherds on the top of the hills, was vanishing. Close in time to the bonfires of St. George, they were probably replaced by them, even though both dates were closely linked to the spring awakening of vegetation.

Almost without an exception, the contemporary informants insist on the fact that the social gathering, the purpose of which was the building and the lightning of Easter bonfire, was considered inappropriate during the socialist period, and was sometimes obstructed or even prevented.

Some of the informants mentioned that the Church did not look too favorably on this custom. However, as the social role of the Church became increasingly important in Croatia during the 1990-ies and the collective consciousness of the religious background of this custom became more prominent, this custom became manifested as a form of popular religiousness, even though it is differently experienced and interpreted.

¹⁰ A Dubrovnik aristocrat, a member of the Great Council and several times elected Governor of the Republic, Nikša Andrečić Ranjina (1494-1582) was the author of the chronicle *Annali di Ragusa* and a collector of the renaissance Croatian poetry and Petrarchan lyrics published in his collection better known as *Zbornik Nikše Ranjine*.

Furthermore, the use of automobile tires for lightning of the bonfire has diminished or completely ceased. The participants explain that with the development of the 'ecological conscientiousness'.

While observing the enthusiasm, zest and hard work, even a significant amount of danger the builders of the bonfire were faced with, not accompanied by some 'old-time' rites, and an almost hurried departure from the scene even before the bonfire completely burnt down, a neutral participant in the event was logically faced with the question whether there were elements of absurdity in their behavior. In any case, this showed that some traditions, with certain 'self-understandable' values, even though questionable with regards to credibility and content in formal expression, appear very functional. They exist as a self-confirmation and identification of groups or individuals with certain worldviews and broadcast to the *others*, through a specific act, the message on their own cultural and social identity.

Through the unconscious acceptance of selective and controlled memory as a desirable form of affirmative behavior, in which the 'determined alternative' is the pattern within which the ritual function becomes secondary, the custom again serves as a regulator of social relations.

Translated by Tanja Bukovčan