

# Space: sense and substance

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**SPACE:  
SENSE AND  
SUBSTANCE**

VLADIMIR P. GOSS



Vladimir Peter Goss

**SPACE: SENSE AND SUBSTANCE**

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Vladimir Peter Goss  
*Space: Sense and Substance*

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Vladimir Peter Goss

Space: Sense and Substance



Rijeka, 2016



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## **I. Introduction**

*Habent suam sortem libelli.*

There is an ebb and flow in the affairs of books.

Some are born under a lucky star, gestate quickly and happily to be triumphantly born into the world of expectant readers. The fortune of the precursor of the text you have in front of you was anything but that. Conceived in 2007 as a book on Croatia's cultural and natural assets, it saw one of its two initiators – the one in charge of nature – resign from the task after three years of procrastination. The other, dealing with culture, i.e., myself, decided to keep his end of the bargain. The publisher did, too. Then after another year, when the text was close to completion, the publisher went out of business. It took a year to find another as the economic crisis kept choking the publishing business. The new publisher “was enthusiastic” about my work and for two years she did nothing. Then, when all the sources of financial support had dried up in 2014 a “solution” was found – to publish on the net. It was done so that the book could be downloaded for reading on a tablet, but the procedure was so complicated and awkward that I have yet to find a brave soul who has managed to download my book (Goss 2014). The English version, luckily, was never published, which is good as the Croatian text was already obsolete. So after another year, I decided to write, in fact, a new, enlarged and updated version in English, and here it is.

The messed up book was a summary of decades of my research into territorial organization, i.e., the mortal's relation to the immortal space, their creative interaction, peaceful coexistence, or tug of war. As the title says it is a book about Space, about Nature that provides its material, immortal substance, and the creative spirit of Culture that endows it with sense. Nature and Culture together make up a Total Ecology. Cultural ecology which is any ecology once human beings appear within it, is experienced through its layers, i.e., cultural landscape. Bits and pieces of that research of mine trickled down in a number of texts, so there is a record of my progress, but my only serious and systematic synthesis, although published, never reached the public. This new text aims at breaking the impasse.

The history of my involvement with spatial organization goes back to my Master's Thesis which was written between 1966 and 1968 at the Art History Department of Zagreb University, but, frankly, twenty years ago I had no idea that I might be writing these lines.

In the fall of 1964 I became a teaching assistant at the Department of Art History of the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Zagreb to the new Assistant Professor, Radovan Ivančević with an understanding that I would also service Professor Stahuljak. A year later I was promoted to being a teaching assistant to the Head of the Cathedra of Medieval Art, Professor Milan Prelog. When I got my BA in Art Histo-

ry, in the summer of 1966, it was clear that I would do my MA under Prelog's mentorship. In the fall of the same year I went to his office to discuss the issue. Prelog did not mince words. "You are a hiker. With your mother you have been visiting ruins and snake pits all over Croatia. I know that your grandmother has a summer house at Selce, so you know the Northern Coastland. In Vinodol in the Middle Ages there used to be nine communes. I would like to know how they came into being. Say: Vinodol territory and its spatial organization..."

Like most of my colleagues, I was a snob. I hoped I would write my thesis on "true art." What Prelog had to offer was not art history; why not something on the Croatian Pre-Romanesque, or on Master Radovan, or Istrian frescoes? Good Lord, in that whole damn Vinodol there was not a single shred of interlace sculpture!

I tried hard to cover up my disappointment, while Prelog continued: "O.K. Go to the Academy's library and see what Barada, Kostrenčić and Ms. Klaić have to say about it. See you in two weeks." And as I was rising from the chair in consternation, he added something which at least somewhat soothed my pain. "I have no idea what might come out of it. But be as it may, I will stand by you. You are a smart guy. I wouldn't ask this of a fool."

The question that would come out, or, more precisely, did come out, was posed at the defense of the thesis, two years later, by distinguished Professors Duje Rendić-Miočević (Archeology) and Branimir Bratanić (Ethnology). They said: "This is quite nice, but it is not History of Art!" An extremely serious Prelog answered: "This is History of Art!"

At the promotion ceremony where I was represented by my late father, Professor Vladimir Gvozdanović, Prelog lavishly praised my work saying that it should be recognized as a doctoral thesis. Nothing came of it, but it did not matter, as I was already at Cornell working on a thesis much more suitable to my intellectual arrogance – Pre-Romanesque and Romanesque Architecture in Croatia. I forgot about my master's thesis, and actually hid it as the snake does its feet having considered it a waste of time. I published a summary in Prelog's *Festschrift* in 1988, and that was it (Goss 1988-89).

I believe I got to know my mentor very well. He had an "eye" with a fantastic capability to read the form, but he knew how to do it within context. In retrospective, I have inherited a lot of his "contextualizing," and I applied it to the fields I have been preoccupied with most of my life – Pre-Romanesque architecture and Romanesque sculpture. And then, in 1999, I was invited by Daniel Rukavina, the Rector of the University of Rijeka to come to Croatia.

There is a repetitive pattern in my life. I get set up with something boring and un-

promising, and then, after some time, it proves a winner. Rijeka is possibly the best example of that “rags to riches” principle ruling my life. In 1999 there was not even an Art History Department there. But this was exactly the point. I was asked to help, with my considerable experience of 30 years “abroad,” to split the Department of Visual Culture into Art History Department and Academy of Applied Art. The task was successfully accomplished and in about two years I found myself a member of a small but at that time harmonious and friendly Art History Department which had good potential of growth and was duly supported by the Administration. As a senior faculty member I was eligible for Ministry of Science financial support and assistants, and I received a rather small but still useful annual sum for the dozen years of the duration of my project “The Romanesque between the Sava and the Drava Rivers and European Culture.”

I was still a bit of a snob. People were saying: “Why did you not get yourself a job in Zagreb?” But soon I realized that being in Rijeka I had something I would have never had within the Zagreb academic establishment – lots of free room, space, and fresh air. As I look back on the decade and a half at the University of Rijeka where I remain today as Professor Emeritus after legally mandated retirement, I cannot conceal my satisfaction. During this period of 15 years I authored or co-authored 8 books and 58 scholarly articles, and spoke or chaired sessions at endless international and national conferences. I do not even know how many pieces of mine are in press right now. This is not hubris, but statistical fact.

Yet what makes me most satisfied is that I have finally started doing real HISTORY OF ART! And without the freedom to think and act which I enjoyed at the University of Rijeka, I would have never done it. Now, a few words about the above mentioned project.

In order to define the topic of my project research I turned to another of my early mentors, Professor Andre Mohorovičić of the School of Architecture of Zagreb University. Again I had some “elegant thoughts” about dealing with the origins of Zagreb, of the founding of the Bishopric, of Zagreb Cathedral, but “Moho,” and it was just a few weeks before his death, said: “My dear young (!) colleague, you are a hiker. With your mother (who had just left us forever a few days earlier) you have visited all the ruins and snake holes in Croatia. Find the Romanesque in the Medieval Slavonia...You are the only one who can do it.” And so the project entitled “The Romanesque between the Sava and the Drava Rivers and European culture” was born.

Today I realize that, just like in 1966, I jumped into something totally unforeseeable, but this time without a mentor who would unconditionally stand by me. From the beginning it was obvious that standard methodology would not suffice. And so my Master’s thesis was resurrected.



Prelog had asked me to use art monuments as historical documents to complement the information gathered from scanty written sources and material culture. He believed that the environment – territorial organization – can tell us a lot about the material and spiritual life of the people who had participated in the creation of that environment. Thus he in fact outlined the concept of cultural landscape the way I myself use it today. That is, as a combination of nature (natural ecology) and human intervention into it (cultural ecology). Such an approach opened, just as it did decades ago, a way toward understanding what the environment means to the human race, why we should study it and strive to preserve it, or, better yet, as it ever keeps changing, creatively improve it. This simply means that preserving a sensible environment endowed by human spirit, as well as monumental heritage, is much more important than writing “scholarly” discourses; meaning that the latter are just a link in a chain: discover, research, publish, protect, improve (if possible and needed), present (Goss 2007, 2008A, 2014).

Again, in retrospective, Prelog was quite aware of the greatness of the esthetic aspect of human surroundings, i.e., the cultural landscape, but he also refused to experience art as something “divine.” He never denied the humanistic greatness of artistic creativity, but he severely questioned concepts such as “courtly” as opposed to “rural,” “high” and “low,” or “western” and “exotic,” art. In 2002 we faced the problem of dealing with a part of the land which had never been properly ambulated in a scholarly sense. There was a wealth of data, but badly coordinated. Intuitively, if I may say so, we started to read the space around ourselves hoping to master the skill of recognizing its sense, its spirit, its content. To our pleasant surprise this, along with the not too numerous written sources and elements of material culture, led us to discovering lost and forgotten monuments. We also realized that the latter, as lost and forgotten as they may be, are also traces of human presence in the space, remains of old cultural landscapes one might try to reconstruct; or to recognize, so that the existing landscape can keep growing on. We became fully aware that in Continental Croatia, where there are still stretches of unexplored cultural landscape, it is very important to raise awareness of their existence and key characteristics; so that they may be protected integrally and not just as a bunch of unrelated monuments.

We realized that studying cultural landscape is for art history both a novel, but also a very old feature. Read Pausanias and you will be amazed by the sheer number of spiritualized spots in the landscape. There is no tree, no rock, no bush, no watercourse, no road crossing that at some point did not act as a witness to human presence and creativity, or was not modified by an intervention of the human hand or spirit – from the simplest naming to creating complex human landscape structures (Pauzanija 2008).

One hundred years ago the Croatian explorer Đuro Szabo listed half a dozen Romanesque monuments in Continental Croatia (Szabo 1929). Fifty years ago Angjela Hor-

vat listed about 60 (Horvat 1984-85). I hoped to research thoroughly what was known and place it within the context of European culture, and possibly find a handful of unrecognized monuments. Today we have a list of 565 sites, and as some of them possess more than one monument, the number of the monuments is considerably greater. Needless to say, this list keeps growing.

I thought that we would be dealing with church architecture exclusively, as its monuments could be at least to some extent put together and sought for on the basis of the list of parishes of Zagreb and Pécs bishoprics from 1334, assuming that a parish in existence around that date would have existed 100 years earlier (Buturac 1984, Brüstle 1876). In Zagreb Bishopric between the two big rivers there were, in 1334, 282 parishes (412 in the entire Bishopric). Out of those 282, 178 were located (Buturac 1984). One should add documented and identified Crusaders' churches, court and filial chapels. For example, in the Požega archdeaconship of Pécs Bishopric there were in 1334 around 100 parishes! In the area between the Sava and the Drava there were in the Middle Ages more than 600 church buildings! We could expect to find some of them, but our hopes were not too high.

Soon we discovered that it was impossible to study the Church without the State, i.e., without fortifications and residential architecture. Existing lists and descriptions counted there hundreds of nobleman's castles, mud forts ("gradišta," as we proceed we will try to more precisely define that term), moats, fords, etc. (Tkalčec 2004). Religious and secular buildings formed the core of the settlements, so they could not be studied without a study of the settlement they stood in (Goss 2007B). And the entire picture started to make sense when the settlements were placed into space. There emerged, step by step, something we had not even dreamed of, namely outlines of old cultural landscapes, imprints of human spirit in the space, in the physical and spiritual environment. In a world in which we did not have an enviable number of preserved monuments, we found something else: a supra-monument system which, once we learned at least the basics of its vocabulary, started to speak quite distinctly about its space and time, substituting for what we have lost through the disappearance of individual monuments. And as we kept improving our understanding of the language of old spaces, we were led to previously unknown and unrecognized monuments. The space itself was the source sending us in the right direction. We learned how to assess where one should look for monuments for which we knew that they had existed, but had left no visible trace. Or we ran into such ones that could not be associated with any known written information (Goss 2007B).

Learning the rules of territorial organization we realized that centers of secular and religious power must be seen as linked together. The centers of parishes (religious "župas") coincide with the centers of the secular "župas" (counties). If there was a church, the fort could not be far away. We also started to sort out patterns of their placement within the space and their relation to wider populations, and the elements

of the natural landscape.

Thus we caught glimpses of the cultural landscape of the period from the 11<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Mature Middle Ages. Much has remained in the dark, but I believe we have collected enough experience so that some of that darkness could be dispelled in the future. As we were watching our unexpected discoveries, something even more fantastic started to happen: it seemed that we caught, here and there and now and then, sight of an even more archaic landscape. In 2007 the second edition of the path finding book by Vitomir Belaj, *Hod kroz godinu* [A Walk through the Year] (Belaj, V. 2007), appeared; exactly at the moment when our ghosts from the distant past started to raise their heads. Based on the revolutionary discoveries of Russian linguists and cultural anthropologists, Ivanov and Toporov, in the field of early Slavic mythology, and equally revolutionary studies of Andrej Pleterski who applied the Russian discoveries in Slovenia proposing that the places dedicated to the key Slavic Gods, Perun, Veles and Mokoš, form sacred triangles of certain stable characteristics, Vitomir Belaj, and his son, archeologist Juraj Belaj, identified a number of such formations in Croatia (Belaj, J. 2007, Pleterski 1996, Pleterski 2014, Belaj and Belaj 2014). For us, Belaj's research, regardless of possible objections, confirmed what we roughly read from the space: imprints of the earliest Slavic immigrants were left in the landscape. The picture was amplified by the monumental work of Radoslav Katičić, a brilliant early Slavic linguist, confirming by linguistic methods – by a careful analysis of Slavic folk poetry from the Baltic to the Adriatic – that traces of the earliest cultural achievements of the Southern Slavs could be found in the landscape (*Božanski boj* [The Clash of Gods], *Zeleni Lug* [The Green Grove], *Gazdarica na Vratima* [The Lady at the House Gate], *Vilinska vrata* [The Fairies' Gate]; Katičić 2008, 2010, 2011, 2014). We will deal with this issue in detail in a later chapter.

We went from practice to theory. So on the basis of that, one should have tried to formulate the theory. These written lines are the latest step in those efforts. Please bear in mind that I am an explorer in the field of visual arts, usually and mistakenly, as we are about to see, called the History of Art. As a humanist discipline the study of visual arts deals with the activities which make a human being what he-she is, and thus contain the essence of his humanity. Hence, I am primarily interested in cultural ecology (Goss 2008, 2009, 2011, 2014). We will now try to define, with more precision, what this "Cultural ecology" is.

It is the total sum of human intervention into the environment. It is everything we have created as human race, as nations, communities, families, individuals. It is our tradition, our identity, a big book in which our history has been recorded through our environment. It is a story of our travel from "the beginning" toward something we are unable to grasp. On that trail the results of some of our actions are deleted, and replaced by new ones. Cultural ecology keeps changing, but, in principle, what was once created, never totally disappears, as it serves as a basis of creating something

new. It keeps changing and cannot be frozen or recreated, conserved or restored. Historical disciplines deal with the past phases of our cultural ecology.

Doing this they discover its layers – cultural landscapes. Let us reiterate. They are not just physical, material, palpable, but also spiritual phenomena. As the human desire to impact the environment changed through time, so also the palpable and recognizable layers of cultural ecology kept changing. You may say: so what, you have just invented a new word for “style!” But it is not so. Style is a “cookbook,” a human construct to recognize features that could be with some regularity and ease noted in the products and behaviors of peoples, periods, or regions. We have invented them in order to help classification, and, as humanists taking over methodologies of natural science, we have committed a grave error. Style has been conceived as an abstraction and it remains so. The Cultural Landscape, i.e., its layers possess a component of the eternal being linked to what *is* eternal – the space – serving as a foil, a framework, a substance, for a cultural landscape. Humans have always been aware of those layers as manifest in such sayings as *Homo mensura* defining the age of Classical Antiquity, *Civitas Dei* doing the same for the Middle Ages, or *Everything goes* for our own age. In traditional language, we have thus recognized the cultural landscape of Prehistory, Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the New Age. Within those categories we defined smaller units – Old and New Stone Age, Greece and Rome, Early Christianity, the Romanesque, the Gothic, the Renaissance, the Baroque, various -isms of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is of course good for our Western experience, but similar linear systems, not synchronous but diachronous to ours have existed elsewhere. As they march through time, human groups pass through similar phases but not at the same time (Vansina 1985). Recognizing, defining and reconstructing cultural landscapes of the past is, again, a task of the historical sciences. Along with written sources and material culture, cultural landscapes are the most important source for understanding the past and the present. One should learn how to read them, and, after a correct reading, how to listen to them and respect them (Goss 2014).

Is there such a thing as a “national” cultural landscape?

One may admit that the nation and the “blood” are not the determining factors, but we know from personal experience how much the physical landscape could impact individuals and groups. We feel differently at a mountain peak, differently in a plain, in a hinterland or at the coast of a sea. Stereotypes can be stereotypes but there are people of the mountains and of the plains, of the forests and prairies, villages and cities. The more enterprising would seek roads, watercourses, and settlements. The more cautious would settle on the hills, in the forests, and in the marshes. Usually there is certain equilibrium among those factors (Goss 2006). Landscape is not only history, it is historical predicament. Still, some phenomena seem to be possible only in certain environments. The Bamberg Rider could come into being in 13<sup>th</sup> century Germany only. If you ask me why, I will reply: I do not know! Yet, I see in it something

which I experience as German, namely a certain spiritual quality which I associate with things German; a certain air of tense seriousness I experience as essential for the people we call Germans. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were, both in Germany and France, groups of painters experimenting with a free use of color. The French *Fauves* created a gamut of warm, glaring, happy colors. The German Expressionists cooled those colors down by injecting a tone of melancholy. Matisse *versus* Schmidt-Rottluff. Did we not we just said that cultural landscape is a historical predicament (Goss 2008, 2009)?

As the features of the cultural landscape keep on changing, so does even that more stable component – nature. Rivers change their beds, climatic change influences the flora. There is erosion, earthquakes, fire. It would be counterproductive to try to keep a cultural landscape unchanged. What would have happened if every creation by human kind had been preserved? Centuries ago we would have stopped creating anything new (Demandt 2008).

Landscape is indeed a huge *objet trouvé* and the artist of the cultural landscape chooses and arranges its elements into patterns in the spirit of visual arts, a point we should return to. The choice may include elements of human intervention, as well as those found in the environment. The ratio between the two groups may vary – from time to time, from place to place, from culture to culture. The art effect may depend, even rather heavily, upon the creative merging of Nature's and manufactured forms. The latter would play a significant role in augmenting the expressive power of the landscape, where certain hierarchies must be respected. The place of the mighty is always at the top, or at the point of control and security (in the center, at crossroads, etc.). The landscape must be able to tell a story. Light, color and texture may be used to emphasize a certain spot, or help achieve tasteful merging. The visual potential of such chains as when there march, shoulder to shoulder, the tower of the Cathedral, of the Castle, of the Town Hall, of the Guild House, of the Cannons Quarters, is endless. Cultural landscape is never the work of a single artist, but a complex *Gesamtkunstwerk* that keeps growing, from generation to generation. Therefore, it is, I repeat, the embodiment of collective memory, identity, and history. It is sense injected into substance (Goss 2008, 2011).

Exploring a cultural landscape is important as every human action is tied to the environment, as it takes place in eternal space. Moreover, the environment could even define some of that activity as the landscape has also its own logic. Studies of the environment, of the space that surrounds us, should be the cornerstone of any historical research and interpretation. The roads, human abodes, continuities and discontinuities of life and settlement, sacred places, utilitarian objects... they are all witnesses and evidence of the way of living and thinking at a certain place in a certain time. By including the study of the landscape as a source, we may acquire an image of the whole and link the information of the written sources to the space (Dujmović



2012).

The practice the above words are based upon was tied to Croatia. One may question its relevance for other parts of the world. One, of course, builds one's case on the basis of the material one knows best. So this book is also an introduction to the Croatian cultural landscape: *Space – Sense and Substance* – subtitle: *Using examples from the territory of Croatia*. However, in a later chapter, we will demonstrate that what is true of Croatia does not substantially differ from what we find in Western and Central Europe.

We have already sailed deep into the domain of the art. So, what is art, and its sources? But first we must clear up the notion of “art history.” Today when we say “art history” we in fact mean the history of *visual or spatial arts*. Yet, the term “Art History” should be reserved for one, general, total, and indivisible area of human activity – the Art. Once we discard the senseless division into visual arts, literature, music, theater, film... we will immediately grasp that all of those “arts” share the fact that they are experienced through senses. There is no such thing as “painting” or “literature,” etc., but the art of image, sound, and motion, but also the arts of smell, touch and taste. And finally the grandest of all, all-inclusive art of structuring and experiencing – space and motion. Visual arts along with the image rely on the illusion of sound and motion. Literary arts are originally arts of sound as literature used to be spoken, but also an art of the image created through words, and art of motion as the reciting also offers the effect of motion, and the act of reading or reciting happens in time. Dance is a visual phenomenon largely defined by sound. Don't we all use such phrases as “the sonority of colors,” “the color of the tone,” “the rhetoric of visual forms?” (Goss 2014A).

A few decades ago an outstanding scholar, Hans Belting, announced the death of Art History (Belting 1987). This claim by our distinguished colleague was a valuable, albeit of course premature warning, as the art studies cannot disappear unless the matter of their studies, i.e., art itself, disappeared first. And art, especially in a broader sense than just a single one of its branches, or “The One Hundred Great Monuments”, is alive and well. It may be shunned and badmouthed by a segment of our greedy commercialized society, yet we, willing or not, create and/or experience art at every step of our life's journey.

Art is embodiment of spirit in inert matter, and the student of art is well-positioned to enhance the spiritual life of his community. This, of course, also implies a heavy social and moral responsibility requiring a profound empathy for and love of art as well as understanding of art studies (History of Art), as a study of art as a whole and not merely of its separate branches. Art is not just documentation or information, it is a force that raises emotions, persuades, installs fears and hopes, moves into action. Therefore art is, as Arthur Danto has nicely put it, “embodied meaning”, or as art

history puts it in general, form with content. Art always “lies.” A tower is taller and fatter than it needs to be, and it appears even taller and fatter. Art must affect the audience so it reacts the way the artist and those standing behind him want. Thus it is not only what an object does as a document or piece of information; what count is whether it works as a successful and convincing piece of communication. This “additional” effect is not just what some call “beauty” or “esthetic values.” Denis Dutton rightly claims that “...it is not just the emotion as a bare feeling that we want from art, it is...” how emotions are revealed in the art, through technique, structure, balance, and the blending of the sounds... Emotion is not just added to the narrative... but is a mood that imbues the whole.” Dutton’s conclusion that art includes “...a staggeringly vast range of activities and creative products,” matches in full my own conclusion. If you walk down the street toward an intersection wondering what is behind the corner turning in your head a “video” of your progress, you are creating art (Fig. 1). Art is everywhere and only a tiny part of it is ever recorded which does not mean that it is lost and without any impact on the life of an individual or community. Coming back to Dutton, I agree that “every artistic act...is performance” (Dutton 2009, Goss 2014, 2014A, 2015).

How did art come into being?

Here is my habitual answer.



**Fig. 1** *What’s behind the corner?*

On a bright summer morning the seer climbed the hill above the huts, still deep in the sunrise sleep. He raised a big stick, waved it and yelled summoning his flock. His heart and mind welled with light, sound, and pulsating motion. He had seen IT, and it was now his holy task to pass it on.



**Fig. 2** A Holy Mountain (Triglav in Slovenia)

The villagers, unwillingly, crept up to where the augur stood. He shook the branch he held and screamed turning toward the neat pyramidal peak shimmering in the morning mist (Fig. 2). “See that Mountain!? This is where your Gods live. We will call it Olympus (or Pirin, or Kailos...)” The villagers, panting from the rushed climb, rubbed their eyes. They crowded toward the seer, following his hand as by pointing he had created an image centered on the peak, a cut out from the surrounding world sanctified by the medicine man’s vision and choice. Today he would have taken a snapshot and made a record of the view, then shared it with his followers. The Pre-Historic eye acted exactly as a contemporary camera. Only, the image was temporary, but also unlimited and changing, merging into eternity (Goss 2014, Goss 2014A, Vinšćak 2011).

The arts of image were created.





**Fig. 3**

*The Loveliest Leg*

Then, by naming the peak and by clasping his hands the Artist created the arts of sound – literature and music, by hopping rhythmically, the arts motion – dance. Mother Nature added Her own: the wind rubbed the naked skin, brought in the smell of wild strawberries, which made the mouth water. All that created an experience of space linking the standing point of the group and the peak in an enveloping foil of light, air, the warmth of the sun, the sound of the wind, the shuffling of the feet... The Gods, up on the peak, were gratified by the seer's performance (Goss 2014A).

The seer had created the Art. I am sure this is not the only model, but in essence it all boils down to the same – recognizing

a pattern of a special spiritual quality impressing itself upon the receiver's own spirit, and then presenting it to the less sensitive public. The artist's act captured and conveyed Spirit. So Art is incorporation of Spirit in inert matter. It makes the intangible tangible, available for scrutiny by our senses – of sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, and the sense of motion and space. There is no art without form, i.e., the solid matter. There is no art without the act of creativity endowing the Matter with the Spirit.

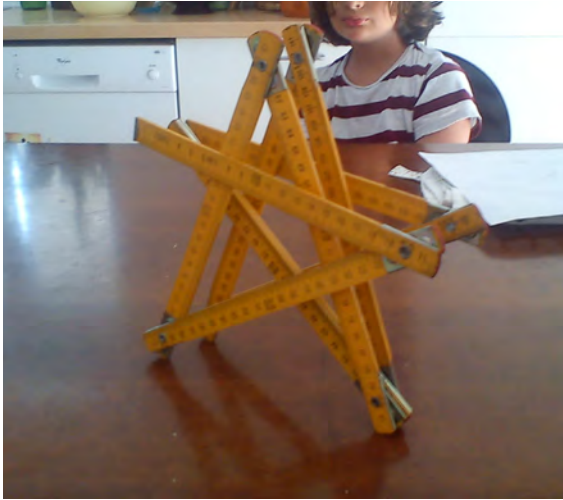
Many may claim that the performance of the seer was not art. Yet the mere naming of a site within nature involves a creative act of recognizing, experiencing, and communicating. *Blato, Čret, Sopot* (Mud) relate to a muddy, marshy spot. A flat ridge becomes *The Table Mountain, Ravna Gora* or *Stol*; *The Needle* is a pointed peak; *The Horse* is a mountain recalling that animal; and so on *ad infinitum*. Simply, the essence of the process is a shortened comparison, i.e., a metaphor (“This mountain looks like a table”). In studying art it is important to establish the source of inspiration, the creative process, and the end result. Watching the seer who summoned his flock screaming: “See that peak?” we became witnesses to an act of creativity involving both experiencing, and creating through the arts of sound, motion and image, so that the experience may be passed on to the public (Goss 2014A).

The art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has also underlined this power of recognizing, choosing and naming as an author's procedure or gesture in case of such forms as *ready-mades* and *objets trouvés*. Choosing and naming Marcel Duchamp gives the chosen object new, unexpected and powerful meaning (e.g., a pissoir is recognized as a “fountain”). Picasso takes parts of a bicycle and makes a visually quite convincing bull's head. In

a log which was spared from being burnt exactly thanks to its visual specificity, one has recognized “the loveliest leg” (Fig. 3). The little Nikola takes a meter and transforms it on his own initiative into a star (Figs 4, 5). Recognizing and putting together the elements of a landscape into a systematic image is a result of the same process. The form of the object of the artist’s vision did not change – hill is a hill, creek a creek, but it was endowed with a new and unexpected content. In Jenny Holzer’s “Abuse of Power Comes as no Surprise” a young woman sports this statement on her blouse, apparently protesting the world of power and greed, but at the same time she holds a cigarette showing that she is in fact a slave to those same dark structures of evil. The statement, the literary element is equivalent to what the seer did by pointing and naming, the woman and the nightly street scene, that of the landscape pointed out by the seer. Nothing has changed in thousands of years. The principles of the seer’s act belong to the mainstream of artistic expression. For a viewer who is familiar with the spiritual context and literary background the experience is as firm and lasting as if it had been motivated by an artifact in durable material. Its physical components would not change, in principle, until the end of the world (Hopkins 2000).

Our augur was well-aware of what he was doing as he kept placing “the images” into the spatial context. He smelled the air, tasted the water, touched the soil. And through those ecological tests he established whether the place was good for living. He performed the *auguratio*, the first step toward founding a permanent settlement. If he liked the results of his probing, he gave it a name and placed it within a broader context defining its position and expanse (*limitatio*). Then he oriented it toward some earlier established spots in the environment (*orientatio*). And, finally, he gave it together with his flock a collective seal of approval through a feast marking the birth of a new community (*inauguratio*). When founding their quadratic towns the Romans did essentially the same. In the non-urban world of the Illyrians, Celts, Slavs, and Germans, the process led to a territorial organization based on scattered hamlets and estates, linked, as an organizational principle, by some geometric schemes such as the sacred triangles believed to have existed in the territorial organization of the Southern Slavs (Milić 1994, Fabini and Fabini 1991, Goss 2008).

From the beginnings of the human race those augurs received sensual impulses and translated them into the incorporation of the Spirit. When recording process was discovered, beginning with the oral tradition, those incorporations could be more permanently retained and shared with larger groups. A chosen individual, the seer, created art forms and explained them to his followers teaching them how to read them (Belaj, V. 2007). By the time of cave paintings the chosen creator was able to credibly reproduce the forms and content of what was the essence of existence of the tribe, i.e., hunting as the source of life. He learned how to arrange his materials in such a way (visual, auditive, motoric) as to convincingly convey the essence, i.e., the spirit of the image through a specific content or embodied meaning (Danto 2003, Goss 2014A).



**Fig. 4**

*Nikola's star 1*



**Fig. 5**

*Nikola's star 2*

When a cook prepares a good meal – not just cooking food – he creates. When his customer consumes the dainty dishes – not just feeding himself – he experiences the chef's art. The cook is an artist of creating, the table guest an artist of experiencing. This holds true for any sector of creativity. The artist receives inspiration – the Spirit. He uses his talent and skills to process this inspiration, and the final product is a work of art. The inspiration, process, and final product are the key points of interest to a student of art, i.e., the artist of experiencing takes the work in and, if he chooses, or is asked to do so, communicates and explains it to the less gifted.

The talent to create is not given to every human being. Neither is the talent of experiencing. One could learn how to draw, how to play a violin, or how to hold a camera. These are skills. Skills of experiencing could also be acquired, as clearly testified by such titles as *Learning to Look*, *Come si guarda un quadro*, *Experiencing Architecture*, *Saper vedere l'architettura...* Still, the true artists of experiencing are as exceptional as the artists of creating. Such become critics or researchers of art, and just like our augur or seer teach the public how to experience what it could not experience by itself. In that they fulfill an important social function and are almost without exception manipulated and misused by those who hold the power. The art is too expensive, too precious; its power of communicating, seducing, and brainwashing is so great that it must be tightly controlled by those who decide what is “politically correct.” Thus the art critics and scholars are among the most corrupt people in the world. This, however, has been the topic of an earlier book, and here we shall not repeat ourselves. The huge majority of the people who experience art non-stop in real life are mostly free and unaware of critics' evildoings. And the kind of ever present art they create and experience is of little interest to those at the top. In order to create it is necessary, in the sphere of visual arts, to see. To see in a specific way, and to create and record as it is necessary to make others also see. The augur, the seer, the witch-doctor was primarily an artist of creating; the public – artists of experiencing (Goss 2014A).

In a path finding book *The Art Instinct* published in 2009 Denis Dutton has convincingly interpreted the instinct to art as a part of the evolution package (Dutton 2009). Dutton claims that our forefathers developed modes of experiencing long time ago as well as relevant contents, and kept handing them down from generation to generation so that they even today influence our choice of creating and experiencing. Therefore one may conclude that such forms and contents would not change as long as there is the human race. The moment we start buying “humans” in supermarkets according to desired specifications, there would be no human race or humanities any more. Thus, in the meantime, it is absurd to ask the humanities to always discover “something new,” the way hard sciences do. As wonderfully deduced by Erwin Panofsky, humanities do not prepare application of a certain discovery, but seek wisdom, and the novelty consists in reinterpretations offered by each succeeding generation (Panofsky 1955). Those reinterpretations are our legitimization in front of the history of the Spirit. As cultural landscapes change primarily through human activity, whereas the framework of the eternal space does not, or just minimally, so the reinterpretations are changes of detail. The material space acquires an infinite and endless competitor, the infinite spirit, which we can feel by our senses only within the infinity of the space. And we can do it best at the moments when we leave our own finite and mortal state through an act of creativity – in arts, sciences, love, dreams, imagination, and, paradoxically enough, in our final exit into eternity – death (Goss 2012).

This is the basic framework of what I intend to present. Moving from the general toward the particular we now ask ourselves: could one on the basis of the above define and describe one instance of particular cultural ecology – in our case of the lands inhabited by the Croats.



## **II. Croatia's Natural and Cultural Ecology**

As we have seen, natural ecology is not particularly open to change. I believe it is possible to describe Croatia's natural ecology, and that it is specific enough to merit attention and investigation. Yet, as we shall see, it is also possible to answer the question of how Croatia fits with "the European cultural ecology," assuming that the latter exists and could be defined. We shall never forget that Nature had been there long before Man.

What is Croatia?

Today it is the area of the Republic of Croatia mostly inhabited by the bearers of the Croatian name and identity (traditionally speaking, the Croatian people), plus some other spaces in the neighborhood, but also in some far away countries, where there are significant groups of such people. These groups may share some cultural characteristics with the old homeland, but, of course within a rather different natural setting. I would describe Croatia's natural ecology as essentially lyrical with moderate, but expressive, dramatic stretches. Croatian mountains are not the Alps, but even modest heights could be surprisingly wild and expressive. Croatia's flatlands are never far from mountain chains, they do not have the infinite expanses of Texas or the Russian Plain, but they wonderfully fit in with their hilly rims. Croatian coast lacks the frightening dramatics of Norwegian fjords and cliffs, yet even these stretches of moderate wilderness happily combine with the green of the pine, the blue of the sea and the sky, and the gold of the Sun. Through millennia the man had plenty of chance to carefully listen to the miraculous spirit of the land uncovering dreams and visions written into the landscape (Goss 2009, Goss 2011).

Who has been that "man?" According to anthropologists and geneticists an average Croat carries roughly 50% of Roman/Provincial Roman, 25% of Slavic, and 25% of other (Germanic, Asiatic, etc.) genes. The current users of Croatia's natural ecology are heirs to the genes, and the spirit (embodied in the culture they have created) of all those who had preceded them in this part of the world (Goss 2009, Jurić 2003, Primorac 2011). Croatian cultural ecology is the result of man's adjustment to that space, and also, for each wave of immigrants, to what their predecessors had done with that space. In these terms I am going to suggest several constants, linked, of course, to the physical characteristics of the space. They can tell us a lot about the Croatian culture.

Today we reach Rijeka from Zagreb in two hours by road, Zadar in three and a half, Split in five, so we tend to forget that those wonderful roads were built only in the course of the last two decades. Throughout history things were rather different. The Croatian history often deals with opposing pairs such as Dalmatian Croatia – Pannonian Croatia, Dalmatia – Slavonia, Coastland – Continent, indicating that splintering

inherited from the lay of the land had a considerable impact on the people in which they had settled. Indeed, one can divide Croatia into three major zones: Coastland, Highlands, Pannonian plain (Goss 2014).

Within these units, we find clearly profiled smaller entities. At the Coast they are: Istria, the Kvarner, Northern, Central and Southern Dalmatia, Dalmatian Highlands (Lika, Gacka, Krbava, Bužani); the Uplands, in Pannonia: Kupa River Valley, Sava River Valley, Zagorje (Transmontane) and Prigorje (Cismontane) Croatia, Moslavina, Međimurje, Drava River Valley, Western, Central (Požega Valley), and Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, Srijem. Even within those, we can identify still smaller pockets. For example, in Transmontane Croatia, the central valley (Zabok), Krapina Valley, Sutla Valley, Bednja Valley, Varaždin plain.

As each of the parts has its own center, this state of affair leads naturally to *polycentricity*. In principle, the higher level units have larger centers. Only recently there appeared the major national state center, and, as Croatia of today has the shape of a cross, it has grown at the point where the arms of the cross meet, i.e., at the intersection of the roads linking up this rather funnily shaped country. The shape is unnatural, a result of vicissitudes of history, primarily of the Turkish punch into Croatia's soft belly, so that it shrank in the middle while extending at the eastern ends. But even a more compact Croatia of the past had the same problem of being divided into the coastland, highlands and flatlands. Inside these major areas we often have several points of like importance. In Dalmatia, Zadar was traditionally the political center, Split the religious one, and Dubrovnik a seat of an independent city state and an intellectual and cultural center of supra-regional significance. The Highlands have never grown a major center. In Southern Pannonia, the historic province of Slavonia, Zagreb has played the role of the religious center for its western part (Pannonia Savia) since the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, soon to acquire also political and economic importance. But Križevci were a serious competitor for quite a long period of time. The main center of today's Slavonia (i.e., Eastern Slavonia or Pannonia Secunda), Osijek, became an important settlement only in the Turkish times. The existence of numerous small centers is particularly typical for the pre-Roman period and the Middle Ages, and, for the reason of Turkish wars, for the period between 1500 and 1900 as well.

Rome is usually, and rightly, seen as urban civilization. Within the Roman system we had strong metropolitan centers at the Coast (Salona), and in Pannonia (Siscia, Sirmium). Of other important cities of the Roman and Medieval Dalmatia some importance has been retained by Zadar and Pula, and then by Poreč, Krk, Rab, Trogir, and Kotor in Montenegro. Some, like Nin, Osor, or Vid (Narona) have lost their urban character. For some Roman cities we have no idea where they stood (for example, Incerum in the Požega Valley). Of the cities that developed in the Middle Ages, Split (a successor to Salona) is today a major modern center, the Slavic city of Šibenik is still a substantial city, and so also the Romano-Slavic Dubrovnik. The other cities

founded by the Croats, the royal seats of Biograd and Knin have lost most of their urban character. In the Highlands in the Middle Ages there are no cities to speak of, with the exception of Bihać (today in Bosnia), and the already mentioned Knin at the southernmost rim of the Mountains.

In the Pannonian part Sirmium and Siscia lost their urban glitter (although the latter, Sisak, has retained some quasi urban characteristics), and by Vinkovci (Cibalae), Ludbreg (Iovium?) and Daruvar (Aquae Balissae). Osijek (Mursa) lost its importance in the post-Roman period to become the Slavonian metropolis in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Varaždin, Čakovec, Krapina, Bjelovar, Koprivnica, Križevci, Požega, Našice, Donji Miholjac, Đakovo, Vukovar come to fore in the Middle Ages or later as local centers of greater or lesser importance, what they are basically still today.

Until recently there has been no strong capital. Zagreb is a typically medieval creation which started to grow in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pula, Rijeka, Split, and Osijek, key Croatian cities of today are, more or less, successors to Roman urban centers. Some apparently important medieval cities in Pannonia have disappeared so thoroughly that we have no idea where they stood (Petrinja, Perna, Gragena).

A logical consequence of the above is the closed up character of individual units – *autarchy*. The Coast is radically set apart from the Continent by mountain chains sometimes growing straight up from the beach. The Highlands gradually descend into the Plain, but this plain is everywhere looked over by hills and modest size mountains which define pockets of settlement throughout Continental Croatia. Moreover, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Croatia was covered by much denser woods than today, and the real roads through the Highlands were opened only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Dalmatia was linked to the rest by modern roads only in the last two decades, and Istria by a tunnel just a few decades earlier. The autarchy also rules the islands, which either belong to various political powers, or feature they own centers, each island or group a world unto itself. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Slavonia was still 80% forest, and where there were no trees there were marshlands busily fed by a myriad of small rivers and creeks (Goss 2011, 2014).

As people cannot live in woods and marshes, at mountain tops and in deserts, not much of Croatia was available for permanent settlement (Dobronić 1986). Hence we also have *low population density* (demographic insufficiency). In Pannonian part the settlement areas are primarily at the feet and on the slopes of important mountains, hills, stretches of high terrain (beams), dry spots in marshlands, river meanders (Goss 2006). The Highlands except for some high plateaus, valleys and karst fields are barely inhabited at all. At the sea coast, the best positions are those within a well-protected bay with a port of more than local significance, lots of fish, and also some agricultural potential (Split-the Kaštela Field-Trogir, Zadar-Dalmatian Lowlands, Dubrovnik-Župa, Pula-Pula Ager-Poreč). Some kind of a road into the hinter-

land would be an additional asset. Byzantine Dalmatia, a string of cities and islands divided by wide sea surfaces, functioned as a single political unit for centuries well into the Middle Ages (Milošević 1999). In Croatian Humanities the question of the links between the Coast and the Continent has never been resolved, and we behave as if it did not exist.

Obviously, connections between the Coast and the Highlands have been weak, but the Highlands are linked to the Flatlands by numerous rivers flowing toward the North. So they both politically and economically tend to lean on the far away lowlands centers rather than those of the Coastland, a few miles away as a crow flies. In the interior woods and marshes represent an obvious obstacle to traffic, but they, as well as mountains, may also act as links. Both sides of the Medvednica and the Kalnik, in Cismontane and Transmontane Croatia are inhabited by the same Croatian Kajkavian populace. Links between the river sides are confirmed by pairs of settlements such as Levi (Left) and Desni (Right) Štefanki, or Martinska Ves Leva and Desna (Martin's Village Left and Right). Local powers-to-be or communities carefully watched the river beds and their banks, and heftily charged for portage. In the jungles of the Spačva River in Eastern Slavonia one can still identify rudiments of an old system of water traffic with small ports and crossing points which mostly substituted for ground traffic. The mountain was at many moments in the past, for example, in the Middle Ages and even later, a supreme asset providing food, fuel, and shelter.

Croatia is splintered and suffers from *poor flow-through*. This splintered character reminds one of the ancient Hellas from Sicily to the Ionian cities, but the Greeks had a lot of sea and little continent, so the flow-through was certainly much better, as well as the control of the outside frontier, that notorious line dividing the Greeks and the Barbarians (Bury 1900). Croatia was never a naval force, except maybe in the times of King Tomislav (910-928), as the Adriatic was ruled by the Byzantines, Venetians, Normans, Saracens, and Turks. Not even the major continental powers such as the Franks and the Habsburgs did manage to impose themselves as a naval force. Croatia's sea border is highly porous when cultural goods are concerned. This accounts for the Mediterranean component in the Croatian culture, which reaches up to the first mountain chain. The big Pannonian rivers, the Sava, Drava and Mura are no obstacle either, as the same people lives on both of their banks. Where the Croats are not on the both sides of the Drava, there are Hungarians. The Croatization of the southern bank and the Magyarization of the northern is still an ongoing process. The Drava is both a divider and a tie. So the cultural wares could easily pass through. On the southern side Slavonia, however, borders on a land of a different cultural ecology, Bosnia, set apart by high mountains. Bosnia is a highland plateau, just like Tibet, Switzerland or the kingdom of the Inkas. Croatian attempts to enter Bosnia were as unsuccessful as Bosnia's to spread over into Croatia, with the exception of the Turkish conquest which took away from Croatia its central parts, today's Western Bosnia, for a long time known as "Turkish Croatia." Croatia's western borders



toward the Holy Roman Empire are, however, rather rigid although they are crossed by the valleys of three big rivers. This was a firm political border between two large territorial units, the Empire and the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen, and, as the Danube access to Central Europe is much easier than the Sava River Valley, cultural influences from the West, up until 1700, reached Continental Croatia mostly through the Pannonian basin (Goss 2010).

Talking about major cultural spheres, Croatia is linked to the Mediterranean by the Adriatic, and to Central Europe via Pannonia. Its eastern border is also rather closed, so it is quite obvious that Croatia belongs primarily to the Mediterranean and Central European cultural circles. Yet, there are also albeit less frequent contacts with Bosnia, the world of Eastern Christianity, and the Turkish Balkans culture. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Turks ruled about four fifths of Croatia, many Croats embraced Islam, and produced the highest rank poetry in Croatian language, both epic and lyric, with such heroes as Budalina Tale, Mustajbeg Lički, Aga of Kanjiža, Pasha of Budim. The Muslim Croats retained their old tradition, e.g., of building in wood (Freudenreich 1972, Lord 2000). Some important population centers were completely Islamized (Udbina, Bihač, Požega, Đakovo, Ilok, Klis) and some second rate places became important urban centers (Osijek). The departure of that urban – Croatian/Muslim – population after the Liberation of ca. 1700 was a great cultural and demographic loss for Croatia. There remained large depopulated areas, both in physical and spiritual terms, slowly filled up by immigrants from the Balkans and Central Europe, many of which have not assimilated until the present day.

Small units, low population density, poor flow, autarchy and polycentricism do not favor large metropolitan centers. Dependence on local resources breeds rural, closed way of life, especially characteristic of Prehistory, the earlier Middle Ages and the times of Turkish wars. Urbanization such as practiced by Classical Antiquity was renewed only within the last one hundred years or so, although the city as a major political and economic unit asserts itself already in the mature Middle Ages and in the Renaissance. We have already mentioned the vicissitudes of larger Croatian cities through history. Two of them, Zagreb and Rijeka have very thin Roman credentials; Osijek does a little bit better, while Split is an outcome of displacement of Salona. The village, the fort and the village community (the Slavic “župa”) are the basic units of territorial organization. The rural culture of a petty nobleman, a yeoman and serf *à la* Ksaver Šandor Gjalski, a major Croatian writer of ca. 1900, allegedly traditionalist and conservative, is an important component of Croatian national character and identity. The high gentry and the city patricians were often foreign or linked to foreign factors, but as they retained some of their ties to their countryside roots, there appears some golden medium, a balance, between the city and the countryside. Let us recall the Dubrovnik Renaissance mansions of both Patricians and rich Plebeians, showpieces of a culture felicitously balanced between the city and the countryside, or those of the Transmontane Croatia from the 16<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> century, or the city pal-

aces of the Croatian Continental gentry as they started moving to the city in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Such a milieu is bound to breed mediocrity, but it can also respond very creatively to impulses of a well preserved tradition. *Biedermayer* – a local version of Central European Romanticism, and Croatian “Naïve” Art, the architecture of the Croatian *Secession* and the *Moderna* movements provide fine examples from not too long ago (Goss 2014, 2014A).

The countryside aspect of even urban civilizations, such as Rome, or of Croatian city milieus up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, shows that the city dweller, be it at the Coast or in the Continent, retained both a functional and emotional link with the extra-urban environments. The Roman *villae rusticae* located in the beautiful Adriatic bays or on the idyllic slopes of the Bilogora, Moslavačka gora or Medvednica, larger extra-urban structures such as Polače on the island of Mljet clearly testify that here the “urbanized” man knew how to enjoy the extra-urban world, and that he could use it functionally, emotionally and esthetically in a very successful way. Zagreb’s 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban villas, for example Felbinger’s “Okrugljak” are heirs to that splendid tradition. The family home at Jandrićeva Street 17 in Zagreb, a serious, rational, Loos type architecture, nonetheless fits beautifully by its proportions and position with the soft forest surroundings at the foot of the Cmrok hills (Fig. 6). The contemporary need not be bad; on the contrary. But imposed urbanization is a crime over Croatian total ecology, as Croatia has rarely been a land of the metropolis (Goss 2011).



**Fig. 6** Zagreb, Jandrićeva 17

One might conclude that in the Croatian space there are no common defining characteristics. Yet, it is not so. Although the Coast, the Highlands and the Plain may appear very different, in essence they are very much alike. Therefore Croatia is one country inhabited by one people. Regional and local differences in the language, folklore, customs, in visual forms and their dialogue with the surroundings, are one of the greatest assets and treasures of the land. It just happens that one is not often aware of it.

In the middle nineties I was at the Annual Meeting of the NFCA (National Federation of Croatian Americans) in San Pedro. At that time I was the Head of its PR Department. After meetings and speeches, the leadership retired into the back yard, a lamb was put on a spit, a *klapa* (small singing group) arrived, and it started softly to sing. For Marko, one from Herzegovina, for Tefko from Bosnia, for Mara from Dalmatia, for Jakov from Istria, for Djuka from Slavonia... and for Dr. Goss we have nothing as we do not know any Kajkavijan song. I said: "Don't worry. They are all mine as they are all Croatian."

If you have wind and strong hikers boots, start out from Orahovica toward the Papuk, pass by the old castle of Ružica, an amazing medieval fortified house, and climb following the old Roman road toward the *Vallis Aurea* (Pože-ga Valley) to a narrow ridge some 700 meters above the sea level (Fig. 7). The ridge houses the remains of an old castle, so old that nobody knows its name; so it is simply called Stari grad (Old Castle). It is a series of rectangular rooms and courtyards lined up some 100 meters along the ridge probably as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Rather inaccessible to men it has been slowly falling into dust, but quite a few stretches of the wall, built from large river pebbles and broken rock, still stand. It was already old when the inhabitants moved down to the more accessible and comfortable Castle of Ružica.



**Fig. 7** Stari grad above Orahovica,  
11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century

If you arrive there in the second half of April you will be treated to a rare scene – ruins surrounded by a wreath of large, dark purple *perunikas* – narcissus flowers of the key Slavic God, Perun, who probably dwelt in those Slavonia heights before the construction of the castle. The nature has done a good job embellishing the labors of human creativity. If you look toward the West through one of the few gaps among the branches you will experience yet another fantasy – an endless line of wooded hills, valleys, ridges toward the South, one of the most intact wildernesses in Croatia.

The Old Castle above Orahovica is a big house from which, before the ridge was overgrown by forest, one could see very far; judging from the few remaining vistas, deep into the heart of the Pannonian plain to the north of the Drava. If I see you, you must see me. The house nowadays called “Old Castle” was seen from far away, white above the tree tops on the unreachable ridge of the Papuk. Those above could oversee the source of life, the land and the water at the foot of the hill, those below could raise their eyes, see the fort and feel secure and protected. Those above probably asked a lot from those down there, but it was a common interest that all of them find shelter in case of need beyond the walls of stone and flowers.

Let this evocation of one of the oldest stone castles in Croatia serve as a link toward the central issues of this study.



### III. Croatia's Cultural Ecology as Witnessed through Art (primarily visual)

#### From Adam and Eve to Tuga and Buga

What follows is not an attempt to write a new short history of Croatian (mostly visual) art. Yet the lines below are not totally free from an ambition to set its study within a new framework; namely that of placing Art within and relating it to cultural ecology and cultural landscapes. We shall of course proceed from the notorious "time immemorial" to the equally notorious "present day."

The beginning is, not surprisingly, clouded in darkness. Not much is known about prehistory in Croatia. So one need not wonder when one finds nothing from Croatian territory in such contemporary surveys as *Europe between the Oceans* by the distinguished British archeologist Barry Cunliffe (Cunliffe 2008). One should bow to many fine researchers and studies; still, something essential seems to be missing.



**Fig. 8** Prehistoric fortress of Monkodonja near Rovinj (photo: Andrija Mutnjaković)

Many "prehistoric cultures" have been established on the territory of Croatia. Has anybody ever tried to identify their practitioners? We know that "in those bygone times" the land in question was inhabited by the Illyrians and Celts. Thanks to their clash with the culture of the Mediterranean the Illyrians get some press, but very little is known about the Celts in Croatia. They appear to be a taboo theme. Croatia is almost totally absent from the catalogue of the great Celtic exhibition at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice (Kruta 1999). I dare say that by using the nomenclature "culture," we limit the scope of our research to the material culture only, disregarding spiritual values which cannot be grasped anyway unless we introduce the human factor of the culture carriers. When the human beings with their "intangibles of history" are taken

into account, we open the door to some light introducing albeit scattered and fragmentary data from the fields of history, cultural anthropology, linguistics, mythology... briefly from cultural genetics. But in order to do so we must identify the carrier. I carry a passport of the Republic of Croatia, not one belonging to the People with the Urns in the Form of a House. I admit that I am totally unfit to write anything sensible about Prehistory, but I think I am able to recognize good work when I see it, so I very much appreciate the lines Tihomila Težak-Gregl wrote in her chapter on Prehistory in the recent – first – systematic survey of the art on the territory of Croatia, which boldly introduces within this theme also the periods of Prehistory and Antiquity, the latter masterfully done by Nenad Cambi (Težak-Gregl 2010, Cambi 2010). On the basis of those fine contributions and some personal observations, allow me to bother you with some thinking of my own.

The prehistoric cultural landscape on the territory of Croatia reflects very well the characteristics we listed as typical of Croatia's natural and total ecology in general. Where I have had an opportunity to get to know it, in Istria, the Kvarner, and along the eastern coast of the Adriatic, in the Eastern Slavonia and on the Bilogora mountain on the continent, I have encountered a territorial organization of small, separate, autarchic units, with forts ("gradinas") in the center, on top of the hills overlooking the coastline or the plain (Fig. 8). Those scattered piles and rings of dilapidated dry wall are excellent monuments of human presence in the hard and rocky eastern Adriatic landscape. They are monuments of a rural ecology in which there is no room for the city or the state, although, of course, the people may have formed temporary alliances as needed. Such forts, as the one at Trsat above Rijeka possess circular ramparts around a steep hilltop above the sea, strategically placed in terms of defense and control over considerable surfaces of the sea water. They also include a hollow with a well, or at least a place to collect rain water, constituting a basis for agriculture. The fort controls communications on the land and the sea, especially the spots where those meet and intertwine in the small ports on the beach below the fort. "Each one on his hill and for himself" is how one could describe this way of life. Do not come close unless you really have to, and unless we have agreed to handle some point of joint interest. Within that strictly autarchic way of life there are, however, special points such as a fort of Vučedol on a steep hill above the Danube, which have left remarkable testimony of



**Fig. 9** Zagreb, Archeological Museum, Vučedol Dove, 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC (photo: AMZ)

the spiritual and artistic potential of the early European cultures (Fig. 9).

The cosmopolitan, urban civilizations of Greece and Rome penetrated like a dagger into that xenophobic, autarchic world. Along with them they brought their most important invention – the city. Not for the last time did Croatia's territory witness an open clash between technocratic, mercantilist, urban civilization, and the warrior-peasant world of the Dalmatian and Pannonian countryside. The Mediterranean appears to have won, but the question to what extent the extra urban space was ever truly Romanized remains. And to what extent that populace of the hills and marshes even when once mixed with Rome had defined a matrix for future waves of immigration?

When I was a college student, in the days of the first, heroic efforts to study the territorial organization at the Institute of Art History at Zagreb University there was a dogma, which applied with reason, had a considerable validity. It stated: Prehistory sits on the hill (in the moor, above the sea coast, in a meander), Rome sits in the plain or along the coast, along important thoroughfares; then in the Early Middle Ages we go back to the hills and into the marshes, to return in the Late Middle Ages to the plain, the coast, the river valley – along communication routes. The Turkish wars upset in the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries what might have been a regular development leading to the triumph of modern urbanized Europe – of the plain, river valley, and coastland. The world ceased to turn in Croatia around 1500. So the return to the plain was postponed until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This scheme: hill – plain, hill – plain is basically correct. The actors, however, differ, and this calls for special explanations. How did Rome cope with a totally un-Roman cultural landscape Rome had encountered upon the conquest of the Illyricum?

Let us take another look at major Croatian cities.

Zagreb's Roman credentials are slim. There were *villae rusticae* at the foot of the Medvednica mountain, and on the hills above the alluvial plain of the Sava, from Podsused through Stenjevec, Vrapče, Borčec, Grmoščica, Sveti Duh, Sveti Rok, Gradec, Kaptol, Šalata, Laščina, Rebro... There were settlements at the protected spots in the plain, too. The Museum of the City of Zagreb itself sits on prehistoric homes. The Early Christian lamp found at Mirogojska Street 16 may indicate a religious center which served the villas and estates on the Mirogoj hill and Bijenik. It is not unlikely that early parishes stood at SS. Šimun and Juda (Markuševac), Stenjevec, on the Kaptol hill, and that there was a hermit community at Remete, beneath the prehistoric Gradišće and close to the Celtic and/or early medieval Kameniti stol (Stone Table). Most of those settlements lived happily from Prehistory through Rome and into the High and Late Middle Ages. That landscape of scattered villages and estates, from which through slow millennial growth the city of Zagreb came into being, was quite

legible a few decades ago, and its major lines could still be read today. There was little room for Roman urban planning within that system, so Rome stayed at the southern bank of the Sava, in Andautonia, a modest settlement which later probably served as the core of a Carolingian *castrum* guarding a ford, and still later of a medieval parish dedicated to the Frankish St. Martin; and, finally of Šćitarjevo, a cheerful mess of Turopolje wooden homes of which some still stand. But try to derive, or even vaguely conceive Zagreb from Andautonia!

Rijeka stands on the site of a not too undistinguished (and unexplored) settlement, of Tarsatica. After destructions in the Early Middle Ages, the Frankish wars in particular, the settlement moved to a steep hill carrying its name along. This is today's Trsat with its medieval castle, a small suburbium, and a famous Franciscan monastery. Rijeka – St. Vitus on the River – reappears in the Late Middle Ages at the site of the Roman city, the ruins of which are still noticeable today. It was and has always been a commercial point of mixed, immigrant, population of particular importance to the Habsburgs. To become the New Age metropolis of the northern Adriatic Rijeka it had to break far out from its narrow ancient and medieval territory.

The Roman Split was a fishermen's village, later buried under the weekend home of the last powerful pagan Roman emperor, the Illyrian Diocletian. During the ravages of the Early Middle Ages the *villa-palace-castrum* served as a refuge-fort to the people of the Dalmatian metropolis, Salona, and in the process became the core of the medieval city of Split. Thus Rome lies underneath the heart of Split, but not the Rome of large urban developments. Rather of the Rome of a large yet still rural type construction.

Only Mursa, the metropolis of Slavonia was a full-fledged Roman agglomeration, and a seat of a Christian bishopric. The Roman city however inherited the site of a prehistoric fort, and this place has remained the center of Osijek until today.

The Roman cities at the coastland have not retained much of their Antique character (Poreč, Novigrad, Osor, Senj, Krk, Rab, Trogir, Vis, Starigrad...). Some lost it completely (Petinum, Nesactium, Aenona, Narona). The metropolis of Salona turned into a mess of scattered villages and estates. Siscia survived the fall of the empire as an inhabited place, but lost its urban character to retrieve some of it only in recent times. Slavonski Brod grew at the place not too close to its ancient predecessor, Marsonia. Other larger medieval and modern centers of Continental Croatia – Varaždin, Krapina, Koprivnica, Virovitica, Našice, Vukovar, Đakovo, Požega, Kutina, Križevci – have very slim Roman credentials. For some fairly important Roman urban centers in on the Continent we cannot definitely say where they were, for example, Pyrrhi or Incerum. Ludbreg may be the ancient Iovio, but its structure looks more like a prehistoric or medieval fort than a Roman city. This is equally true of Cibalae, once a flourishing city with a bishop's seat, then the medieval City of St. Elias, and then



Vinkovci, a bunch of rather unrelated villages. The sophisticated spa for the rich and cultured, Aquae Iassae (Varaždinske Toplice) grew at a perfect prehistoric location, a well-protected hill which reclaimed its importance in the Middle Ages. Another such oasis of sophistication, Aquae Balissae (Daruvar), lies underneath, but also on a hill, a location inherited later on by the incoming Slavs. Another such hill in Daruvar is the one featuring the post-medieval Janković mansion; yet another one is at the medieval monastery of St. Ladislav of Podborje. At On the Coast the Croats urbanized Šibenik which has survived as *urbs*, and Knin and Biograd that haven't. Ragusium (Dubrovnik) sprang up on a rocky island buoyed by the refugees from Epidaurus (Cavtat). It started its miraculous growth only when the Roman core (Ragusium) was linked to a new Early Slavic settlement of Dubrava.



**Fig. 10**

Pula, Arc of the Sergii, 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (photo: IPU)

In my opinion only two Roman cities, both with an almost metropolitan status today – Pula and Zadar – have retained some of their Roman glory. The urban development of Pula is an excellent illustration of the paradigm hill-plain-hill-plain, whereas in Zadar such migrations were unnecessary as the city was founded on a spacious, flat and well-protected peninsula satisfying both the prehistoric and medieval need for protection and the Roman and New Age commercial, administrative and communication requirements. Senj (Senia) at the end of an important trail into the Continent recalls Zadar by the stability of its position; it was always a rather small port city as it is also today. Ilok (Cuccium) on the Continent belongs to the same group as it has been sitting on its high plateau above the Danube since time immemorial.

Our paradigm has therefore some general meaning which may be lost in the execution. The great explorer of the city in the eastern Adriatic, Mate Suić was quite right when he doubted the Classical Ancient character of the land beyond a stone's throw from the walls of the Dalmatian Roman cities (Suić 1976). Take a look at a local "Roman-Provincial" piece of sculpture and, but for a possibly some detail of dress or weaponry, you will find absolutely nothing of "ancient classicism." Who can reliably distinguish such a piece from a Celtic, Early Slavic, Pre-Romanesque... any "barbarian" piece anywhere around the World!

So the Roman predicament in the eastern Adriatic – in Istria, Dalmatia, Pannonia – is much more complex than it appears at first glance. This is because Rome entered an area which is both Mediterranean and Central European – Continental. Yet one must admit that Rome was the only power until up to the present date that managed to somewhat tie the parts together. Both at the coast and beyond, Rome ran into the “Croatian” total ecology of small autarchic



**Fig. 11**

Brijuni, Roman villa at Verige  
(photo: Vlasta Begović, Ivančica Schrunk)

units which were hard to tie up. It seems to me that Rome practiced several models or strategies entering as a powerful urban force into a conflict with the *rus*, the countryside, the mountain and the marshland; a clash that is still being fought on the territory of Croatia. Rome energetically imposed its model of metropolis creating Narona, Salona, Siscia, Sirmium. Let us repeat: with the exception of Pula and Sisak in recent times, none of the mentioned places deserves to be called a city today. With the Roman urban models the Roman urban culture arrived too. Other *Apoxiumenoi*, not just the Lošinj one, traveled our seas, imported just like those foreign artists who in the metropolitan centers and the areas under their influence created the Arena and the Arch of the Sergii in Pula (Fig. 10), Diocletian Palace, the architecture and sculpture of Narona, the Zadar Forum. Among imports was the sculpture such as the Diana from Sinj (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD), and so also the mosaicists who created the fantasies of Pula’s workshops. Even in extra-urban areas this imported spirit has left us the complex of the villa in the Verige bay at the Brijuni Islands (Fig. 11) (Cambi 2010, Begović and Schrunk 2006).

Another model which we may provisionally call “small township” is the place where the cosmopolitan influences are integrated into the domestic milieu, but still in a spirit of the humanist and anthropocentric world of the Mediterranean. An example would be the Minerva from Varaždinske Toplice (early 2<sup>nd</sup> century) where a typical classical model was domesticated through soft under carving and the play of light and shadow (Fig. 12). To this model one can add a large group of stele, sarcophagi and cult reliefs both in Dalmatia and Pannonia. In still smaller places we encounter the third model applied to the same themes. This is the art of the Romanized native population, that “Roman provincial,” with identification elements of Classical art but in a style which reveals a harder domestic Illyrian or Celtic base. Finally, there is the total “rustica” difficult to distinguish from prehistoric, “Celtic-Illyrian,” early medieval, or even later rustic products (Fig. 13). This is an equivalent to that hard spirit of the inhabitants of the Balkan hills and marshes that Mate Suić speaks about. Rome descends upon Illyricum in a theophanic manner, but this theophany of the Classic

is softened outside the metropolitan centers, it is superficially reflected in the countryside, and swallowed by the local tradition in a hut and the cave (Suić 1976).

We may again claim that the Croatia's natural ecology is reflected here, which is that some processes continuing up till today were initiated at that point. This is very important as this confirms the firmness of the natural landscape, and also that each new feature imposed upon the constant of nature brought something new. As the four Roman models (I do not claim there are not more, but these four appear obvious) gain or lose importance, there occur changes, even disturbances, in the layers of cultural landscapes.



**Fig. 12** Varaždinske Toplice,  
Minerva, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD  
(photo: IPU)

Actually, we know very little about the cultural landscape of Croatia in Antiquity and Late Antiquity. Thus much depends on the intuition and intellectual position of an individual researcher. There was certainly that wild, mountain population that has not “Mediterranized” to this day, but there are also indicators that tell a rather different story. This would primarily refer to those smaller communities which constituted the majority of the population in the Roman Dalmatia, and even more so in Pannonia. The ownership of a *villa* on the Bilogora was a dream of the Roman veteran. On the gentle slopes of the Bilogora, and so also in the Zagreb Piedmont and the *Vallis Aurea* there were hundreds of estates, possessions and villas of a domestic, peasant (possibly minimally urban), military and veteran class. Or of holdings of petty bureaucrats and small merchants, a class which seems to have reached, especially in Late Antiquity a certain level of life which would be best described as “genteel.” What I imagine on the slopes of northern Croatian hills or along the banks of clear creeks, the *Belsimons* of the

Celts (hence *Bliznec* denoting clear waters in Slavic) (Falileyev 2007) is a fairly sophisticated countryside culture of mixed Illyrian-Celtic-Roman milieus, which, just like the Auvergne of Sidonius Apollinaris, happily and quietly enjoys the breeze and the sun, while the movers and shakers keep marching down the big roads. This image may be my fiction based on the experience of the beauty of the Zagreb Piedmont hills, the vistas from the vineyards of Zelina and the Šestine Valley toward the mighty Savus under the veil of bluish mist. Personally, I believe in that world, and, maybe one day, we may get to know it better. Or take Polače on the island of Mljet, a monumental pile of ruins in the southern Dalmatian landscape of dark pine and blue surface of the bay, monumental yet not metropolitan, and perfectly integrated into its surroundings. This phenomenon of the Late Antique country culture seems to anticipate for a millennium or more the environmental consciousness of the Croatian



**Fig. 13**

Split, Museum of Croatian Archeological Monuments, early Slavic (?) three-header from Vačani (photo: MHAS)

Pre-Romanesque, the Renaissance villas of Dubrovnik, the Baroque and Classicist mansions of Transmontane Croatia, and the suburban residential quarters of the Zagreb of the periods of the *Secession* and *Moderna* (Fig. 6).

The cosmopolitan trend is represented by sumptuous basilicas of Salona, and the imported sarcophagi from of the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century from Salona to Siscia. Some of them were even made at home, as the one with Cross and the Lambs from Kaštel Lukšić made from Proconnesian marble (6<sup>th</sup> century). A similar pattern is displayed by the last phase of Antiquity, the period of Justinian's re-conquest. The import of people, material, and ideas is represented by the highest class monuments such as the Basilica Euphrasiana in Poreč (Fig. 14), or Santa Maria del Canneto in Pula, in terms of architecture, decorative sculpture, mosaic and wall-paintings. The already mentioned fine Lamb of God lamp found in Zagreb at Mirogoj Street may have been made in an *officina* in Siscia. But the trend of rustic, barbaric relief continues. Istria and the Upper Adriatic made a special contribution to the treasury of Early Christian forms in terms of a rectangular Christian cult space with a half-round bench for the clergy which persisted from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century until the Late Middle Ages (Cambi 2010). This is the world to be invaded in the course of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> century by Tuga and Buga, and their five Croatian brothers, Hrobatos, Muhlo, Klukas, Kosences and Lobelos (possibly Hrvat, Miljo, Kljuka, Kosić and Ljubelj), at first to destroy it, and then to gradually make it their own. This initial rapprochement would happen around 800 AD with the conversion of the Croats under Duke Borna. These Croatian Slavic immigrants were recorded as having come under Borna's father (Goss 1996). What happened between the collapse of the Late Antique order in Roman Illyricum and the beginning of the ninth century is the most crucial change that has ever occurred on the territory of the present-day Croatia. So those two centuries merit a special chapter as they define whatever was to happen through today.





**Fig. 14** Poreč, Episcopal complex with the Basilica Euphrasiana (photo: IPU)

### **From Tuga and Buga to Borna and His Father**

Tuga, Buga, et al., kept arriving in waves into Southeastern Europe between the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Dates, directions and mechanisms of the Slavic diaspora are moot, but linguistics and cultural anthropology give us enough data to be able to conclude that the Slavs did migrate, that they came into what is today Croatia from a wide circle from the Elbe to Ukraine, and that there were several waves of immigration (Goss 2009A).

About the partners the Slavs had in their march to the Southeast, the belligerent Avars, we know still less. The Slavs were allegedly the subjugated people, a second rate partner in the enterprise of war and conquest. The Avars disappeared at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the last news being protests of Christianized Avars against Slavic pressure. It is quite probable that the Avars constituted a thin, ruling class of warriors. Their language, but for a few words, has disappeared. Place names which relate to the Avars (Oborovo, Obrovac) appear as Slavic words, adjusted by and to Slavic language speakers. It is unclear what the Slavs could take over and inherit from the Avars (Ančić 2000).

The Avars lived in the *hrings*, forts made from mud and timber. The same were built by the Slavs. The remains of the fort in the Oborova šuma (Avar Forest) near Daruvar are of the Celtic half-moon type. Could we simply accept that the Avars, being a nomadic, warlike, horse riding people, left nothing substantial in terms of spatial organization? We know them almost exclusively by cemeteries and we have not been able to identify any specific spatial indicators which would have been linked directly to the Avars. Except that the incidence of place names linked to the Avars grows in

Croatian Pannonia from east to west, which makes no sense, as the Avars were supposed to hang onto the great eastern Pannonian plane.

Be that as it may, these “Avaroslavs” or “Slavoavars” delivered a *coup-de-grâce* to an already dying classical tradition in Dalmatia and Pannonia, bled dry by the passage of dozens of Germanic, Asiatic and other ethnic groups. With the arrival of Tuga, Buga, and their brothers, any remaining continuity came to an end.

Place names provide a good clue. There are very few place names which could be with any reliability linked to pre-Roman times. Possibly for example *Belsimon*, the Celtic word meaning “clear water,” hence the Slavic word Blizna, or Bliznec. The mysterious word “Zelina” may also be of Celtic origin, a name of a river the Romans wrote down in the Iberian Peninsula (Salaeni, Salaena). *Cas(s)inomagus* is a Latinized Celtic word which might have meant “the place of oaks,” hence the name “Čazma.” The Latin world has left many more place names, but only starting with the Slavic layer could we get into reading the messages of space through place names, as the study of place names ceases to be just linguistic material studied in isolation to become a way of seeking sensible relationships between individual place names and the space. Studying Romance and Slavic place names could tell us a lot about the distribution of the population, as Skok has shown in his book on the Slavs and the Romans on the Adriatic Islands (Skok 1950), but what has been attempted by Belaj, Katičić and Pleterski for the Slavic period, has never been attempted in the case of pre-Slavic place names (Belaj, V. 2007, Belaj and Belaj 2014, Katičić 2008, 2010, 2011, 2014, Pleterski 1996, 2014).

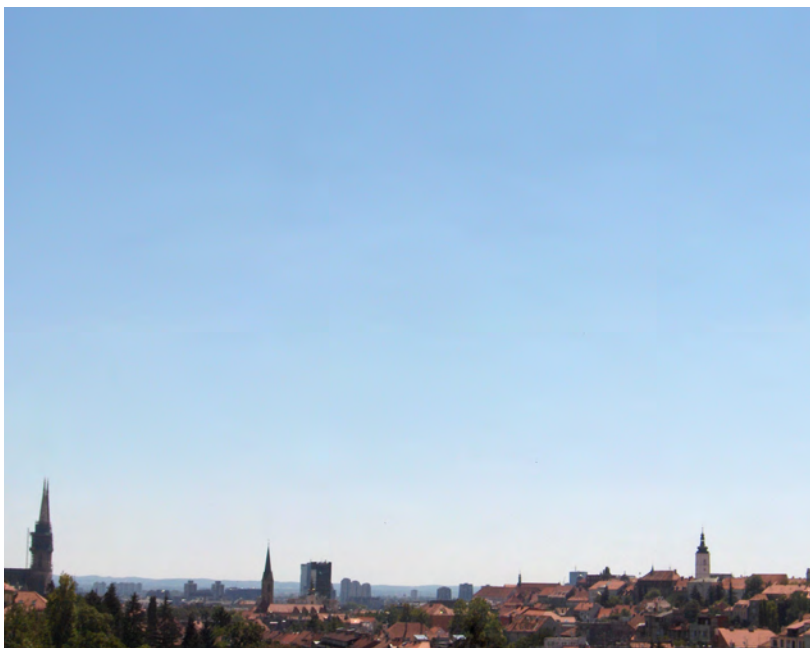
The just mentioned research in the Slavic area shows that a major change *through confrontation* occurred around 600. Belaj is right when he claims that naming places and setting them up into mythological understandable formations was based on the desire to chase out the old and introduce the new Gods. That layer which we can sense quite well developed immediately upon immigration when the previous population was either exterminated or chased away (Belaj, V. 2007).

Rome failed to completely urbanize and de-barbarize Illyricum. The extra-urban territorial organization certainly provided a number of fixed spots to the new lords. Yet Rome did not exterminate the Dalmatian and Pannonian *rus*; neither had the next wave of occupiers been able to completely obliterate the urban component of the cultural landscape they rushed into. The radical confrontation is illustrated very well by a brick found in Sirmium bearing the following inscription: “O Lord, stop the Avar and save the city and the writer of these lines.” (Goss 2009B) Very few sites, almost exclusively along the sea, managed to preserve a semblance of their urban structure, primarily in terms of an area surrounded by walls, and the institution of bishopric. Only in Istria did a large tract of extra-urban land remain in the hands of Romance population. Not counting Istria, there are the Dalmatian cities of Osor, Krk, Rab,

Zadar, Trogir and Kotor. Salona, the Dalmatian metropolis moves into a fortified palace, the nucleus of Split, Epidaurus to the rocky island of Ragusa. The Pannonian metropolis, Sirmium, disappeared for all practical purposes. The same is true of all other cities of southern Pannonia. It was only Siscia that managed to retain a status of a fortified place, if not a true city. But even Siscia disappeared in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

The situation in Continental Croatia was very nicely described by Vjekoslav Jukić in his doctoral dissertation. Here we quote the relevant passages (Jukić 2015): “As opposed to Dalmatia, urban centers of Pannonia kept stagnating, and many among them were irreparably destroyed. The territory which in Antiquity was well organized and covered with networks of communications, transformed itself under the new circumstances of the early Middle Ages into a new space the power of which does not rest with the tradition (albeit the tradition must have been present at least somewhat), but with a number of new smaller centers or groups of agglomerations. The best example (quoted more than once) is Zagreb which was formed gradually during the Early Middle Ages to obtain a bishopric by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 15). Vukovar would grow by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century from marshlands in Antiquity to one of the key centers of southeastern Pannonia. As opposed to such new centers old ancient cities such as Cibalae, Mursa, or Sirmium lost their importance, and almost completely disappeared. The disappearance was not physical, as the ruins could still be seen close to early medieval villages which had grown according to different rules and principles almost completely denying the ancient tradition. The ancient cities would serve merely as the source of building material for the new settlers.”

It is quite clear that in the territory ethnically cleansed by the newcomers, there were still some groups of the earlier population, for example on the Kozelin near Zagreb, or on Kiringrad to the southwest of it, who managed to defend themselves and then



**Fig. 15**  
Zagreb, Gradec and Kaptol

come to terms with the newcomers (Goss 2006B). But this was not *rus* meeting *urbs*, but an old rural civilization facing a new one. In Transylvania where there are studies of rural settlements, it has been demonstrated that the same scattered structure of settlement applies to the Slavic and to the pre-Slavic, not or barely Romanized, settlers (Fabini and Fabini 1991). The new *rus* probably found it easier to come to terms with the old one than with the *urbs*. Thus the period before the Romanesque is an ideal period of the rule of the countryside over urban areas.

That place names constitute important evidence in historical studies is nothing new. The areas inhabited by Southern Slavs are full of places bearing old Slavic references – names of gods, of rituals, of old obsolete words long gone from the language, etc. What, however, was done over the last two decades, and here the southern Slavic area is in the forefront of research, is to stop seeing individual place names in isolation, but to relate them within a system. This in itself was made possible by the research of the Russian scholars, Ivanov and Toporov, who, some forty years ago, recognized structural relationships between the elements, and thus enabled researchers to establish the importance of certain points in the landscape. It became possible to recognize the essential elements of the fundamental myth centering on the clash between Perun, the thunder-god, whose place is “up there”, on a mountain, and Veles, the snake, the god of the “down there,” the underworld, who is chased back by Perun’s lightnings into the depths of the water whenever he dares attempt to climb the mountain. The interested reader is referred to anthropological literature for details of the myth which is common to many groups of both Indo-European and Non-Indo-European nations, and has even pre-Indo-European roots; and is related to the cycle of the year, the change of seasons, and rituals contained therein. In a nutshell, Perun’s son, Juraj/Jarylo is abducted by Veles’s agents in the dead of winter, and spends his youth as a shepherd of Veles’s wolves. He escapes, crosses the river, changes his name to Ivan, and at mid-summer marries his sister, Mara. He is unfaithful to her, and is killed only to be born again in the midst of winter. And so on, year in, year out. An additional bone of contention between the Thunderer and the Snake is Perun’s wife, Mokoš, who spends half of a year with her husband, and another half with her lover, the god of the underworld. I apologize to my anthropologist colleagues for this drastic oversimplification (Belaj, V. 2007).

The outstanding Croatian linguist, Radoslav Katičić has identified several “stages” where the segments of the myth are played out, including place names such as *Perun*, *Perunsko* (Perun’s place), *Vidova gora* (St. Vitus’s Mountain), *Gora* (Mountain), as opposed to *Veles*, *Volosko* (Veles’s place), *Dol* (Hollow). Between them there may be an oak forest, *Dubrava*, *Dubac*, where some believe the conflict between Perun and Veles might have taken place, but such a presumption is far from certain. Building upon Katičić’s insights, the Slovene archeologist, Andrej Pleterski, Croatian ethnologist and cultural anthropologist, Vitomir Belaj, and his son, archeologist Juraj Belaj started searching for patterns within such clusters of place names. The conclusion,

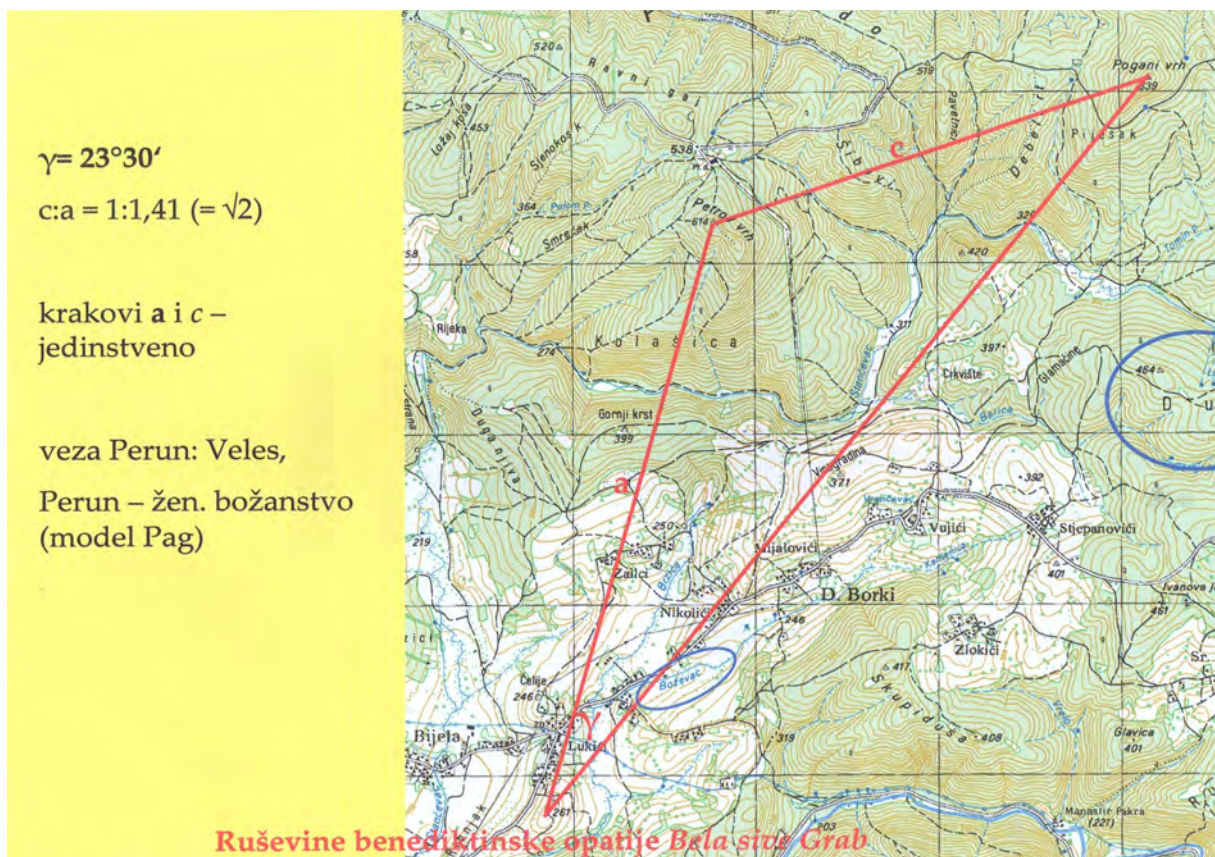


by V. Belaj, is as follows: “These are not just points in the landscape any more... Mythically interpreted landscape transforms itself into an ideogram, read by those who within the culture were trained to do so. As an ideogram is in fact script, the structured points in the landscape represent a written source about the early Slavic paganism.” (Belaj, V. 2007)

The pattern that has emerged is that of a sacred triangle the characteristics of which are:

- Of the three points usually in visual contact with one another, two are occupied by male deities (Perun, Veles; Juraj), and the third by Mokoš.
- One of the angles measures ca. 23 degrees (representing the deflection between the imagined orbits of the Sun at the equinox and the solstice; in Croatia 23 degrees 27 minutes).
- The two longer sides form a ratio of 1 to square root of 2.
- The longest side usually links the two key opponents.
- Perun’s point is always on an elevated ground.
- The female point is usually next to water.

There is usually water between Mokoš and Veles (Figs 16, 17).



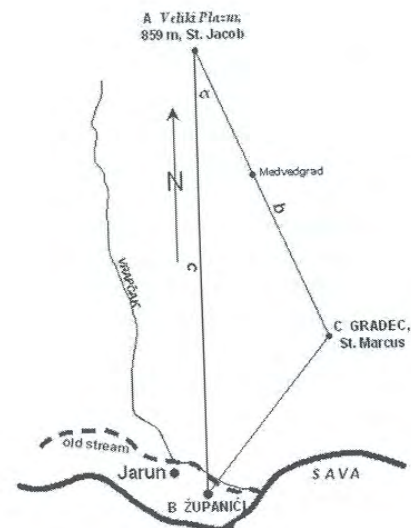
**Fig. 16**

“Belaj’s triangle” on the Western Papuk: Petrov vrh, Pogani vrh, Abbey of St. Margaret in Bijela (author: Vitomir Belaj)

Elements of the myth and its representation could be considered pre-Indo-European. In conclusion, Belaj underlines the tremendous practical impact of the “myth in the landscape.” “There is something even more important. The incorporation of the myth into the newly occupied territories was, obviously, an essential part of making the new land one’s own... This is what we, who live here nowadays, albeit we have been blown together by many a wind of history, make in a mythical and ritual way its legitimate owners” (Belaj, V. 2007).

If the view of the “myth in the landscape” is correct then, first of all, the Croats, and the other Southern Slavs, brought along to the Roman and Greek world within which they had settled a fairly sophisticated culture. They imprinted some of its essential mythical features on the new land in the process of taking it, and thus perpetuated some of their deepest experiences about the self and the world. They re-made the picture of their old country. They simply stuck to their tradition. It would be foolish to assert that a nation capable of doing that immediately forgot everything about their artistic practices, although they had moved from a land of wood to a land of stone, from a land of wood-building and carving, to a land of building and carving in permanent materials (this is also true of the “wood” country of the Roman Pannonia, where stone and brick were widely used), from a land of a rural organization to a land of highly developed urbanization. Finally, from the world of paganism which they projected on their environment, to a land of Jesus Christ who very soon asked them to become His faithful followers; what they duly did, while retaining some of their pre-Christian lore until today (Goss 2009).

Knowing how to read the pre-Christian landscape structures (bearing in mind that some of them may coincide with the previous, Roman, and pre-Roman territorial organization) may be of tremendous help to an art historian and archaeologist looking for traces of lost buildings, and trying to reconstruct cultural landscapes that followed upon Christianization. That this is really so illuminates one of Pleterski’s examples, when within a “sacred triangle” in Carinthia he identified as one of the points the church of the Savior at Millstatt, recorded as standing over an “ecclesia demonibus addicta,” a pagan Slavic sanctuary. Any time later, even recent building standing at a suspected “mythic point” would probably hide traces of earlier, Christian or even pre-Christian buildings. Places dedicated to Mokoš may lead us to many a lost church of the Virgin Mary, St. Mary Mag-



**Fig. 17**

“Belaj’s triangle” in the Zagreb Prigorje:  
St. Jakob, St. Marco, Županići/Jarun  
(author: Vitomir Belaj)

dalene, St. Margaret, St. Helena, or some other powerful female saint. The tradition of recognizing sanctity of a place has continued in Christianity even if the sacred point contained no specifically built sanctuary, but acted just as a “sacred spot” in the landscape. Still today the parish priest of Ivanec holds a solemn open-air mass at the peak of the mountain Ivanščica, an important Perun’s place, at Mid-Summer, although there is no church there. The triangle may encompass the territory of one early Slavic “župa,” i.e., county – political unit, and also of the smallest unit of church organization, the parish. The political “župa,” was ruled by a “župan” (count), the ecclesiastical one by a “župnik” (parish priest). Thus the triangles may be a useful tool to identify the early political and religious centers with the accompanying architecture (Belaj, V. 2007).

Let us pause for a moment.

Katičić and Belaj have submitted strong evidence for the existence of the migration of the Slavs to Southeastern Europe. The Slavs exist. They came from somewhere. The routes of their treks could be fairly well identified. Katičić and Belaj have highlighted the key place of language and linguistic research, demonstrating that language is to culture what genes are to genetics. Now we need to go back to the field, the goal being to show who came and wherefrom. Whom did the newcomers find? What did they bring along; and how they merged this with what they had found? How to identify in the landscape credible records of those processes?

Are there any witnesses in the sphere of visual arts that could be associated with the earliest cultural layer upon the migration? The answer is almost totally negative. Yet, there is a ray of hope.

One of the most intriguing pieces of stone sculpture in the enormous collection of the Museum of Croatian Archeological Monuments (Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika) in Split is what appears to be a fragment of a tapering column bearing representations of three faces in fairly high relief discovered at Vačani (Fig. 13). One of the faces is almost complete, the other is rather damaged but legible, and the third is obliterated beyond recognition. The fragment was acquired by the Museum more than a hundred years ago, and although it was recognized as a possible relic from the pre-Christian world of the Slavs, it has never received a systematic study. Our recent attempt did not solve all the problems, either. The piece is simply too damaged (Goss 2009A). Yet, it cannot be just set aside.

The fragment is ca. 35 cm tall (all measures are approximate), its width including the relief of the faces is between 27 and 29 cm, that of the body of the column ca. 16 cm. The relief of the faces is about 6 cm, the height of the faces varies between 21 and 16, and their width from 16 to 18 cm. At the base the fragment is ca. 23-24 cm wide. The top of the column today has a low domical shape. There is a hole in the base ca. 10



cm deep. The material is yellowish limestone, and not too hard.

One may conclude that the original form was a free standing tapering column with three projecting faces. The lower part was cut off, and the face area crudely re-cut when the stone was reused. Why were the eyes of the damaged face savagely pried out, whereas those of the mostly preserved face were left almost intact? Was that face identified as particularly evil at one point in ideological history of the piece? After Christianization? Or was the preserved face turned toward the inside of the wall when the stone was reused, and somebody decided to pry out the eyes of the only visible face? In that case, was this done by Christians to spite the pagans, heretics to spite the Catholic, Muslims to spite the Christians?

The style of the piece may be described as “primitive” but the sections where the original surface appears to have been preserved indicate quite a competent level of carving, smooth and finished. The preserved detail also seems to have been cut with precision and competence. Detail of the preserved face, i.e., the eyes, the nose, the mouth, may be simple but the master definitely knew how to carve and incise with a secure and experienced hand. Looking at the work in general one is somewhat reminded of the later medieval “stečaks” such as frequently appear in the Dalmatian hinterland. One is inclined to conclude that we have here a work of an artist who prefers a high degree of stylization, symmetry (eyes of the preserved face), parallelism of planes, but who does it as his stylistic preference and not as a consequence of poor technique. This is compatible with what one may broadly call “Pre-Romanesque” esthetics, but not necessarily only so. It could still be a work of a well-trained carver of some later (or earlier, e.g. Roman provincial) period who has not mastered, or does not care for the art of human figure. One must not exclude the local Illyrian-Celtic environment, either (Garašanin 1960).

So much about the form. How about the function? Numbers one, three (i.e., two plus one), five (four plus one), seven (six plus one) and nine (eight plus one) seem to play an important role in the art and architecture of both the “primitive” and not at all “primitive” civilizations – from the sacred circle of innumerable religious traditions to the triangular composition of the High Renaissance. On Croatia’s territory the number three figured prominently in both the Greek (Zeus, Hero, Athena) and Roman (Jupiter, Juno, Athena) pantheons. The main Celtic gods also formed a triad (Taranis, Esus, Teutates). Christianity features the Holy Trinity, particularly *en vogue* in the Carolingian period. Three faced pearls were discovered at Prozor, Kompolje and Donja Dolina, and were linked to the Celtic trade if not outright manufacturing. A representation of the Holy Trinity on late medieval frescoes at St. Brcko at Kalnik shows an image which could be called a very inflated three-faced pearl – three repeated faces of the Members of the Holy Trinity painted next to one another. Such images continued in rural areas of Europe, e.g., Western France into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Celts are known for a conflated image of a three-header, a head with three faces,

three noses and four eyes, which are shared between the central and side faces. The famous “Mačak” (“Cat”) bracket from Rudina in Slavonia (12<sup>th</sup> century) (Fig. 18) is an impressive Romanesque rendering of that Celtic model (Goss 2010A).

Thus: is our three-header from Vačani a Roman or Greek, a Celtic, or a Christian Trinity, or something else? It is amazing how little we, as a Slavic language speaking nation, have done to investigate the Slavic component of our past. The fact that the Vačani fragment was recognized as “Slavic” and then never studied in depth is just another case in question. We have done an extensive and remarkable job of studying the links of our earliest post-Roman (and also much later) art with the classical and provincial Roman antiquity trying to see Rome, pagan or Christian, everywhere without ever seriously asking the question: what has been the contribution of the Slavic population called nowadays Croatian, the genetic picture of which is roughly 50% native pre-Slavic, 25% Slavic, and 25% other. The Slavic genes may not be overwhelming, but the cultural genes, as represented by the key bearer of cultural identity, the language, were rather sturdy. After all, the Croats are a rare example among the nations that settled within the old Roman Empire who have retained their non-Romance language. Such people could not be mere barbarians. They must have had a certain rather sophisticated culture of their own. Do we have in the three-header from Vačani proof of that Slavic cultural tradition?



**Fig. 18** Rudina, Mačak (the “Cat”), 12<sup>th</sup> century  
(photo: AMZ)



It is well-known that the pagan Slavs worshipped many headed or many faced idols. There is even a literary underpinning for that multiplicity. A Russian 15<sup>th</sup> century text, a compilation of questions and answers says (I translate): “How many heavens are there?” The answer: “Perun est mnog” (There are many Peruns). A Lithuanian *dajna* tells us that there are four Perkunai (the Baltic Perun), “Perkuns are four: the first one in the East, the second in the West, the third in the South, the fourth in the North.” Scandinavian cosmology maintains a scheme whereby heaven is supported by four groups of dwarfs (*Austri, Vestri, Nordri, Sudri*) representing the four winds. This, of course, reminds us of the multi-headed or multi-faced Slavic deities of old chronicles. Saxo Grammaticus saw a four headed Svantevid at Rujan. There was also a seven-headed Rugevit, a five-headed Porevit, and a four-headed Porenutius. Three-headed gods stood in Szczecin, Wolin and Branibor (Brandenburg). That last one was identified as “Triglav,” and destroyed in 1157 when Albert the Bear seized the stronghold of Branibor. A later tradition renamed the Triglav into a goddess Trigla. A statue of “twins” made of wood and datable to the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century was discovered at Fischerinsel, the place some identify with the famous Slavic fort of Radogošč. In 1848, a four-headed god was found in the river Zbruč in Galicia; a four-headed god was also found in Preslav, the ancient Bulgarian capital, to list just a few better known examples. In his important book, Slupecki has collected a number of examples of single and multi-headed figures of idols, both in stone and wood, noticing Celtic analogies, and also similar products of other peoples (e.g., Turkish). Many of them are rather crude examples of incision in the rock (Wolgast), some equally crude two plane relief pieces (Lezno), some reveal a better sense of rounded form (Powiercie, Kolo, Lysec), and some a fairly high degree of sculpting sophistication, as, for example, the four-headed “Svantevid” from Zbruč. Saying that some of the detail may recall the piece from Vačani again does not get us much further. One should, however, note that the multiple-faced idols are usually associated with an upright columnar form (Zbruč, Ivankovtse, Yarivka, Fischerinsel). This seems to be the only firmer visual element placing our piece within the sphere of pagan Slavic idol sculpture, be it in wood or stone (Belaj, V. 2007, Goss 2009, Slupecki 1994).

Of course, there is Triglav in Slovenia and Troglav in the mountain Dinara. The three-facedness related to Triglav and Trigla finds a surprising reference in the names of two villages near Daruvar in Western Slavonia – Treglava (cf. *Trigla*) and Trojeglava, and in Trojglav near Čazma and Troičko brdo near Ivanić. In spite of the fact that Western Slavonia has suffered seven depopulations and repopulations in the last five hundred years or so, the area between Bjelovar, Daruvar, Garešnica and Kutina is a true treasure-chest trove of old forgotten “gradišta,” entire townships probably relinquished when flying the Turks, and of place names relating to pagan Avar and Slavic populations. This is an additional argument to seriously consider the possibility that a “Triglav” once stood in Treglava and Trojeglava although the villages as we see them today offer little historical or archeological evidence (Goss 2009, Cepetić 2015).

However, in order to substantiate what we have tried to do up till now, we must make a decisive step into the unavoidable question of the “arrival” and/or “migrations” of the “Slavs” and/or the “Croats.” As we very well know, the question of the migration of the Croats is one of the most debated and least resolved in Croatian history. The solutions most frequently proposed include one or two migrations of the “Croats” (“Slavs”), occurring around 600 and/or 800 AD in the contexts of either the Avar conquests (600), or of the anti-Avar wars of Charlemagne (800).

This is not the place to enter again into all the intricacies of the issue, and this writer does not consider himself competent to do so. As already stated, the Croats “are” ca. 50% natives (i.e., Illyrian/Celtic population of Dalmatia and Pannonia), ca. 25% Slavs (ranging from 29 in Pannonia to 23 in Dalmatia), and 25% other. Yet the Slavic element proved surprisingly tenacious as the people calling themselves “Croats” have spoken and speak a Slavic tongue. In other words they imposed some of their “Slavism” on the others. What is language? I would suggest that language is a kind of a cultural “genetic marker,” a major, possibly *the* major component of identity and culture. Through language one expresses one’s worldview (mythology, ideology), in itself another important component of “cultural genetics.” As expression of a worldview is unimaginable without the space within which it occurs, language (naming, showing – in Croatian *kazivanje*, *po-kazivanje* – of landscape elements) also quite directly impacts the way one sees and arranges one’s surroundings (what Barry Cunliffe calls “cognitive geography”) (Cunliffe 2008). This is yet another “marker” of the kind we are here interested in. As in the process of structuring the landscape according to a certain worldview expressing formula, the man intervenes in his environment through the work of his own hands, and as visual arts are one of the aspects of that work, they should also be seen as a tool expressing one’s worldview, thus another marker within the sphere of “cultural genetics.” Human environment, the cultural landscape of a certain group, place and period, is thus a huge book in which history has been recorded. It is particularly useful for understanding such aspects of our identity as “the intangibles of history,” or “allusions and hopes,” as they have been called by some of the most distinguished scholars in humanities, and without which there is no understanding of either the past or the present (Kitzinger 1972). It seems to me that good results may be obtained if one may be able to reconcile the facts offered by both “natural” and “cultural genetics.”

The linguist will tell the historian of visual arts, what names have been given to certain points in the landscape, what language they belong to, what their etymology is, who might have been the speakers, what may be comparable forms elsewhere. Next, the visual art historian would depend on the cultural anthropologist who would tell him why a certain name was chosen, what the mechanism and meaning behind the choice was, and what this may mean for the worldview (identity, culture) of the naming agent. Without the precious work of Radoslav Katičić in linguistics, Vitomir Belaj in cultural anthropology, and Andrej Pleterski in archeology, history and cultural an-

thropology, the above lines and those that follow would have never been written (Belaj, V. 2007, Belaj and Belaj 2014, Katičić 2008, 2010, 2011, 2014, Pleterski 2014).

Assuming that there had been a migration, do we have any concept how artistic and other cultural materials might have traveled? The Arab writer Ibn Fadlan saw in 922 a group of Russian merchants among the Bulgars on the Volga worshipping a number of small idols placed in a circle, in the middle of which stood a bigger one, addressed as “My Lord.” We do not know whether those “Russians” were Slavs or Varangians, but it really does not make much difference. What is tremendously interesting is that a sanctuary, in this case the rounded and/or polyconchal, was portable. One had to just unpack the “idols,” draw a circle, place them in the right position (possibly one in each conch projecting from the rounded core), and adore them! This is nothing exceptional as Cosmas tells us that the Czechs brought their Gods along, and Thorolf, when he went to Iceland, took along a plank from a sanctuary of Thor bearing the God’s image, and when he reached the coast he threw the Thor into the waves and settled where the plank landed. A wooden multi-header might have traveled in a bag from White Croatia to the Adriatic coast, assuming that such a migration did occur (Belaj, V. 2007, Goss 2009, 2009A, Goss 2015).

The formula defining the form of a sanctuary may have also traveled for thousands of miles, as it was linked to the highest *sanctum*, the chief executive God of the Slavic, and related, pantheons. Sacred circles of a simple kind are ubiquitous throughout the Slavic world. They have been found at Tushemla, Prudki and Gorodok near Smolensk, two of them at Trebiatow, one at Parsteiner See and at Saaringen on the territory of Polabian Slavs, at Pskov, etc. The sacredness of the circle is attested to by the *Egil Saga* mentioning a circle marked by ropes within which the judges sit; the Frankish *Lex Ripuaria* demanded that oaths be sworn within a circle surrounded by hazelnut trees, also sacred to the Slavs (Slupecki 1994, Cunliffe 2008). Elsewhere I have extensively written about the problem of pagan and Christian polyconchal structures among the Slavs. Below, we will say a few words also on some possible sacred circles we have located in Continental Croatia (Goss 2009).

While preparing the text for the chapters on Pre-Romanesque and Romanesque for the grand exhibition “Slavonija, Baranja i Srijem” (Zagreb 2009) we combed through all the 1:25,000 maps between the Danube and the Ilova Rivers, and even such preliminary efforts yielded a huge quantity of place names relatable to the Avars and the Slavs. We quote a select few. The Avars are recalled (which is remarkable always in a Slavic form!) by such names as Obar (Slavic/Croatian for Avar, with a regular change from A to O), Obrovo, Okrugljak (Rounded Place), Kruge, etc. (Obrovo polje near Šag, Okrugljača near Sibinj and Valpovo, Okruglica and Obrovac near Tenja, Okrugljak near Slavonski Brod, Okrugljak and Okruglica near Jakšić, two Okrugljaks near Nova Gradiška, Okrugljice and Okruge near Cernik, Okrugljak near Slatina, Obrov vrh on the Papuk, Okrugljak near Gradina; and, of course, Okrugljak, Kruge and Oborovo

in or near Zagreb, and Obrovac in Dalmatia).

Still richer is the treasury of early Slavic names linked with mythology as reconstructed by cultural anthropologists. Perun occurs but rarely in Slavonia (Perunika near Orľjavac), but more frequently in Istria and Dalmatia (e.g., at Źrnovnica), as Perun's seats were taken over by Christian saints, but his competitor, Veles (Volos) the Snake is commemorated by numerous place names: Vološka dolina in Baranja, Velišanci near Retkovci and Valpovo, Veleševac near Sisak, Veleškovec near Marija Bistrica, and then endless names such as Zmajevac, Zminjak, Zmijnjak (Dragon or Snake Place), Dol (Hollow), Crna lokva (Black Puddle), Vražje blato (Devil's Mud) near Đakovo, Vražja leđa (Devil's Back) in Baranja, etc. An interesting sequence stands in eastern Baranja – Zmajevac (Dragon's Place), Vražja leđa (Devil's Back), Đavolja greda (Devil's Beam), Vološka dolina (Volos's Valley), Zminjak (Snake Place), whereas on the southern side of the Drava, right across, there is the famous sanctuary of Our Lady (Mokoš weaves by the water, and is often succeeded by St. Mary, and other powerful female saints), and also Bijelo Brdo (White, i.e., Dry Hill – Perun's seat, and also the most famous site of the Early Slavic "Bijelo Brdo" culture). We add also a number of "Holy Water" or "Spring" sites, most numerous around Daruvar (the best known being a triple spring issuing forth from underneath the chapel of the Holy Healers, SS. Cosmas and Damian near Kreštelovac, but also at Daruvarski Brestovac, Oborova šuma, etc., and then at Orolik, Okučani, Emovci and Čačinci). Above Daruvar there is Stari Slavik (Old Slav Place), and we have already mentioned the villages of Treglava and Trojeglava. This sample of a sample was collected on what is less than a quarter of the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

And here are some other place names from Pannonian Croatia which can be related to figures or concepts Belaj has associated with early Slavic myths. Dubrava (according to some, place of the battle between Perun and Veles; not universally accepted) – Oak Forest (Dubovac, Dub, Dubovnik, Hrašće, Rašće, Hrastik, Hrastovac, Hrastovica, Staro Rašće, Rastik, Lug, Lužan, Lužanjak), Bukovje – Beech Forest (Bukevje, Bukovica), Gaj – Grove (Lug), Bor – Pine (Borje, Borovac), Lesje – Hazelnut (Leskovac, Lešće; hazelnut is sacred both to the Germans and the Slavs, and also the first – and the most nutritious nut three – that colonized the North after the last glacial age!), Orah – Walnut (Orehovica, Orašje, Orešje), Gora – Hill, Mountain (Brdo, and so also Staro brdo, Golo brdo, Bijelo Brdo, Dobri vrh, all associated with Perun, so also Perunika, Pogani vrh, Pogana gradina, Svetinjski breg), Dol – Valley (Dolina, Jama, and other names associated with Veles. e.g. Zmajevac, Veles, Glamočine, Glamača /sacred lake to which we shall return/, Zvjerkuša, Zveričke, Zmijačina, Zminjak, Zmijno, Vražjak, Vražnjača, Vražje brdo, Vražja jama, Vražje Oko, Vražje vršje, Vražji do, Vražje blato, Vragića brijeg, Zvirišće, Crna mlaka, Crna lokva, Crna jama, Poganovo polje, Ižišće, Plazur), endless names beginning with Vuk – remember, Juraj was the shepherd of Veles's wolves (Vučjak, Farkaševac, Farkaš međa, Vuka, Vučica); Ivan (Ivanovo Polje, Ivanovo Selo, Ivanova jama, Ivanjski krst, Ivana greda, Ivan dvori, Ivanja Reka,

Ivanovo, Ivanec, Ivanščica; it is of course difficult to decide whether the name Ivan refers to the pagan Juraj/Ivan, to St. John, or to the Order of St. John who held vast estates in Croatia); Mara (Marino Selo, Marijanci, Marjančaci, Marin dvor; as above, it is not always clear whether we are dealing with Ivan's sister, or Our Lady), Juraj (Đurđ, Đurđička, Đurđic, Juranščina; St. George seems to have consistently taken over places associated with Juraj/Jarilo), Triglav (Treglava, Trojeglava, Trorogovac), altars and sacrifices (Trebljevina, Trebljevine, Trebarje, Trebišće, Konjsko, Konjščina, Kutina) (Goss 2009B).

As already stated, taken by themselves, place names are interesting linguistic material. They acquire a new cultural meaning when we discover meaningful interrelationships. I would like to conclude this section by listing some from my recent practice.

### **1. Trema**

*Trema, trem*, is an old Slavic word signifying, according to Katičić and Belaj, a big *blockbau* building, a distinguished building, a tower. The meaning is close to words such as "hram," and "kreml." The modern Croatian word is *trijem* (štokavian) and *trem* (kajkavian) meaning a porch. A place called Trem or Trema would imply presence of a building worthy of a chieftain. So far we have uncovered five such locations in Continental Croatia.

The most extensive is a small, closed high plateau called Trema surrounded by hills to the east of Križevci. It is full of place names which can be put together in a meaningful pattern according to the models offered by cultural anthropologists. There are Dvori and Dvorišće (Court and Courtyard), the place where the big log-built "Trem" would have stood, the seat of the local lord, and the place where the marriage between Juraj and Mara took place. To the northwest, beyond a low beam, there is the hill of Đurđic with the church of St. George (Juraj) the tower of which retains Romanesque detail (Fig. 19). The church stands on a hillfort, and to the north there is an extensive cemetery with an excellent view of the great mountains of northwestern Croatia – Kalnik, Ivanščica and Medvednica. The Ivanščica was a Perun place as demonstrated by the Belajs, the significance of the Medvednica would be discussed in a minute, the Kalnik is unexplored but promising. Another church, of St. Juliana, for this part of the world a very rare Netherlandish Saint, stands on another hillfort to the southeast of Dvori/Dvorište (Fig. 20). St. Juliana is a Saint that triumphed over devil. The church has been believed to be a 16<sup>th</sup> century building, but a new, unauthorized restoration produced a number of elements which may point to a much earlier date (Goss 2008). The third significant point is the Staro Brdo, the highest peak in Trema (226 m), with a great view toward the east and southeast, as far as the Požega Mountains in Central Slavonia, ca. 100 km away. That the name "Trema" referred to the entire plateau is revealed by the fact that a number of other places bear the prefix "Trema;" Trema-Budišovo, Trema-Osuđevo, Trema-Pintići, Tremski Prkos, Tremske



livade. Another interesting name is Vražje Oko, on the beam between St. Juliana and St. George, and also referring to the marshy land in the little valley to its west. Vražje Oko (Devil's Eye) could be associated with Veles, but the Snake probably had its main Trema apartments at Đurđić, where, subsequently, Veles was tamed by St. George, the snake killer.



**Fig. 19**

Trema near Križevci, St. George in Đurđić, 13<sup>th</sup> century and later



**Fig. 20**

Trema near Križevci, St. Juliana, 16<sup>th</sup> century, with traces of an earlier church

In the summer of 2013 I took Professor Katičić to Trem. He was impressed and a week or so later revisited Trema in the company of another outstanding scholar, the late Tomo Vinšćak. At the Vražje Oko they met a woman who told them that there is an old story about a herd of cattle which was swallowed by the earth at the Vražje Oko, which is quite compatible with Veles' tricks. What wonderful confirmation of our reading of the landscape!

St. Juliana who triumphed over the devil could have succeeded Mokoš. If planned investigations confirm our hopes we might have the first well-preserved Carolingian building in northwestern Croatia, bearing a dedication to a saint whose presence here after the Carolingian period would not be very likely. Perun would have, consequently, occupied the highest peak, the Staro Brdo (Old Mountain), on the eastern slope of which one finds a deserted village with traces of a circular building or area. It could be anything but it could be also a trace of a sacred circle – only excavations might tell. But it is significant that right opposite to the Trema hills, on the southern slope of the Kalnik we find two more such circles, at Igrišće (“Place of Rituals”), next to ruins of a church of St. Martin (Carolingian Saint), which appears to consist of an elongated aisle and an added, polygonal (Gothic?) sanctuary, and at Vojakovački Osijek-Mihalj (St. Michael), a stone's throw from an enormous rectangular hillfort with rounded corners, accompanied by traces of a square building. In either case the circles do not seem to have been fortifications as their walls are too thin, and they are in no particularly meaningful relationship to the neighboring buildings, church or otherwise (Goss 2008, 2008C). The same is true of another such odd couple, at SS. Kuzma and Damjan at Kladešćica in the eastern Medvednica, and the circle at

Pogano Sveti Petar (Pogano St. Peter) on the western Papuk, to which we will return. Of course, only the shovel can tell whether we are dealing with a Slavic sacred circle, or with a lime pit or coal maker hut (Goss 2008B).

The view from the cemetery at Đurđić in spite of its low height (209 m) is fantastic and it may have been a relay point between two major systems, of northwestern Croatia and central Slavonia. The view from the top of the Staro Brdo may have been even better, but nowadays it is obscured by the forest which covers the peak. The spot it might have linked up to was another low, but strategically placed hill, once the site of another church of St. George, at Đurđička Rudina west of Daruvar, some 80 km east of Đurđić. It has the view of the Medvednica, Ivanščica and Kalnik in the west, the Bilogora to the north, the Moslavačka Gora to the south, and, most importantly, the Petrov vrh (St. Peter's Peak) at the western end of the Papuk to the east. The significance of the latter will be explained soon.

The second Trema, Trem, Tremi is at the top of the hill above the village of Jakopovec to the south of Varaždin. The hill at a lower altitude also features a well-preserved Romanesque church of St. Jakob (Jacob, James, the significance of the patron will emerge in a moment) on a hillfort, while from the top we have a commanding view of the holy mountain of the Ivanščica, and of Kalnik, as well as of the Drava River flatlands around Varaždin. One wonders if this Trem did not contain a log palace of some early Varaždin “župan.”



**Fig. 21** Zagreb-Gradec, view of St. Jakob, St. Marco and Medvedgrad

Another Trem is found a few kilometers to the west of Jakopovec above the historic Gornji Kneginec where King Emeric imprisoned his brother Andrew around 1200. A tradition of a nobleman's building at this Trem has been maintained by an early 20<sup>th</sup> century mansion at the site of another, somewhat earlier one, which is itself a successor to an old log building where the city of Varaždin kept the city wines. As a King's free borough was a collective feudal nobleman, we encounter also here a link with the distant past (Pascuttini-Juraga and Peškan 2009).

Next we have the Tremski Breg (Trema Hill) above the village of Šumečani to the east of Ivanić, one of the oldest settlements and possessions of the Church of Zagreb in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, along a road to another such ancient settlement further east, Čazma. The vicinity of this yet to be even basically explored Trema features a Đurino Brdo (St. George's Hill), Stupovi (Place of Columns), and what may be traces of a Roman road. It also features a family the name of which is Tremac/Tremci.

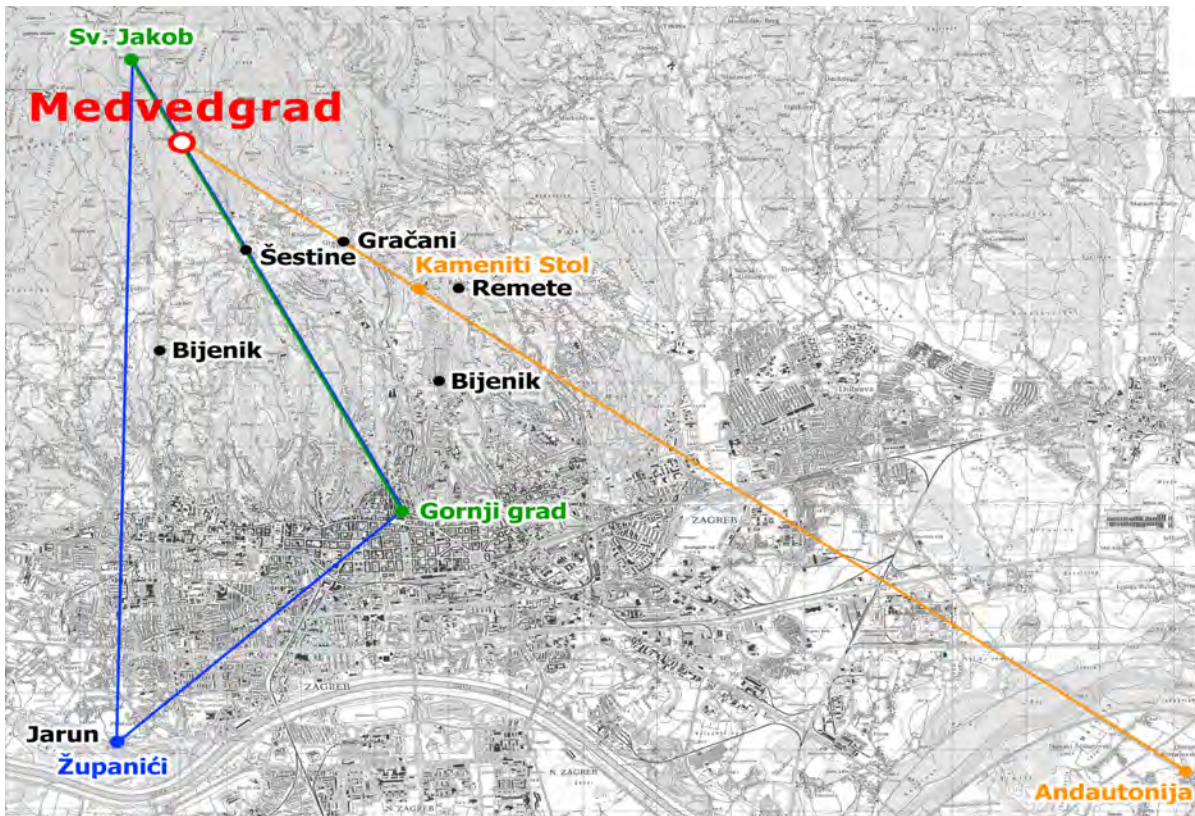
Finally, a hamlet called Trem near Sveti Ivan Zelina (another documented early settlement and possession of the church of Zagreb, late 12<sup>th</sup> century) is mentioned in a document from 1412 (Goss 2009A).

## **2. Sveti Jakob (St. Jacob's)**

Vitomir Belaj has noticed that if we extend the line which goes from the peak of Sveti Jakob (St. James, St. Jacob's) at the western end of the central massif of the Medvednica through the hill of the Medvedgrad castle, we hit the church of St. Marco in the center of the Upper Town – the medieval Gradec – of Zagreb (Fig. 17). Independently, I have confirmed the same. Belaj has additionally constructed a sacred triangle with the third corner at Jarun (Jarilo's place), once on the southern bank of the Sava. The Hill of St. Jakob is also called Veliki Plazur (the Big Crawling Place), and that of Medvedgrad Mali Plazur. Veles may have crawled up from the river trying to reach Perun on the lovely peak of St. James. On his way he was met by Perun at Bijenik (west of Šestine and exactly on the line linking Jarun with the Veliki Plazur) who hit him ("Bijenik" from *biti*, to hit) with his lightning (Figs 21, 22, 23) (Belaj, V. 2007, 2008, Belaj V. and J. 2014, Goss 2008C, Goss and Gudek 2009, Katičić 2008).

The Zagreb Prigorje offers an incredible wealth of material. Professor Belaj has noticed that three key landscape markers, two of which are also supreme works of art – St. Jacob's peak, the Medvedgrad castle on a lower hill below St. Jacob's, and the parish church of Gradec – St. Marco (Figs 15, 17, 21), fall on the same line! My young colleague, Tea Gudek, extended that line looking for "interesting" place names on or close by it (Fig. 22). Across the Sava River, the line goes through the village of Jakuševac, where the newest research has located the long sought for Cistercian Monastery (Dujmović 2015). Behind the Medvednica, the line passes through Jakovlje and Igrišće. At Jakovlje (Jacob's Place), a long scattered village on a raised beam, it





**Fig. 22**

Extending the “Belaj’s triangle” in the Piedmont of Zagreb

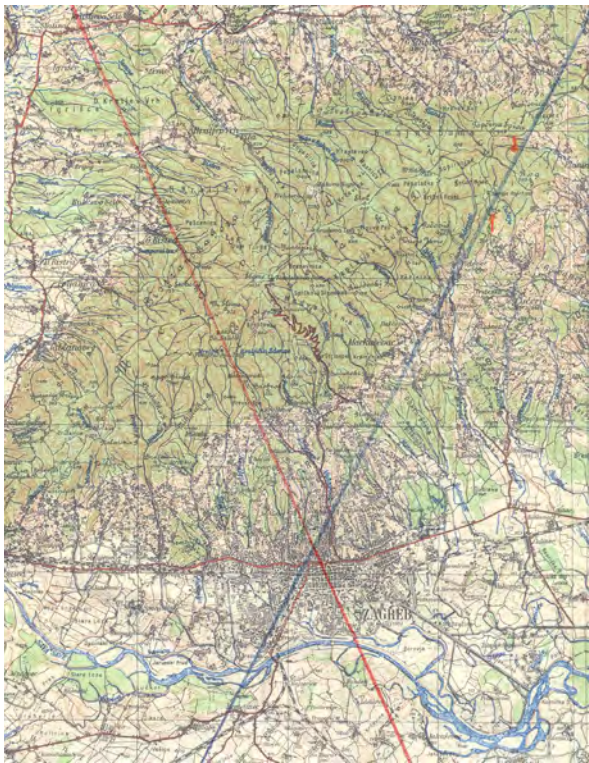
(Vladimir P. Goss, Tea Gudek)

passes through a hill, once surely fortified, bearing a recent chapel of St. Dorothea, a very rare Saint in Croatia. As she is a patron of fruit and flower growers, having miraculously produced apples and roses in mid-winter in the course of her martyrdom, here a Christian Saint must have landed on top of some ancient fertility Goddess (Flora?). At Igrišće, another scattered beam village just to the north of Jakovlje, it passes through the highest point, a steep hill at the extreme eastern end of the beam, an ideal spot for a small fort and/or sanctuary. Igrišće is an interesting place name. At the Kalnik mountain, as we have seen, it appears within a very indicative context, i.e., at the place of the ruined chapel of St. Martin (single nave with an added, polygonal sanctuary, which indicates a Romanesque if not earlier date for the nave), in front of which there are traces of a circle made of stone, the walls of which seem too thin to be a fortification. As “Igrišće” means the place of dancing, thus of rituals, we may have here traces of an old, Slavic, or even pre-Slavic sacred spot Christianized by the untiring and in northwestern Croatia omnipresent St. Martin (Goss and Gudek 2009). There is also an Igrišće near Dubrovnik, in Jesenice in Slovenia and under the German name, Spielfeld, on the Austrian side across from Maribor. It is also known in Belarus poetry. It is very common in Ukraine and it refers to a place where the youth from neighboring villages got together, danced and laid ground for family ties. Medvedgrad is of course an obvious eye catcher but it does not appear on any of the triangle corners (Fig. 23). We looked for another spot that may belong to the Med-



**Fig. 23**  
Medvedgrad, around  
1230-40 and later

vedgrad orbit, and to the east, within the Remete area we found an interesting place name – Kameniti stol (Stone table, Celtic Dolmen, i.e. table of stone). We drew a line from Medvedgrad through the Kameniti stol and it ran exactly through the church of St. Michael in Gračani, an excellent early medieval position, and then continued across the Sava to pass through the area of the ancient Roman Andautonia, today the village of Ščitarjevo (Figs 22, 24)!



**Fig. 24**  
Key organizational axes of the Zagreb Piedmont  
(Vladimir P. Goss, Tea Gudek)

Gračani is also an old sacred spot. Its medieval name, *Mons Isce* (The Witch's Mountain), has been retained by the name of the main street running along the ridge of a narrow hill bearing the church and the old settlement confirming that there used to be a pagan sanctuary which was tamed by building a church of the Archangel. The line runs on through the Remetski Kamenjak which like a wall surrounds most of the Remete area, the next stop on our travels (Goss and Gudek 2009).



### 3. The Sacred Hoof of Remete

Until about thirty years ago the charming village of Remete at the northern end of the Mirogoj hill was one of the best kept secrets of the Zagreb Prigorje. Then it was discovered by the affluent and the powerful of the previous and the current regime, and was horribly overbuilt in a taste revealing the worst type of *nouveau riche* mentality.

The serenity of the plateau that was to become known as Mirogoj was well sensed by the city fathers of Zagreb who decided by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to set the main Zagreb cemetery there, and by the architect who built the main structures, Hermann Bollé. By selecting Mirogoj they were absolutely in line with ancient history. The 20<sup>th</sup> century Zagreb city fathers did even better. By building the complex of the Crematorium to the north of the ever expanding cemetery, they may have sat on top of a very old sacred spot itself.

The village of Remete used to rise on a gentle terraced slope above a small creek (today mostly set underground). This enclave of peace and security is surrounded on all sides, except on the south, by a hoof-formed ridge pointing northwards – Remetski Kamenjak (The Stone Ridge of Remete). The ridge falls precipitously down toward the Gračani Creek to its west and to its north toward the narrow valley of Dolje between the foot of the Mountain and the Remete-Mirogoj Plateau. At the ridge's northeastern point there is a short extension toward the east-northeast, culminating in the hill of Gradište (Hillfort), probably a prehistoric site continuing into the Middle Ages. The site is totally unexplored, and will remain so as it is densely covered by new and offensively ugly multistoried homes for the rich. The view from the southern flank over the Sava plain is fantastic rivaling that from Medvedgrad or St. Jacob's. To the south, at the foot of the Gradište hill a beautiful valley opens up and at its center there is the famous monastery of the Pauline monks where traces of a large medieval church have been discovered next to and partly underneath the Gothic (rebuilt) monastery church. This means that the discovered foundations belong to a pre-Gothic period, which, we may learn when the results are published.

Mirogoj-Remete did not attract only those looking for earthly and everlasting peace. A communication tower was built in the 50's just to the south of the Crematorium (then not yet in existence), on the highest and northernmost spot of the Mirogoj cemetery area (Fig. 25). It is a strange building recalling a Romanesque keep, and it "controls" a transversal gap separating the Mirogoj area from the hoof of Remete. The view from the "keep" is again wonderful – of Medvedgrad and St. Jacob's, central Zagreb area and beyond. I truly admire the architect's intuition as he may have built his tower at the best spot to protect the access to the hoof of Remete, and we are quite convinced that some protective structure and/or observation point stood there thousands of years ago.

And now, finally, let me introduces the element which stands behind this entire story. The area within the hoof of Remete, along the former creek's bed within the Fučekov jarek (Fuček's Hollow), i.e., the large section of the Crematorium's memorial gardens is marked on maps as *Kameniti stol*.

Kameniti stol, as already stated, means Stone Table, and is a literal translation of the Celtic word dolmen (dol – table, men – of stone). So somewhere within the area of Crematorium, or closely nearby, there may have been an old, Celtic cult place with a dolmen, most likely shielding a tomb, presumably an impressive structure as it gave name also to the road running from the Crematorium to Remete, and even beyond, up the defunct creek's ending in dirt and cheap shrubbery in an uninhabited area called Pustoselina (Deserted Village), possibly the core of the old Remete settlement, and practically at the heart of the Remete hoof. Unfortunately, this is where the story ends, hopefully just for the time being. Interviewing some of the Crematorium builders revealed no information about some earlier layers. However, one should also consider the place of the Kameniti stol and its surroundings within the larger picture of the Zagreb cultural landscape. As one travels along the narrow edge of the precipice of Remetski Kamenjak, wonderful vistas open up of Medvedgrad and St. Jacob's, and of the ridges and villages in between, especially of the already above mentioned village of Gračani. From the Kamenjak St. Jacob's assumes a silhouette more compatible with those associated with the Holy Mountain, i.e., close to an ideal pyramid. If we look onward to the northeast, we see the end of the Central Medvednica massif, the heights of the Lipa-Rog, and its drop-off toward the important gap of Laz. An unavoidable question imposes itself: is the Lipa-Rog complex in a way an equivalent to St. Jacob's at the western end of the Central Massif? And if so, is the Remete hoof, or, more precisely, the Gradište hill a relay point as Lipa-Rog cannot be seen directly from either St. Jacob's or Medvedgrad? Additional interest to the Remete hoof was brought by Professor Pleterski who suggested that the Kameniti stol had nothing to do with the Celtic word, but with an early Slavic one, *stolec*, *štulec*, German *stuhl*, meaning a chair, a throne. This might imply that Remete was a seat of an early Župan of Zagreb (Goss and Gudek 2009)!



**Fig. 25**

Zagreb, Crematorium, Kameniti stol at the entrance into the "Hoof of Remete"

#### 4. Lipa-Rog and the Stari Kip

One of the most famous pilgrimage places in Croatia is Marija Bistrica, at the northern end of the narrow gap linking up the Cismontana and Transmontana from the dawn of history. An important Roman, medieval and modern road passes through the gap, marked by a mountain village of Laz, belonging to the same verbal family as the word pLAZur, we encountered when talking about Medvedgrad and St. Jacob's. Marija Bistrica (Mary on the Clear Creek) is separated from the Zagreb Cismontana by the last heights of the Central Medvednica. Most prominent within this section is the massif of the Lipa-Rog (Linden and Horn). Marija Bistrica is overlooked also by a lower, elongated hill known as the Tepčina Špica (642 m), another mysterious place hiding traces of an old settlement, possibly a fort and a church, and of course, never explored. It gains in interest as one recalls that the *maiordomus* of Early Croatian kings bore the title of "Tepći."

The church at Marija Bistrica may go back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1334 the parish of St. Peter was recorded there. A miraculous statue of a Black Virgin (datable ca. 1500) was discovered in 1684 (in the wake of a great Liberation war which moved the Turkish border hundreds of kilometers to the east!), and at that point Marija Bistrica became a pilgrimage spot of choice and is still so today. As of 1731 the church has been dedicated to St. Mary of the Snow. The name Laz may bring to mind Veles, the Great Crawler. It is interesting that some other places associated with Veles were taken over by St. Peter, one of which we will discuss shortly.

Several pilgrimage trails lead through the eastern parts of the Medvednica, the road through the Laz gap, but also trails through the Lipa-Rog group from the villages of Markuševac, Vidovec, Čučerje, Vugrovec, and Planina Gornja using various secondary gaps from Gorščica on the west to those inside the Lipa-Rog massif. One such road, or more precisely two, interest us here. One issues forth from Vidovec and joins the other, issuing forth from Čučerje a few meters south of the tiny chapel of St. Mary of the Snow, a resting place on the pilgrimage trail next to a fine, cool mountain spring. Just south of the spot where the two trails meet there is a hill called the Stari Kip (The Old Image, possibly statue).

The hill, which slopes rather gently toward the north and east, and falls more steeply toward the south and particularly the west, consists of two peaks. The northern one is steeper and more prominent and its top is covered by rocks which form several small terraces on the southwestern side. The central rocky plateau, a few meters wide, could have provided a good base for the "Old Statue." The other peak, some fifty meters to the south is less steep and nicely rounded with a circular hollow at the top. Again, something may have been made there by human hands, maybe the base for the "Old Image Statue." Well, take your pick. The northern hill may appear more prominent, but the southern hill commands a fascinating view down the ever

widening channel of the Čučerje valley, and then, as in the case of Medvedgrad and St. Jacob's, or the Gradište at Remete, over the entire Zagreb area, Western Bosnia, and Central Slavonia.

The Stari Kip can be identified as a gentle ridge offset against the flank of the Lipa-Rog from the viewing terrace at the top of the medieval Lotrščak tower in Gradec in Zagreb. Although it is only 519 m high its positioning is very close to that of Medvedgrad, a prominent spot within a "half pot," only Medvedgrad is more dramatic and prominent. To its left stands a more dramatic elevation of Stražnjec, a rocky and inhospitable peak (627 m). Recent research has indicated that Stražnjec may have been the place of an old fort, possibly of the never truly located *Castrum Nicola* recorded in 1201 (Dujmović 2015). Indeed, one might claim that by its pyramidal form clearly visible from the Lotrščak, and its prominence, the Stražnjec should carry more weight than the Stari Kip, but the latter has the advantage of being accessible and clearly visible. One could hardly imagine a human settlement on the Stari Kip or any kind of fort. But as a platform for an "old statue" it is quite convenient.

The Lipa-Rog massif offers some problems, and also some attractive possibilities. The problems are of cartographic nature and have to do with nomenclature. The massif has two slightly pointed peaks (749 and 709), the western one taller, and the maps disagree as to their names. Some call the Rog the lower, some the higher peak. The lower one is also known as Strmina (Precipice, as it falls steeply off toward the east). Sometimes one peak is called Rog, the other Lipa, the name otherwise reserved for the entire massif. One of the best experts on Croatian mountains, Professor Poljak, claims that both of the horns are called Rog, which seems logical: the mountain of Lipa has an image of a two-horned creature.

According to a letter by Professor Pleterski, places named Rog, Rogla, Rogatec, etc., are usually dedicated to Veles, and in Christianity to the devil. However, Pleterski also warns us that "the heavenly bull has horns, too." Lipa (Linden) could be seen as the "axis mundi," as one of the holy trinity of trees: oak, beech and linden. Linden has excellent characteristics. It produces honey, medicinal tea, its wood is never attacked by worms and no mouse can bite through it. "Symbolically, the entire complex may represent the Lipa as a wife of the Rog," suggests Pleterski.

This confirms our assumptions that the massif of the Lipa-Rog is in a way an equivalent to St. Jacob's on the other end of the central massif. So we have drawn a line from Marija Bistrica, through the higher of the two Rogs and the line went straight through the Stari Kip (Fig. 24). We seem to have a segment of an axis linking up, the two sides of the mountain just like the pilgrimage trails. That the linkage is intended is further confirmed by the dedication of the small chapel mentioned above to Our Lady of the Snow. Standing some 100+ meters to the north of the closer of the two Stari Kip peaks, it definitely confirms the area as sacred, and as belonging to the



world of Our Lady of the Snow. The fact that the Stari Kip is just above the intersection of two important trails linking two neighboring villages with the trail to the Transmontana, further reinforces the sacredness of the area, as intersections usually do. Something standing on the Stari Kip, possibly not so heavily forested in the past, could have been seen from as far as Gradec in Zagreb, and certainly from the peak of the Rog! If we continue our line, it indeed passes through the Gradište in Remete, the eastern flank of the Fučekov jarek at the Crematorium, and somewhat to the north of the center of Gradec and St. Marco's! One may feel very jubilant about this, but one should temper one's enthusiasm. Namely, the late date of the pilgrimage to Marija Bistrica would speak for a late date of the underlying "sacred landscape." Yet, while tempering our enthusiasm, we would like to point out that Marija Bistrica, on a well-protected hill right at the northern entrance to the Laz gap, must have served as an important observation and fortification point ever since people started to move from one side of the mountain to another, i.e., since time immemorial! As such it certainly had an aura of holiness, too. We have at least two documented instances of Veles being succeeded by St. Peter, at Veleševac near Sisak (St. Peter's parish and church) and at the Petrov vrh on Papuk. It is just possible that the original medieval settlement of Bistrica had its church dedicated to St. Peter to annul the impact of its snakelike predecessor. While leaving to the better versed to work out the details of the underlying myths, we seem to have indeed identified two backbones of the territorial organization of the Zagreb Prigorje going back to a fairly distant past. It is worth noting that Perun had to face Veles even in what is today almost the center of Zagreb. There is an unpaved road, Zmajevac (Dragon's Trail) running up to the Mirogoj hill from the end of Rockefeller Street. At the end of the trail, on the plateau of Bijenik, Perun confronted Veles, and chased him back into the marshes at the spot where there is today Zvijezda Square (Goss and Gudek 2009).

I was born on the Mirogoj hill, at Rockefeller st. 40, some 300 meters to the south of Zmajevac. As a child I already noticed the violence of thunder and storms in the plateau crossed by Bijenička Street, the Street of Bijenik, i.e., the Place of Hitting, as I was to learn at a very mature age. I have experienced thunderstorms all over the Zagreb area, but nothing quite compares to the Bijenik storms.

In the summer of 2013 I was invited to a party in the Mikulići village area of the Šestinski Dol (Šestine Valley). The village itself is very old, recorded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Around 9 PM we decided to walk down to the creek. As we left the house, a lightning bolt jumped out from Medvedgrad, right to the north, followed by an overwhelming clap of thunder. We retreated inside and right on time, as a thunderstorm comparable only to those on the Mirogoj hill descended upon us. When it was over, some ten minutes later, and as peace and quiet returned, my wife observed that Perun was really mad. It occurred to me then that we were in fact on the Bijenik, on the line of Veles' approach to St. Jacob's from Jarun, according to Belaj's Zagreb triangle! So we witnessed another frustrated attempt of the Snake to crawl up to the Heights. Now



tell me that old Gods are just a figment of one's imagination!

## 5. Budinjak



**Fig. 26**

Budinjak, excavations of a tetraconch at a Slavic sacred place

In Belarus folk poetry Veles is often assailed by Perun's lightning bolts while hiding in a shack called in Belorussian "budiniak." Morena Želle recently discovered traces of a tetraconch building at the Budinjak hill in the Žumberak (Fig. 26). It was underneath a later Greek-Catholic church of St. Petka, the saint which succeeds Mokoš in Eastern Christian traditions. Do we have here the entire Slavic Trinity together – Veles hiding in a Budinjak, Perun releasing his lightning, while Mokoš watches from the sideline waiting for the outcome. By the way, as I have shown elsewhere, a tetraconch stands at the beginning of Christian Slavic architecture in stone in a number of western Slavic countries – in Poland, in Bohemia (?), in Moravia, and, now, possibly in northwestern Croatia, if we ever manage to date the Budinjak tetraconch with any precision. Now, if the Slavs did not migrate then

how to explain the appearance of the word "Budiniak" in two such far-flung places as Belarus and Croatia, and in a very similar mythical context (Katičić 2008, Belaj, V. 2007, Goss 2009, 2009A, Želle 2007, 2007A, Slupecki 1994, Polaček 2006).

## 6. Pogano Sveti Petar

As the final stop of our trip let us return to Western Slavonia, and recall the villages of Treglava and Trojeglava. The reference to the three-headed pagan Slavic god may also bring to mind an extremely interesting and relatively well-preserved building, a unique trichonchal chapel standing in the middle of a deserted cemetery on a high plateau between the villages of Toranj (Tower) and Strižičevac; Torre and Strigevazzo of immigrant Italians. It is a tall building consisting of three broad, contiguous conches, without a square entrance bay which regularly makes its appearance in trichonchal buildings at the Croatian Coastland and elsewhere (Fig. 27). The entrance is placed at the south between what one may call the side conches, whereas the central conch, the

altar area, is directed toward the north. Its high quality mature Gothic detail of door and window frames, tracery, and interior supports (preserved up to the springing of the vaults) points to some powerful and cultured patron, probably a member of the Pukur family, who rose to the peak of their career in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The building probably contains traces of an earlier church. Here is an architectural form which irresistibly recalls the three-faced sculptures of pagan Slavic gods. The adjacent fields have provided no surface archeological material, which may mean that the building was not associated with a settlement. Did it arise on the site of an early Slavic sanctuary? As a truly significant piece of Croatian medieval art the Toranj triconch should be an object of a thorough architectural and archeological study, and it deserves a scholarly monograph (Goss 2008, 2009A, Goss and Gudek 2009).



**Fig. 27**

Toranj near Pakrac, triconch,  
14<sup>th</sup> century and earlier

The northern conch of the Toranj directs our eyes toward another crucial spot of the western Slavonian landscape, the westernmost tip of the Papuk mountain where, in a wide saddle between two peaks, the Petrov vrh (614 m) and Pogani vrh (639 m), there is the site of Pogano Sveti Petar (Pogano St. Peter). The site (“Crkvište” – i.e., “ruined church”) is a sizeable medieval village (parish is mentioned in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century), with ample traces of stone structures, residential and possibly fortifications. Its main feature, retained in local memory (although the area was inhabited by orthodox immigrants ever since the 16<sup>th</sup> century!) is a circular mound too small to be a chapel or a meaningful fortification tower, and sunk into the ground. It appears to have stone foundations. We may have even identified the locally notorious “inscribed rock” which nobody could read. One could possibly make out something that looks like a badly damaged *crux gemina*, but this is far from certain. The site, of course, needs a thorough investigation (Figs 16, 28, 29).

Below the site is the area called Dubrave, then Glamočine, an extremely interesting name to be commented upon later, and Ivanova jama (Ivan’s Hollow). To the east there is a lower peak called Crna mlaka (Black Puddle, 506 m). Together, one might say, a very nice example of the “Belaj landscape” (Belaj, V. 2007, Goss 2008).





**Fig. 28**

Pogano Sveti Petar on the western Papuk, from left to right:  
Petrov vrh, Crkvište-Pogano Sveti Petar, Pogani vrh



**Fig. 29**

Pogano Sveti Petar, Slavic sacred circle (?)

The Petrov vrh (St. Peter's Peak), the lower of the two prominent heights (614 m), the last of the peaks as the Papuk collapses toward the Daruvar plain, was probably Veles's domain, to be tamed in post-pagan times by the Prince of the Apostles (as already mentioned a church of St. Peter stands also in Veleševac near Sisak). The undulating configuration of the descending ridges indeed gives an impression of a snake crawling up, and then down, toward the Pogano Sveti Petar gap. It will attempt to disturb the divine peace of Perun the Thunderer, sitting on the higher Pogani vrh (Pagan Peak, 639 m), a lovely ideal pyramid. However, when Perun noticed Veles's crawling he intervened, and hit him in the area of Dubrave, as some would have us believe. Ivanova jama (Ivan's Hollow) introduces another moment of the myth. Juraj has already escaped from Veles, crossed the water and become Ivan, to marry his sister Mara. Where is Mokoš? South of the central scene we have a hill with the ruins of one of the most important, largest, and most beautiful Benedictine monasteries in Croatia, St. Margaret in Bijela, a powerful female Saint, in whom one may see a successor to Mokoš. The appearance of the site of St. Margaret (by the way, as St. Juliana, a female Saint that triumphed over devil) within a Slavic "sacred triangle" would be truly amazing.

It is equally amazing how the "stage" of the "Divine Battle" is seen from every important medieval site in Western Slavonia within the range of tens of kilometers. If the complex could be explained as we just did, then the artist of genius staged his drama indeed in front of a full house. The Petrov vrh is visible from the Kalnik, and on clear days from the Ivanščica, as also its relay point, Đurđička Rudina. It is visible from St. Jacob on the Medvednica, which thus communicates in a roundabout way with the Kalnik and Ivanščica, closing the huge circle of the Houses of the Lord in the western and central portion of the land between the Sava and the Drava Rivers.

In March 2009 we took Professor Belaj to Bijela and Pogano Sveti Petar. Two days later we received his verdict. The Petrov and the Pogani vrh, and St. Margaret form a perfect "sacred triangle" (Fig. 16)! Moreover, Belaj eliminated one point of doubt we had had, and that is the absence of a water course between Mokoš and Veles, as the Bijela flows to the south of the monastery hill. There is a small creek to the north of it, called, believe it or not, Boževac (The Creek of Gods)! And this name has been preserved even 500 years after the Croatian population left the beautiful upper Bijela valley fleeing the Turks! This is not any more just an academic matter. Huge ruins of the monastery stood less than a century ago. It is finally being excavated and what has been found so far is in harmony with the monumental scale of what we know about Bijela from old drawings and photographs.

In passing, the link between St. Margaret and Bijela/Bela seems to reoccur elsewhere! The parish church at Margečan to the southeast of Ivanec in Transmontane Croatia is dedicated, as the name tells us, to St. Margaret. It stands above the creek called Bela, and the same name is borne by a castle on a steep hill further southeast

above the Bela, which, as the entire area, belonged to the Hospitallers. Another such combination exists in Slovakia. Why? We still need to find out.

In the summer 2013 we took Professor Katičić to the western Papuk. The “expedition” in addition to Professor and Mrs. Katčić and my wife, consisted of Dr. Goran Jakovljević, my long time project associate from the Museum of the City of Bjelovar, and our field scout, Mr. Dario Ambrožić from Daruvar. Our main objective was to show Professor Katičić the area of Gornji Borki, a large field of ruins nobody had ever explored.

This forest wilderness has been inhabited by Serb immigrants ever since the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and was a forbidden land to such an extent that the locals even prevented the Yugoslav army from setting up its hunting camps there. No Croat or Catholic “infidel” was allowed. Our friend Dario was an exception though, as he had a friend in Gornji Borki, and thus was able to collect the local lore before the Serbs left almost to a man in 1991.

As we drove back to Daruvar, Dario embarked upon a story of the Serb settlement in the Papuk. They first settled on the Lisina peak (Lisina, the “Dry Peak” is also a mythological site, another home to Perun), but then, one night, there occurred a terrible thunderstorm in the midst of which a burning dragon fell from the sky and onto a haystack. It started a huge conflagration and the people, frightened, ran away to settle in Gornji Borki. It was wonderful to observe Professor Katičić as his face lit up hearing the perfect description of the Clash of Gods retained by an immigrant population almost half a millennium after the original Croatian settlers had massively left the area fleeing the Turks and their Serb retainers. What it means in terms of providing credibility to our investigations of the western Papuk need not be emphasized.

This is a small portion of the huge collection of data that is being collected. But even that small selection suggests to me the following:

The place names and key landscape points were selected by a speaker of Slavic language. This language is different from languages spoken previously in Dalmatia and Pannonia, being Latin, Greek, Illyrian and Celtic, i.e., the locally spoken languages we know enough about to realize the difference between them and the Slavic. There is no trace of Slavic language left in the previous, Roman or Pre-Roman period. Thus it must have been brought here and imposed upon the land and the native population. Striking analogies, something we shall return to shortly, show that similar tongues, Slavic, were spoken within a wide area from the Laba to Rus, from the Baltic to the Adriatic. The wealth of the early Slavic, or re-Christianized, names is enormous, and in many cases meaningful patterns reflecting an early Slavic worldview (mythology) could be established. We need to expand this corpus, a task for generations of researchers (Belaj, V. 2007, Belaj and Belaj 2014).

Acculturation of a landscape, creating of a meaningful cognitive geography does not



happen overnight (Cunliffe 2008). Whoever did it had spent some time, at least several decades, before the process was fully under way. Obviously, it was done by people believing in a different set of ideas and values from those of Christianity. Briefly, they were pagan. This paganism was firm and ingrained, and its traces have survived in customs and in the landscape until today. Thus we are dealing with the speakers of a Slavic tongue, participants in a Slavic pagan worldview, who had not been present on our territory in previous periods. They had spent some time here before they converted to Christianity, a process which went on along with the assimilation of the natives, their culture, and, as genetics teaches us, their blood.

When and where did they come from? We can find some answers to this question also in the landscape.

In 2000 Mladen Ančić demonstrated how it is possible to show for some Slavic-speaking groups where they had come from. Obodriti (Obotrites) came from the Laba area (Polabia) to eastern Pannonia, Delminjani/Delminzi (Delminians) and Lievljani also from Polabia to what is today Western Herzegovina (on the Glamoč question, a few words later), Bužani from the Bug River to Lika in the Highlands (offspring of Buga, one of the seven mythical foremothers and forefathers of the Croats). Viš(lj)evići from Wislica on the Vistula in Poland settled in Southern Dalmatia (Dukes of Hum). To this laudable effort of Ančić's we can add: Moravians to Moravche (Moravče or Moravce) near Zagreb, to the Highlands (Moravice), to Sirmium (Morović), and to what is today Northern Serbia (the Morava River region) – these Moravians need not be, though, the Moravians from what is today the Czech Republic, hut Slavs abiding by a muddy river or marshes; Sorabs to the Highlands (Srb) and to Serbia; (G)lupoglavi from Silesia to Lupoglav near Zagreb and to Istria; Volynians to the Banovina region (Volinja) from Volynia or from Wollin (Poland); Dulebs from Ukraine or Bohemia to the area to the northeast of Zagreb (Dulepska and Dulepski potok near Vrbovec) (Goss 2009A).

The offspring of Kosences (Kosić?), another of the seven forefathers settled next to Buga's children in Lika (Kosinj). Tuga, Buga's sister may have left her trace in the Croatian noble family of Tugomirići. Finally, the royal tribe, of Horovatos (Croat, Hrvat) captured the best lands in the hinterland of Zadar, which since time immemorial have been called "V Hrvatih" (At the Croats). They came from the "White Croatia" as again witnessed by a dozen ancient place names linked to the Croatian name. This list need not be perfect, nor is it complete. But it keeps growing. Additionally one should note place names such as the Odra (a river near Zagreb and in the Baltic), Žitomir, a village in the eastern Medvednica and Ukraine, Kozelin (Koželin, Kuzolin), an important archeological site in the eastern Medvednica and also Koszalin in Poland, Požega in Croatia and Poszoga near the Baltic (Goss 2009A, Slupecki 1994, Lowminaski 2004, Delonga 1996). That the White Croatia is not a figment of someone's imagination has been quite successfully demonstrated by Majorov. In particular, we are referring to his information that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization service recorded groups of people from the area of Galicia who for immigration purposes declared themselves as the “White Croats” (Majorov 2012). There is also very interesting and quite recent anecdotal information by the late Tomo Vinšćak. On his research trip to Galicia in 2012 he met some people who asked him where he was from, and when he said he was Croatian, they said: “So, you are one of ours that went South 1,500 years ago!”(!).

Ančić has placed the arrival of all those groups within the context of the anti-Avar campaigns of Charlemagne. The King of the Franks needed soldiers, soldiers need land, and would turn settlers after the victory. What we see are splinter groups of larger Slavic ethnic bodies the appearance of which in what is today Croatia is best associated with Charlemagne’s martial endeavors (Ančić 2000).

Particular attention should be paid to (G)lamo/ač. Some scholars have associated it with the Delminians (Dlamočani, hence Glamočani), but this is probably not so. Glamač (Lamatch) was a sacred lake of the Polabian Slavs, and Slupecki has proposed that there was a Glamač, Lamač, Glamoč, etc., in each major political or territorial unit representing the central holy spring of the tribe. Delminzi (Delminians) lived next to the above mentioned Polabian Glamač. They reinvented it upon their migration to Dalmatia’s hinterland. The place name otherwise occurs from Polabia, through the Carpathians to Slavonia and Herzegovina (Goss 2009A, Slupecki 1994). But there is more to our Glamoč. It is a word and concept borrowed from the Langobards as clearly narrated by Paulus Diaconus. A certain whore gave birth to seven children and threw them into a fish-pond. King Agelmund passed by and poked at the infants with his spear, until one of the babies clutched the weapon. The king pulled him out and declared his heir. As he was pulled out from a “lama” (pond) he was called Lamisso (also Laiamicho or Lamicho). A fine example of cross fertilization between Slavic and Germanic mythologies! (Goss 2009A, Foulke 2003)

One should also notice that Florin Curta has raised the well-known doubts about the origin and migrations of the Slavs. Yet Curta himself lists a number of names from the Eastern and Southeastern Balkans which are not just Southern Slavic, but find their echo as far as the Polabian Slavs, e.g., Dragubites = Dragoviti, sg. Dragovit, Ardagastus = Radogost, Peiragastus = Pr(ij)egost, Dragameros = Dragomir, to list just the ones which are the most obvious and easiest to unravel (Goss 2009A, Curta 2001, 2006).

The first mention of the Croatian name on the territory of Croatia is most likely in an incomplete inscription from the royal estate of Bijaći near Trogir – “...atorum et iup...” which could hardly be interpreted otherwise than “...Croatorum et iupanus...,” i.e. “Ego X Dux Croatorum et Iupanus Y.” The style of the fragment points to the time around 800 as it forms a part of a large and ever growing corpus of analogous material from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina which Ante Milošević has been success-

fully collecting. The epigraphy is compatible with such a date. Although not 100% proof, the Bijaći fragment is a very strong argument for the appearance of the Croats in Central Dalmatia under the aegis of the Carolingian expansion around 800, as recently suggested by Mužić (Goss 2008B, Milošević 1999, Delonga 1996, Mužić 2008).

At a presentation of a book toward the end of 2008, Professor Igor Zidić asserted that what our art history lacks are collections of facts. If we do not know the facts then how can we expect foreign scholars to know them? Only nowadays is Tomislav Marasović publishing a corpus of Pre-Romanesque architecture in Dalmatia. We have a fairly good corpus of Romanesque sculpture in medieval Slavonia; also of Baroque painting in Istria, of Pre-Romanesque inscriptions on the territory of Croatian principality, a proto-corpus of wall-paintings in Continental Croatia – laudable but isolated and unrelated efforts. We have no corpus of interlace sculpture, of medieval painting on wood, of Istrian frescoes... to mention some areas where the absence of such a body of information is sorely felt. In this study we have heavily relied on our corpus of sites of earlier medieval art between the Sava and the Drava. It contains a list of 565 sites and keeps growing daily (Ratkovčić 2014, Goss 2012A).

What all this tells me is that there were two migrations toward the South of the people speaking Slavic language and worshipping Slavic gods; one within the framework of Avar conquest, another of Charlemagne's anti-Avar wars, thus around 600 and 800, basically what the mainstream of Croatian history has always maintained. The second migration of "splinter groups" brought here also the bearers of the Croatian name, a limited but well trained and efficient group of mostly military people which emerged as the core of a future nation. As genetics tell us, the Slavic layer was thin but not negligible, and culturally tenacious and politically and militarily powerful enough to impose itself upon the native majority. It was also open enough to start successfully assimilating assets of the Mediterranean culture it had encountered in the new country within a rather brief period of 200 years, as marvelously demonstrated by Katičić in his monumental book *Litterarum studia* (Katičić 2007).

Now let us go back to our three-header from Vaćani (Fig. 13).

The models and the means of transmission have been accounted for above. It could be an image of a Slavic pagan idol. Its form and technique is compatible with the provincial Roman and post-Roman sculpture in Dalmatia. It would be useful to know more about the circumstances of its discovery, but unfortunately this information is lacking. The likelihood that it was a work of pagan, pre-Christian art is rather high. Having described the basics of the cultural, political and spiritual context, one may say that the Vaćani sculpture by its topic (a multi-faced religious object) fits with the Slavic pagan tradition, whereas it also fits with the process of assimilation of some aspects of the local tradition, as confirmed by a reasonable skill of carving. It would be going too far to declare it a symbol of an ongoing assimilation, but it would be

equally wrong to summarily reject it as a possible witness of that process. It is also a witness of the fact that we still have much to learn, and of how many corpora of facts we still have to collect (Goss 2009A).

One such corpus that seems to be in the making is that of the oldest early Slavic fortifications between the Sava and the Drava Rivers. They are mostly known as “gradišta” (pl. of “gradište”), a word associated in many Slavic languages with old forts. In Croatian scholarship it has become customary to consider “gradište” as a medieval fort, whereas such terms as “gradac” or “gradina” are reserved for prehistoric ones (Tkalčec 2004). But any more serious probing would reveal that the term does not help dating, as such words as “gradište,” “gračišće,” “gradina,” “gradec,” “gradac,” “gradečak,” “gračec,” “gradiš,” etc., can denote a fort from any period. Nor is the building material a safe guide, either. It is, again, customary to associate with “early medieval gradišta” forts made of mud and timber, but wooden forts were constructed along with stone ones as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Also some of the forts identified as gradišta were built from durable materials. Some wooden structures are not early medieval “gradišta” but precisely what the proponents of this name see as the opposite to them – noblemen’s castles. If we assert that the gradišta are usually round, then we should classify some monumental noblemen’s castles in durable materials as gradišta, e.g., Korodvar, Levanjska Varoš, Đurđevac. I use the word “gradište” for such primarily earlier medieval complexes which combine an obvious fortification character with that of a settlement containing, for example, suburbia, religious buildings, protected utilitarian buildings and areas, and residential areas. In short, old fortified settlements. Therefore, for what I consider to be an early Slavic fort I am using exactly that word – fort. And to prove that they are really early Slavic we would need to dig down beneath the lowermost cultural layer – something that has not been done for a single one of them. Mud forts with traces of timber structures are today most often dated to the late medieval period, on the basis of surface findings of the 13<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Of course, we have no idea what



**Fig. 30**  
Vojvodske livade on the  
Bilogora



lies underneath. The type of fortified settlement we are dealing with here has been recognized as Perun's court in Slavic folk poetry (specifically in Belarus), where it is described as a rounded fort with several rings of pointed palisades, decorated gates and protected suburbia and utilitarian areas (Fig. 30) (Katičić 2011). Fine examples of the type could be seen in the forests and marshes of Western Slavonia, especially on the Bilogora between Daruvar and Bjelovar (Orlov Grad, Duhovi, Betlehem, unnamed complex near Mala Trnovitica, Pavlovac-Kolo, etc.). Of course, none of them has been even minimally explored, and their datings are highly hypothetical. But one must start somewhere.

Exactly for that reason we have devoted quite a few pages to that relatively brief span of ca. 200 years. It was necessary to do so as this entire section represents new research, undoubtedly controversial and open to questioning. Indeed, questioning is invited from all collegial and constructive sources. Also, as already noted, that period before the first suspected appearances of the Slavic element in the Roman Illyricum ca. 600 through the conversion of the Croats ca. 800 incorporates the greatest change that happened in the area throughout history with powerful impact both concerning genes and culture. Without those two centuries of *change through confrontation* there would have been no *change through integration* either. The latter was made possible when, as claimed by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (Goss 2006), the Croats, who had come under Borna's father, accepted the cross under Borna himself (Jurčević 2011).

### **From Borna and His Father to Cvijeta and Matija**

I cannot emphasize enough the word "change," as the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages was the greatest change that ever occurred on Croatia's territory. It codified the ethnic, religious and cultural characteristics of the people that would inhabit Croatia until the present day. It also defined a political orientation and set foundations to total and cultural ecology.

Rome failed to completely urbanize and de-barbarize Illyricum. The extra-urban territorial organization certainly provided a number of fixed spots to the new lords. Yet Rome did not exterminate the Dalmatian and Pannonian *rus*; neither had the next wave of occupiers been able to completely obliterate the urban component of the cultural landscape they rushed into.

Nikola Jakšić has demonstrated how the Slavs settled in the deserted Roman villages in Dalmatia, which was not the case in the interior (Jakšić 2008A). For the newcomers the walled city and the endless sea, the golden Sun and the dark green of the cypresses, represented both a large scale physical and intellectual challenge. But it was not totally without its charms. Trpimir, a prince (nowadays we know that he was considered a King) of a not so negligible country at the gate of the Ancient Dalmatian



cities, had to acquire silver for church vessels from the Archbishop of Split (Bužančić 2012). Obviously, the city had something to offer, and once – it is difficult to precisely state when – the initial animosity subsided it became a point of attraction.

Since the rape of the Sabine women (and, of course, since the beginning of the world) the male prisoners were executed, but women were preserved. The conqueror, mostly a nomadic male, needed women in order to assure the continuity of the tribe. Doubtless, “our guys” greedily grabbed the native women, both on the Continent and at the Coast, which is clearly revealed by the genetic picture of the contemporary population. The woman stands for culture. Europa comes from the East. Helen must be returned to Greece. Where the ancient tradition was less interrupted, and this is closer to the coast and the urban centers, the process of acculturation was faster.

What were the “Dalmatian cities” of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> century? They formed a disconnected chain of small, degenerate communities owning maybe some extra urban land just next to their dilapidated walls. They were forced, as we are told, “to live from the sea,” from fishing and some basic trade. Politically they depended on the only power which can to some extent heal isolation by having a potent navy – the Eastern Roman Empire (Toma 1960, Bužančić 2012, Jakšić 2000, 2008). In cultural matters, with the exception of Istria where some territorial continuity had survived, the cities did not have much to offer. One adapted ancient structures (e.g., St. Andrew de Fenestris in Split), one carved crude flat panels (Zadar, Split), and any improvement was limited to décor (Goss 2006B, 2010, Bužančić 2004, Jakšić 2008). Actually, we are back to the flat, non-figure sculpture of pre-Roman times or of the Roman rural tradition. One such stone cutter may have produced our Three Header from Vačani for a Slavic patron. Professor Prelog lucidly called such phenomena “passive negation of the Antique.” I have called it Pre-Pre-Romanesque as I tried to define it in my books and especially in my contribution to the recent, first, great survey of the history of Croatian art (Prelog 1954, Goss 2006B, Goss 2010).

But the most important thing that the city had to offer was a new God in the spiritual, and the art of administration in the secular sphere. The moment the ruler of the newcomers had grasped that both could be of use, the phase of change through confrontation was over succeeded by change through integration. From Borna’s Father to Borna!

I am of course aware of the great debt we owe the people who lived here before us. They *are* us. Don Ante Škobalj whose monumental work would for a long time to come remain a huge source of material and a huge challenge to Croatian humanistic studies discusses two orientations, two “parties,” in the Early Slavic Croatia – the “Latin” and the “National.” Had the Latin option prevailed, says the author, the Croats would have become a Romance nation. They would speak a Romance language and their culture would be definitely of the Mediterranean character (Škobalj 1999).

This did not happen. Our culture is to a considerable extent “Mediterranean,” but we are not a Romance nation (except by the genetic picture whereby we have about 50% of local pre-Slavic blood), we do not speak some “Dalmatian” language. Language and culture are markers of cultural genetics, and by those markers the Croats are Slavs.

Almost 1000 years since the first appearance of Tuga and Buga is the period of that change through integration. It means a gradual rapprochement with the West, Western Christianity, and the principles of western humanism and democracy. In terms of territorial organization, the urban centers would grow from practically nil and acquire a new importance, but the *rus*, the countryside would remain a significant factor. At the end of that millennium, around 1500, we would witness some brilliant examples of integration of the city and the countryside, a preview of what might have happened had the Turkish riders stayed away from the Balkans.

In the change through integration a major role was played by the Carolingian thrust toward the Southeast and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of choice of the upper classes around 800. In this framework and in the period between ca. 780 and 900 one should review the extraordinary phenomenon of the Croatian Pre-Romanesque. The integration means creating a new layer of cultural landscape which could be best read at the Coast and its immediate hinterland. The old Dalmatian centers which started to slowly revive in the course of the 8<sup>th</sup> century stood as the source of ideas and models. But when those models, as in the case of the so-called “free-form churches,” appeared on the Croatian territory, the outcome was different. For example, St. Pelegrin at Savar and St. Viktor at Telaščica, both on the Dugi Island, followed a type of Early Christian square memorial chapel such as appear in scenes of the Resurrection in the Early Christian ivories representing the tomb of Christ. However, on the Croatian territory at St. George in Ravanjska that model was applied to a longitudinal rectangular space covered by a miraculous longitudinally elongated



**Fig. 31**  
Ravanjska, St. George, 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century  
(photo: Andrija Mutnjaković)



**Fig. 32**  
Omiš, St. Peter in Priko, end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century  
(photo: Andrija Mutnjaković)

dome (Fig. 31). The churches of the so-called “South Dalmatian type” are based on a model of the early Christian *memoria* recorded by Bramantino, but, for example, St. Peter in Priko in Omiš is not a mere copy of an old model, but for its size a very complex space with an equally complex body (Fig. 32). Here, as in many Pre-Romanesque buildings of the eastern Adriatic the curvilinear spaces – apses, domes and semi-domes – are embedded within rectilinear masses, which may be a concession to the tradition of wooden architecture. One should add that there are no two churches of that type which look exactly the same. The model is accepted in general lines, and then it is creatively varied in relation to the natural and human ambient (Gvozdanović 1978/82, Goss 1996, 2006B, 2015, Katičić 2007, Karaman 1930).

Two groups of buildings seem to be especially important for the understanding of the cultural landscape of the Croatian Pre-Romanesque – the polyconchal buildings, and the buildings with a westwork or a western annex. In Pre-Romanesque Croatia and Dalmatia, there are 12 six or eight lobed buildings on record, quite a number for a relatively small territory. Polyconchal sanctuaries, however without roofs, are known from other Slavic countries, as the one excavated at Perun in Novgorod: eight conches around a central rounded area with the main altar and the statue of the God. From travel literature of the time it is known that the Slavs carried their Gods in sacks on their backs and they could quickly set them up in a circle around the tallest idol in the middle and adore them. The memories of numerous sacred circles, as well as two, four and six lobed structures were certainly not lost throughout the migration. Once the Slavs found themselves in the Baptistery of Zadar to receive Christ in its late Antique, six lobed interior, they must have recognized an architectural form they had known in the old country. So to the polyconchs in Zadar (two) and in Trogir (one) one has to add those on the Croatian territory – at Poljud near Split (Fig. 33), at Bribir, Pridraga, Kašić, Brnaze, Kakma, Škabrnja, Ošlje and Rogačiči in Bosnia (Goss 2009, Slupecki 1994).



**Fig. 33**  
Split, Poljud, hexaconch  
of the Holy Trinity and  
Mihovil, around 800



The other important group is larger longitudinal structures linked to the higher strata of society. I identified that group in my dissertation in 1972, and this has remained an unchanged view until today. After additional valuable studies by my colleagues they are today dated to the late 9<sup>th</sup> and early 10<sup>th</sup> century (Gvozdanović 1978). These buildings possess a western tower – a westwork – the key invention of Carolingian architecture, and the most important subgroup is that of the buildings with rounded buttresses mostly in the Dalmatian Highlands, in the heart of the Early Croatian state (St. Cecilia, the churches at Lopuska glavica and Bukorovića podvornice, all in Biskupija near Knin), the Savior's Church at Cetina (Fig. 34), St. Mary in Blizna, and the Cathedral at Biograd). With the exception of Cetina and Blizna the remnants are scanty. In addition to totally idiosyncratic rounded buttresses, never satisfactorily explained, these buildings, especially the larger ones (St. Cecilia, Cetina, Biograd) are remarkable for complete vaulting of large areas, exceptional for 9<sup>th</sup> century Europe. The westwork, the *turris* of both the heavenly and terrestrial Lord, is a significant addition to the building, and to the European cultural landscape. Its appearance has never been successfully explained, either, as there are no precedents in Classical architecture for the powerful vertical element which courageously enters into a dialogue with the surroundings replacing the modest, horizontal and low lying Early Christian basilica (Goss 2010B, Jurković 1986-87, 1997, Petricioli 1995).

From travelers of the times, mostly Arab, we learn that Slavs, so also the White Croats beyond the Carpathians, used to build semi-buried huts, which possessed a superstructure with some kind of a tower. It is not impossible that here we have the source of the westwork, yet, nobody has so far been able to plausibly reconstruct such a Slavic or Germanic tower. It is not insignificant that in Croatia the tower appears in a group of buildings which form Croatia's greatest contribution to the history of European Pre-Romanesque. As in the case of the multi-lobed buildings, one may recall the principle of national memory grafted upon the most modern innovations of the West (Goss 2006B, 2010B). One should add that some ten years ago a large, aisled, 9<sup>th</sup> century building with a spacious westwork was discovered at Lobar in Transmontane Croatia (Filipec 2008). It was



**Fig. 34**

The Savior's Church at Cetina,  
late 9<sup>th</sup> century



richly adorned with interlace sculpture. This indicates that the cultural landscape in Continental Croatia did not depend on architecture in wood only. And at the same time the cultural landscape of Dalmatia, a land of stone *par excellence*, did not depend exclusively on stone as demonstrated by the 8<sup>th</sup> century wooden beams from St. Donat in Zadar bearing décor comparable to that of the interlace sculpture in stone. This interesting phenomenon has never been fully explained either (Vežić 1985).

Thousands of monuments and fragments of interlace sculpture scattered all along the eastern Adriatic coast from Istria to Albania, belong to the tradition of the European West. The interlace sculpture motifs are quite compatible with those used in wood carving, but quite a few of the motifs are used in the decorative arts of Roman Antiquity. Among interlace sculpture examples we find well-carved and well-balanced examples, but also such that recall carvings in wood and metal, and the art of textile. The flood of interlace sculpture is yet another evidence of domination of the rural, decorative spirit in Early Medieval Europe. In Croatia there are some stunningly accomplished pieces – Branimir’s inscription from Muć (888), or the choir-screen from Koljani (9<sup>th</sup> century) (Fig. 35), and in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the interlace décor and its esthetics are the foil for the reappearance of the human and the animal figure (Goss 2006B, 2015, Jakšić 2000).

A world class example are the two panels of a choir screen from St. John (Sv. Nediljica/Sv. Ivan) made probably somewhat before the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 36). They show the early life of Christ from the Annunciation to the Baptism. The frame of the scenes is made by arcades filled by, but also cut by human figures made in the technique of interlace sculpture. The relatively free relations between the figure and the frame as the former on several spots cuts across the latter used to be offered as evidence of a “growing Romanesque freedom,” but this is hardly likely. Those “misunderstandings” between the frame and the figure point exactly to the Pre-Romanesque unable to integrate the novel element of figuration. The Romanesque would have



**Fig. 35**  
Split, MHAS, Koljani panel, 9<sup>th</sup> century  
(photo: MHAS)



**Fig. 36**  
Zadar, Archeological Museum, pluteus form  
the St. John (Sv. Nediljica) Church, Infancy of  
Christ, first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (photo: IPU)

forced the figure strictly inside the frame, as it did in the *early Romanesque* sculpture of St. Lawrence, also in Zadar, a few decades later (Goss 2006B, 2010C, Petricioli 1960).

What do we conclude from this, admittedly, rather small sample of most prominent early Croatian monuments? The cultural landscape of Croatia both pagan and Christian Pre-Romanesque is very rich and it still needs a lot of research. One should note two stages: the first wherein we move through confrontation from the Roman, Mediterranean and predominantly urban civilization into the world of the barbarians, of the village, and the European Continent; and the second of the change through integration signifying reception of Mediterranean tradition in as much as it was available. The latter is more evident at the Coast, the former on the Continent where it still needs a lot of exploring. The first stage defined the territorial organization of smaller political and religious units (“župas”), typified by scattered settlements in rural zones linked to some more solid points, fortified, if one may say so, both in a physical and spiritual sense. Here again we must warn that a lot of those spots may have been taken over from rural tradition of Prehistory and Antiquity. Valuable materials in those terms have been collected by Don Ante Škobalj for the area of the Poljica, and it remains valid, *per analogiam*, even for a wider area (Škobalj 1999).

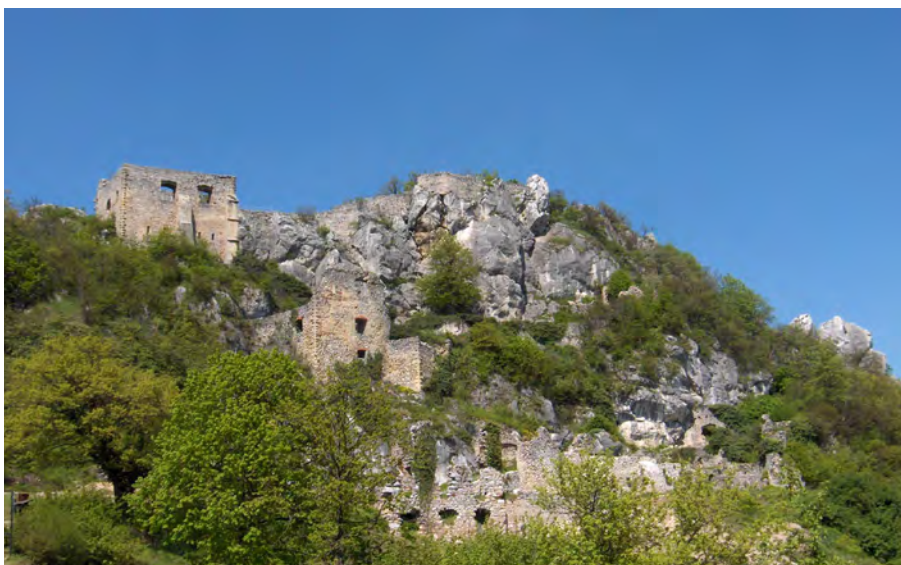
Innovation is more present at the Coast where the Slavs formed their first cities, Biograd and Šibenik, and where through Christianization and acceptance of building in permanent materials one could reach deeper into the already rather transformed Antique tradition. Yet, as in the case of the language, the Slavic element (or the element linked to the non-urban and non-Mediterranean layer of earlier cultural landscapes) is also noticeable. This is an area which needs thorough future exploration and discussion.

The Pre-Romanesque is one of the golden periods of Croatian culture. Building upon what was already there in terms of the natural, cultural and human factor, we witness a creation of a cultural landscape very well adapted to the tradition and spirit of the newcomers. The urban factor was minimized, but its allure did not go unrecognized, which secured its future. Still the big things happen primarily in the countryside – royal estates, fortresses, religious centers (Bijaći, Klis, *Villa regalis* – Biskupija, Knin, Bribir; monasteries at Rižinice, St. Peter in Selo, St. Peter at Supetarska Draga, St. Stephen of the Pines near Split). The urban monasteries, primarily in Zadar (St. Krsevan, St. Mary) and Biograd (St. John, St. Thomas) having attracted the hearts of the fresh converts, spread into the Croatian countryside through grants or purchases of the land. Their charters and cartularies are a real treasury for a study of the territorial organization of the Coastland. And this is based, as archeology confirms, on the type of scattered settlements and estates which had their own small cemeteries. It is rather strange that only today one such complex – at Orlić – is finally being systematically explored (Petrinec 2009).

The key to the Continent are still poorly known areas of Komarnica, Kalnik (Fig. 37), Komor, etc., centers of old religious and political units (“župas”). The picture that has been slowly emerging is not much different from what we generally find in Early Medieval Europe, in particular beyond the limes, in Scandinavia, Germania, Baltic lands, British Isles, in Pannonia and beyond the Carpathians. Foundations of a rural culture were laid there, we may even call them ecological, with a brilliant sense of defining space by creative selection of main orienting points – let us just recall such phenomena as the Pre-Romanesque churches at Dubrovnik islands, or on the slopes above the Salonitan field, or on the hills in the Zadar hinterland, or the positions of the already mentioned extra-urban monasteries; or the placement, friendly and functional, of the mud-and-timber forts on the Bilogora (Fig. 30) and in the Drava River flatlands. In spite of all those, one is tempted to say, tectonic changes, that system based on the beauty of the land recognized by the newcomers, can be gleaned even today.

When next time in Budapest, please climb the Buda hill and turn toward the South. When next time in Knin, climb up to the Fortress and look toward the North. Having done so, you will understand the fate of Croatia between ca. 1100 and ca 1500.

Around 1100 southeastern Europe went through the process of political enlargement. This happened under the aegis of the Hungarian Arpadian family, but it could have also happened under that of the Croatian Trpimir family and King Dmitar Zvonimir. To understand what happened we have to backtrack a little. Up until 1000 the eyes of Croatian rulers turned primarily to the Sea and Dalmatia. From the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century they started turning toward the North until such time that a distinguished Slavonian, Zvonimir, was elected to the throne of Trpimir’s line to become the most powerful king of the “National dynasty.” This was made possible also by the fact that the Pannonian started looking toward the sea. By this I mean both the



**Fig. 37**  
Kalnik, old castle of  
Veliki Kalnik, 12<sup>th</sup>  
century and later

Croatian and Hungarian Pannonians. The two of them actually made a marriage alliance – Zvonimir married Jelena (Ilona) “Lepa” (the Beautiful), sister of the Hungarian king Ladislas I (Szakács 2006). In my opinion the objective was clear: together Hungary and Croatia would be stronger, and they could forever secure the much desired coastland cities.

Now imagine that Zvonimir’s offspring outlived their Hungarian relatives; that Zvonimir’s son, Prince Radovan, had not died before his father; that Princess Klaudija had not disappeared in the mists of history; and that Zvonimir’s life had not been cut short by a rebellion. Then imagine the kingdom of the lands of Zvonimir’s Crown from the Adriatic to the Carpathians with its center at the vertiginous fortress of Knin.

Could you?

Hardly!

When the Arpadian looked toward the South and the sea from his well-protected seat in Esztergom or Buda, he saw a spacious plain slowly rising toward the chains of mountains which, on the other side, collapse into the waves. There at the mountains’ southern foot stood the fabulous Dalmatian cities which would open the world to the Arpadian. The Arpadian did not just imagine those fairytale lands. Some Arpadian rulers descended to the sea, some even more than once, to gain a firsthand experience of the blue sea, the blue sky, and the golden sun, to return to the green and mist of his native Pannonia (Klaić 1976).

According to legend, Zvonimir was killed by his enraged retainers, because he had proposed to lead a Crusade. Interestingly enough, according to another legend, Ladislas was also meant to lead the First Crusade. As if the legend, both the Croatian and the Hungarian version, equated the two – either one would perform what the Southeast needed – a political union to be able to cope with the pretensions of the Empire, the Venetians, the Normans, the Greeks. History proved to be on the Arpadian side (Szakács 2006).

The Croatian version does not seem to reveal what might have been the true reason for the rage of Zvonimir’s retainers. But quite obviously, they could not stand a ruler who, in a revolutionary way, turned his eyes toward the Continent! From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century Croatia was squeezed between the sea and the Dalmatian Theme on one, and the mountains on the other side. It was not easy to break out of that circle. Zvonimir understood that if Croatia, the Southeast, was to survive as a thriving power, it needed to get out of its geographical bondage, and he paid for it with his life. The enlargement, initiated by the marriage of Zvonimir and Jelena could not be stopped, though. By the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Croatia, Dalmatia, Slavonia, Bosnia, Lower Hungary (Pannonia), Upper Hungary (Slovakia), and Erdely (Transylvania) joined together to form the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen, the crown worn



by Ladislav and his nephew and heir, Koloman. Croatia was too constrained as to offer a view toward the North that could produce the needed enlargement of the Kingdom. Had Zvonimir inherited the crown of St. Stephen, he himself would have moved to Esztergom and become a Hungarian King first of all. The first attempt to move the center of the Croatian Kingdom toward the North failed. So the Arpadian looks toward the South, across the Drava River, and dreams of the warm climes of the endless sea. Still, it means that Croatia made a step toward becoming also a Central European country. By the end of the period we are discussing, Dalmatia would have been lost, and the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen would have become a respectable Central European power, not even imagining that after the brilliant rule of the above mentioned Matija (Matthias Corvinus), it would fall victim to a new power rising in the East, the Ottoman Turks.

The coveted Dalmatian coastland never truly integrated itself into the new political entity. Dalmatians, but so also the Croats, retained their ancient liberties and acquired new ones. Never did they rebel against the Arpadian – something noticed by the Hungarian historians as well – as their privileges were better than those of the Arpadian's Hungarian subjects. So while the Arpadian looks toward the Sea, the Dalmatian communes and the Croatian gentry enjoy their autonomy. That the idea of looking toward the South was not forgotten is revealed by the monumental attempt by Herceg (Duke) Koloman and Bishop Stephen II of Zagreb to create a large unit within the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, consisting of Slavonia, Croatia, Dalmatia and Bosnia, its political capital being the new city of Čazma, its religious one Zagreb, where the archbishop would have moved from Split. But for the Tartar invasion of 1242 and the death of the Herceg, they would have probably succeeded (Toma 1960, Goss 2007A, 2010).

The political power in Croatia remained with the gentry, but the cities, navigating carefully among various political factors – the Arpadian, Venice, the landed aristocracy, their own communal pretensions – kept growing (Toma 1960). They were that link to the world, to a New Europe that confidently turned toward the world, toward the South and Southeast launching the Crusades, colonizing her own internal wastelands as well as those of Eastern Europe, promoting the Church Reform in the Investiture Struggle. It created the “Renaissance of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.” All this is reflected in the Southeast with some delay, until King Bela III in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century turned decisively toward the West (Goss 2007A, 2010).

One may legitimately ask: what about the Dalmatian cities?

They turn toward the Adriatic, its West and South, not the North though, where Venice, their mortal enemy lurks ready to crush them. Strong ties with Apulia, the Mezzogiorno in general and the Marche continue up until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They are the source of Dalmatian *Podestàs*, such as Gargano de Arscindis from Ancona in

Split, and major ecclesiastical figures – Treguanus of Florence, the bishop of Trogir, Bernard of Perugia, and Roger of Apulia, archbishops of Split, all in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Masters from the Cathedral at Trani worked on the Cathedral of Dubrovnik around 1200; from Trani also came Master Otto who worked in Split in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The church of St. Mary on the island of Mljet was built according to the Apulian scheme. Apulian influence is also reflected by the Cathedral at Kotor (Toma 1960, Goss 2010).

Cities, however, also looked toward the North seeking protectors among the restless Croatian, and also Bosnian and even Serbian nobles. Some of the best men from the powerful Kačić and Šubić families acted as *podestàs* of Split, but so also did Matej Ninoslav, Ban (viceroys) of Bosnia, and Duke Petar of Hum. Among the archbishops of Split we find Hungarians – Guncel and Hugrin – while Archbishop Bernard of Perugia was the tutor to the son of King Emeric. When the King and the Queen descended to the sea, the cities curried their favor. Trogir and Split fought incessantly for the grace of King Bela IV and his wife, Mary Lascaris (Toma 1960, Goss 2007A, 2010).

The golden age of Dalmatia was the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a period of great, colorful historical figures and exceptional artistic creations. Let us not forget, with the exception of Zadar which Venice considered worth destroying with the help of the Crusaders in 1202, there were no particularly great urban agglomerations. But when there was an important community project the cities were quite capable of finding funds, patrons and top artists. Here are some of them.

Andrija Buvina, the master of the wooden doors of Split Cathedral (1214) was seemingly an archaic sculptor, but he was an accomplished narrator, skillful master of composition and inventive in iconography (Fig. 38). His are the best preserved Romanesque wooden doors in Europe. Buvina is also the first Dalmatian artist who, probably on the instructions of Archbishop Bernard, applied his artistic language to a public task – creating a poster combating heretical ideas. The heresy of the Cathar type was rife in Dalmatia and its Bosnian hinterland in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the West, the anti-heretical propaganda was a great



**Fig. 38**

Split, Cathedral, Buvina doors, 1214

(photo: IPU)

theme in public art already in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Gvozdanović 1978/82, Goss 2010).

In that Buvina was succeeded by Master Radovan at Trogir (working for Bishop Treguanus), and by the Master of the Annunciation at Split, possibly working for the Paris student, Archbishop Hugrin.

Master Radovan, author of parts of the portal of Trogir Cathedral (1240) was an accomplished artist of a broad spectrum of means of expression, who left his trace also in Italy (Cathedral of Parma, St. Marco in Venice, and also possibly in the French Royal Domain). His art is a superb summary of everything the Romanesque had done and its triumphal last hurrah (Fig. 39). He was an epic bard of profound, Homeric depth and width, in narration, in the use of formulas, and in the innovative use of the traditional Romanesque repertoire. Yet, he was not Gothic. The action follows the surface, the image is built from parallel planes and the figures are set up in emblematic groups. Recently, Arturo Calzona attributed to him the design of Parma Baptistery citing analogies with Diocletian Mausoleum in Split (Goss 2008D, 2010, Calzona 2004).



**Fig. 39** Trogir, Cathedral, lunette by Master Radovan, 1240 (photo: IPU)

The tower of Split Cathedral is contemporary to Radovan's activity in Trogir (Fig. 40). Although somewhat sloppily rebuilt around 1900, the tower remains the tower of all Romanesque towers. Just like Radovan, it is the pinnacle of everything Europe had done on the theme of towers – in Lombardy, Burgundy and Southwestern France. The groups of King Bela IV and Queen Mary Lascaris on the lions' backs were made by an artist of genius inspired by the art of the court of Emperor Frederic II in Southern Italy (Fig. 41). Today the originals are at the City Museum of Split replaced at the bottom of the tower entrance by replicas. The panels of the Nativity and the Annunciation, once possibly altar frontals inside the Cathedral, nowadays built into the



tower, are works by another great artist, from Radovan's circle whom he recalls by the voluminous treatment of human figures while he surpasses the Trogir master in vitality and iconographic complexity. The Annunciation (Fig. 42) in particular is one of the most complex works of medieval sculpture in general, and it may owe its consummate iconographic design to the learned Archbishop Hugrin (1244-1248) (Goss 2007A, 2010).

As one can see, the cultural landscape of Dalmatia in the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries is not simple. The complexity is also the reason why some individual monuments are so specific and unique. This is however nothing really new. The Romanesque in Dalmatia announced itself triumphantly by way of the tower of St. Mary in Zadar (1105-



**Fig. 40** Split, Cathedral tower, 13<sup>th</sup> century and later



**Fig. 41** Split, the City Museum, Queen Mary and her court, around 1240



**Fig. 42** Split, Cathedral tower, Annunciation, around 1240-50 (photo: IPU)



1111) (Fig. 43). As in Trogir and Split, the Mediterranean elements cross-fertilize with the continental ones creating another masterpiece difficult to account for. The tower usually called “Lombard” is in fact a combination of Lombard elements but it also possesses a powerful sculptural effect as opposed to essentially “painterly” Lombard campanili, as for example, ever staying within Croatia, the tower of Rab Cathedral. The Zadar tower recalls also the areas beyond the Alps, first of all the Reform Burgundy. The paintings of King Koloman’s lodge at the tower point in the same direction. The key figures behind the tower’s construction, Abbes Vecenega, a scion of the highest Zadar gentry but also of the Croatian royal house, and King Koloman were ardent supporters of the Reform, and Vecenega had the tower built to celebrate Koloman’s triumphal entry into Zadar in 1105 (Goss 2010, Marinković 2003-04). To make it clear, Dalmatia of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries is not crammed with masterpieces. Remember, Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia suffer from demographic insufficiency. But the best creations are truly outstanding and unique, linking the Mediterranean with the Art of the lands beyond the Alps, even the Royal Domain, of the Venetian lagoons and the imperial Mezzogiorno. The late Romanesque monuments of Trogir and Split are paradigmatic works of a great European style which triumphantly stepped down from the artistic throne exactly on the Croatian coastline. As we are going to see, something similar happened also in the Panonnian hinterland (Goss 2010).

Agglomerations that could be considered towns in a social and economic sense appear also in Pannonia in the course of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Some of them become so even politically in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, having obtained the privileges of King’s Free Boroughs (Fig. 15). Thus one might surmise that the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries in Croatia were a period of essentially urban culture. This would be wrong. The Croatian-Dalmatian-Slavonian countryside lived an intense cultural life continuing the old theme of confrontation of *urbs* and *rus* in which the latter knew very well how to hold its own (Goss 2010).

The “demographic insufficiency” of the Kingdom, its continental stretches in particular, improved somewhat already by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century when the first colonies of the “Saxons” were formed at the foot of the Carpathians. The first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the reign of Andrew II, is the great period of this immigration of that West European rural element into the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen. Those “Saxons” were a mixture of Frisians, Thuringians, Flemings, Saxons... a productive society of freemen, and they



**Fig. 43**

Zadar, tower of St. Mary, 1105-11

(photo: IPU)



**Fig. 44**  
Novi Mikanovci,  
St. Bartholomew,  
around 1230-40

settled in particular in Transylvania and on the Pannonian slopes of the Carpathians (Spiš), but they left their traces also in Slavonia. They were accompanied by several architectural forms which can be traced to the European Northwest – the rounded tower, at St. Bartholomew at Novi Mikanovci (around 1240) (Fig. 44), the only instance of such form within the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen; the church with a rounded apse, vaulted choir square and unvaulted single nave, with or without a tower at the western end – the *zusammengesetzter raum* of German scholarship – Our Lady at Morović, and the so called “Saxon church“ at Novo Brdo in Kosovo (both ca. 1300); and the “Frisian décor” at St. Mary in Bapska (early 13<sup>th</sup> century). The confirmation of the Saxon presence is also revealed by a new spatial organization of rural settlements, regular placement of buildings and estates along a spacious “gmajna” (commons), closed by a church on one and by a fort on the other side (Grabrovnica-Hat, Nijemci). This type of village was known in the Northwest already in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and it became a badge of the Saxon diaspora in Pannonia and the Carpathians (Goss 2010, Goss and Jukić 2008).

The migration of the Saxons fits with the general opening up of the European East and Southeast within the framework of the Renaissance of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Another factor of the same process were the monastic orders, primarily the Cistercians or Premonstratensians, as well as the military orders (Templars, Hospitallers, Teutonians, Sepulcralians). They cleared the woods, dried up the marshes at the same time as they eradicated heresy and stamped out the remains of paganism. They built in durable materials and introduced sophisticated architectural and figured décor (Topusko, Gora, Glogovnica – Fig. 45) and wall-paintings (Novo Mesto Zelinsko). All these new phenomena cross-fertilize with the traditional elements of the cultural landscape, as nicely revealed by the little church of the standard type, aisleless with a rounded apse, of St. Martin at Lovčić on the Dilj mountain, with its two layers of high quality wall-paintings, one Romanesque, the other Gothic, once certainly a center of a long forgotten “župa.” It is precisely the Slavonian *rus* which indicates that upsurge of

creativity due to cosmopolitan presence as, for example of a Reims type décor at Topusko (by the way of Pannohalma in Hungary), or of the perfect *à crochet* capitals at Gora. Just like at the Coastland, on the basis of the elements of foreign, high quality cultural landscapes, but also the *genius loci*, a fantastic style came into being, not any more Romanesque, never truly Gothic, but wonderfully adapted to the local ambient and tradition. This style was elaborated and spread by the royal workshops of Esztergom, formulated by the project of Esztergom Cathedral carried out by Bela III and Archbishop Hiob in the last third of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It took root in the Pannonia Savia around 1200 as witnessed by two capitals, one from the Cathedral of Zagreb (Fig. 46), the other from the Royal palace in Esztergom dated around 1200. The two are not just alike, they are the same. Although we know next to nothing about the monumental Zagreb Cathedral completed at the very beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the style of the royal workshops became a hallmark of the already mentioned great political project by Herceg Koloman and Bishop Stephen II, first of all at the new capital-to-be, Čazma, in the course of the second quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The still standing church of St. Mary Magdalene, a reduced replica of the Cathedral at Esztergom, was embellished by decorative and figured sculpture by the royal workshops (Fig. 47). A large rose of the Bamberg type was added most likely after the Tartar invasion of 1242, when the church became the mausoleum of Herceg Koloman. The imperial motifs – Bamberg received large endowments from Emperor Frederic II in the 1230s – thus



**Fig. 45**

Gornja Glogovnica, No. 61,  
relief of a Sepulchralian (Godfrey of Bouillon?),  
around 1200 (photo: AMZ)



**Fig. 46**

Zagreb, Museum of Croatian History,  
capital from the Cathedral,  
end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century  
(photo: HPM)



appear in Slavonia just as in Split at about the same time. The French element was splendidly reflected by the chapel of the Medvedgrad castle near Zagreb (Fig. 23), in the pair of column biting lions behind the chapel's altar, carved with such skill and taste that they appear as if they had stepped down from a page in the sketch book of Villard de Honnecourt (Fig. 48). Another master, working in the same chapel for Herceg Koloman before the Tartar invasion, knew the atlantes of the Imperial Mezzogiorno. The art of the Koloman-Stephen circle was reflected also in the *rus* – as witnessed by high quality decorative fragments of sculpture from Vinica, Novo Mesto Zelinsko, and Sveti Ivan Zelina. Might one venture to say that in the figures of the King and Queen at the entrance to the tower of Split, the two great cultural landscapes, both imperial but wonderfully grafted upon the local cultural landscape, overlap (Goss 2007A, 2010, Goss and Vicelja 2006, Goss and Jukić 2007)?

This is not the end to the complexity and multifaceted character of the cultural language of Dalmatia and Pannonia of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The urban foreign element – the “hospites,” are another key to the upsurge of Slavonian urban centers (Varaždin, Križevci, Koprivnica, Zagreb, Samobor, Virovitica, Petrinja, Perna, Vukovar). Among their inhabitants there are also Slavs, but as we learn from their char-



**Fig. 47**  
Čazma, St. Mary Magdalene,  
around 1230-40 and later



**Fig. 48**  
Medvedgrad, Castle Chapel, column eating lion,  
circle of Villard de Honnecourt, around 1230-40  
(photo: AMZ)



ters, both in Dalmatia and Slavonia, the city is the home of a foreigner who, however, domesticates rather quickly. Royal charters were bestowed also on agglomerations which did not have urban character proper, one might say, “half-cities,” such as Jastrebarsko. At the same time some places which were obviously “cities” by population and occupation structure went without royal privileges (or they received them much later) remaining in the hands of the Royal House or of powerful nobles (e.g., Požega as Queen’s property; Našice in the hands of a powerful noble house; Sveti Ivan Zelina, Ivanić, Đakovo, and Čazma belonging to a bishop).

That the freedom of the city was relative and should be viewed under the condition of the time is shown by the fact that the cities entered their cultural landscape as collective feudatories with extramural estates and subjects. This secured at least a *pro forma* compliance with the system. For this reason precisely the mature and late Middle Ages did not witness a triumph of the urban form (neither did Rome!), but a replay of the well-known ecological pattern – *urbs:rus*, confronting city, village (be it scattered, planned, with a fort, a parish, etc.), nobleman’s castle (possibly also with suburbia), extramural monastery (also possibly with a village or suburbium), etc. Following the pattern of the early medieval “eights” we find adjacent forts and parish churches (Gudovec, Lužanjak), a principle which also rules the core areas of big cities, e.g., Zagreb (Fig. 21). As the city is a feudal landlord, the image imposed upon it by the legislator is that of a country seat. The metropolis or urban zone is not a form compatible with Southeastern Europe, the Carpathian basin, or the eastern Adriatic. One may recall that in the period we are discussing Vienna or Budapest were not even bishop’s seats. The only urban center which may be seen as having metropolitan pretensions was Dubrovnik, part of the Kingdom as of 1358. Zagreb, as well as the majority of Pannonian dioceses comes into being as a political enterprise as the Church was the mainstay of the royal policy, and, additionally, a bishop’s city was not infrequently a border guard. It is believed that Zagreb Cathedral could house about seven times the city’s population. As already stated, we know very little about the Romanesque Cathedral of Zagreb, but there is no doubt that, as in the case of the best art creations of Dalmatia, it was an exceptional monument. In its next phase, after ca. 1270, the Cathedral was possibly the most Gothic building of Southeastern Europe. The quality is witnessed by the late 13<sup>th</sup> century frescoes in the sacristy painted by a worthy master of the school of Rome, by a respectable late 13<sup>th</sup> century North Italian hand in the southern aisle, and in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by a very good Giotto’s followers, most likely from the Rimini area in the Chapel of St. Stephen (Goss 2007B, 2010).

If the city did not want to give up controlling its *rus*, this was even less so the case with a noble’s castle or a monastery. They were the key elements of the countryside complex, its core and the main orienting points, in the same way as it had been the sanctuary and the *dvor* (hall, germ. *hof*) in the pre-Christian period, or the political and religious “župa” in the early-conversion time (Figs 7, 23, 37). Just take a look at the position in the landscape of such castles, be it on the Continent or at the Coast

as Medvedgrad (Fig. 21), Okić, Veliki Tabor (Fig. 49), Čanjevo, Bribir, Imotski, Zvonigrad or Ostrovica, at the way these powerful feudal seats constitute and dominate the regional space. They are typically placed within “half-pots” with a view of 180 degrees or more, seeing and being seen from afar. Or look at how castles set within a full “pot” decisively create their micro environment (Žumberak, Blaguša, Dubovac, Samobor, Lipovec) (Goss 2010).



**Fig. 49** Veliki Tabor, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century (photo: IPU)

A special case of cooperation between man and nature are troglodytic castles, a superb combination of nature and human labor – Veliki and Mali Kalnik (Fig. 37), Okić, Stari grad above Orehovica (Fig. 7); in Dalmatia, the castles of the Cetina River valley – Čačvina, Nutjak, Omiš. One should add here also the huge wheel made of brick, Korodvar near Osijek, a transfer of the form of an early medieval circular mud fort into the 13<sup>th</sup> century architecture in permanent material (Goss 2010).

Those Romanesque rock houses in the form of a single, mostly square, tower, or several such towers became customary in the course of the 12<sup>th</sup> century: Stupčanica, Tuščak (Fig. 50), Dobra Kuća, Čaklovec, Garić, all of them are fortified homes watching over their micro environment from high above. Investigations carried out in our neighborhood, e.g., in Transylvania, neatly demonstrate the process of symbiosis of the fort and the village. We learn how, for example, an ambitious and greedy petty nobleman smuggles himself onto the hill with a peasant mud fort from where he subjugates the population at the foot of the hill; or how, on the contrary, such a fort may be taken over by proud village freemen and end up being the tower (be it western or choir) of their parish church. In Croatia, such is the case of the churches at Belec and Sveti Ivan Zelina, and possibly at Ivanec (Fabini and Fabini 1991).



The monastery acts in a way similar to the gentry's keep. One looks for a strategic, well protected spot from which to dominate the surroundings. Extramural monasteries are in principle fortified. A fine example is the 12<sup>th</sup> century St. Michael at Rudina. The 19 carved heads, brackets, from Rudina represent an expressive Romanesque idiom, unique and without analogies, elaborated most likely on the basis of some very old, Prehistoric, Celtic and Early Christian models available at or in the vicinity of the monastery (Fig. 18). It is an example of a local variant of the Romanesque nowadays being recognized more and more throughout Europe. Here, the local cultural landscapes intersect both horizontally and vertically. At Rudina, the international institution of the Benedictine Order has donned local clothes when doing sculpture, whereas at the same time in the architecture of the aisled church, and, possibly, the overall iconography, it follows the well-known Romanesque models (Barral i Altet 2006, Goss 2010A). The Sepulchralians – Canons of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem – formed around 1200 their seat at Glogovnica on a strategic hill overlooking the river and the rich slopes of the Kalnik falling toward the city of Križevci and forming a “half-pot“ with the monastery roughly in its middle. Six monumental sculpted pieces are linked to the site, one of which, a relief of a sovereign with an expression of regal serenity, may be an ideal portrait of the mythic founder of the Order, Godfrey of Bouillon, the first King of Jerusalem (Fig. 45). The powerful rounded forms of the Glogovnica sculptures find analogies in Southern Hungary (Pécs, Madocsa). This is a horizontal link, but there is also a vertical one, as the pronounced cubic treatment of the forms and the tiny rounded eyes recall Celtic head-pots (Goss 2010).



**Fig. 50** Tuščak, remains of a keep, 1198

Finally, the *rus* has left some superb creations in the area of special structures. First of all, here are the Istrian hilltop townships, half cities – defined as such by their wall, half villages if we consider the agricultural nature of the majority of their population (Fig. 51). They sprang up at the locations of the pre-Roman forts inheriting their urban elements – the wall that strictly separates them from their surroundings which they dominate and control from their eagle’s nests. The urban community character is furthermore emphasized by their special treatment of the community centers including the secular community meeting spaces and buildings, and the parish church (Motovun, Gračišće, Pićan, Labin, Barban, Brseč, and scores of others). On the other



Fig. 51 Pićan

hand, Istria also features spacious stretches of scattered rural settlement, again on a Prehistoric base, wholeheartedly adopted by the immigrant Slavs and the Carolingian conquerors. One such stretch is above the canyon of the Raša to the north of Labin where the place names record both the extra-urban Slavs (several places named Gračišće, Županići), the Romans (Santalezi, Zulijani) and the Carolingians (St. Martin). As a great single monument of the Istrian *rus* I would list the church of St. Fosca at Peroj and its wall-paintings, in particular the highly stylized representation of the Majesty of Christ with all typical *formulae* of the Romanesque style, and yet so unique that convincing parallels are not easy to find (Fig. 52). Monasteries also step very nicely into the Istrian rural structure, as for example, St. Michael above the Lim Canal, where within a rather poorly populated area one had been building ever since Early Christianity. In that wilderness we find another brilliant witness of Istrian wall-painting, the frescoes of the larger church built around 1040, in a high quality post-Ottonian style. One should note, however, that the “half-city” of the hilltop settlement type is not absent from Slavonia, either – Sveti Ivan Zelina, Brckovljani, Preseka, Vrbovec, Mala Črešnjeвица, Križ, etc. It is just less evident as most of its old



wooden structures have disappeared, the only building in permanent material being the parish church, and, very rarely, a stretch of the wall (Vrbovec, Sveti Ivan Zelina) (Goss 2009C).



**Fig. 52** Peroj, St. Fosca, wall-paintings, ca. 1100 (photo: IPU)

The cultural landscape of the Romanesque did not change too much in relationship to the Pre-Romanesque. It just got richer and more complex. It attached itself into European trends while adopting them to its own tradition. The *urbs* played a more distinguished role, but did not dominate. It fits into the system defined by the countryside character of the environment. Foreign factors, the *hospites*, the Saxons, the monks, and the Crusaders adjusted themselves to that system rather quickly. Along with the city the key special orienting points were nobleman castles, monasteries, and parish centers. The countryside recognized the new elements but received them in a leisurely way, avoiding express confrontations. All that was integrated into a harmonious system within a country which did not have enough population to worry about overpopulation and urban sprawl.

The outlined pattern is retained also throughout the Late Middle Ages, which represent, along with the local Renaissance the peak of the quality of life in the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen. The Anjous coming to power at the very beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century are the additional link to Europe, from the Baltic to the Mezzogiorno. At home it meant new, powerful centralization of everything so also of the cultural landscape, which, however, was clearly reflected in the major centers only. Charles Robert and Louis I could brake the power of the Croatian high gentry, put a stop to Venetian pretensions, integrate Dubrovnik, but the gist of the cultural landscape did not change. What had changed is the model which for the royal centers at the Coast



**Fig. 53** Beram, St. Mary on Škrljine, wall-paintings by Vincent of Kastav, 15<sup>th</sup> century (photo: IPU)

(but also albeit to a lesser extent in Pannonia) was increasingly the Anjou Naples, and for the Continent Prague. This pattern continued even in the decentralizing 15<sup>th</sup> century. While the monarch, depending on his individual power, wrestled with the nobility and the cities, the noblemen built seats of power of remarkable size and culture of living (Ružica, Veliki Tabor – Fig. 49), extended their hand to nature creating pleasure pavilions like Hercegovac at Ružica, supported the high quality architecture of city walls (Ilok), founded important monasteries (Lepoglava). The cities produced the “gold and silver of Zadar,” or such charmers of Gothic metalwork as the tiny angel that stunned the public at the great international exhibit “Sigismundus, Rex et Imperator” in Budapest and Luxemburg in 2006, listed in the Catalogue as from Zagreb or Budapest, which clearly underlines the recognition Zagreb enjoyed as an art center around 1400. Through the urban centers such as Zagreb (Cathedral, St. Marco) (Figs 15, 21), or Ilok but also through the rural Trški Vrh, Voćin or Rača near Bjelovar, wandered followers of Peter Parler and Benedict (Beneš) Rejt. While the gentry fought among themselves and against the throne, and the Turks initiated their dismembering of the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen, while Venice beginning around 1420 and throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century imposed its rule over Dalmatia, the Croatian-Slavonian-Dalmatian-Istrian *rus* was busy renovating their parish churches, enlarging them and building new ones. They were embellished with new sculpted and painted decor using influences from the circle of Giotto, of the Italian courtly Gothic, of various Mediterranean, Alpine, and Transalpine styles. Local artists such as Master Vincent and Ivan of Kastav (Fig. 53), or of the Master of Svetice and Zado-



barje, ingeniously domesticated those foreign influences while also echoing the many centuries of live rural culture. The vitality of this late medieval *rus* was incredible given the fact that the Kingdom had less and less money, less and less land, that the king and the gentry plundered and terrorized the cities, Venice raped Dalmatia, the noblemen *à la* Franjo Tahy (Tahy) their peasant subjects, and the Turks more or less everyone (Vukičević-Samaržija 2010).

The vitality, inventiveness, and beauty of that last segment of what Croatian lands gave between Borna and his Father on one, and Cvijeta Zuzorić and Matija Korvin (Matthias Corvinus) on the other hand, of that Croatian Renaissance occurring as a brief but brilliant flash of light before two centuries of savagery and barbarism, is stunning. Francesco Laurana (Franjo Vranjanin) grew up in the world of late medieval Zadar metalwork, and became one of the greatest sculptors of the Quattrocento. Luciano Laurana (Lucijan Vranjanin), the father of the High Renaissance architecture, grew up in the world of Dalmatian classical Antiquity but also of its medieval tradition. Both Lauranas represent the paradigm of what could be created in Croatia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the greatest Croatian contribution to the Renaissance in Europe; the former by his fantastic, to abstraction purified busts of the women of the Aragonese and the Sforzas (Fig. 54), the latter by a concept of architectural order which at the Montefeltro's court at Urbino opened up the path to Bramante and the High Renaissance style. Another Croat, Pope Sixtus V left his powerful imprint as a patron on 16<sup>th</sup> century Rome. They were all crucial for the formation of the high, classical, model of the Renaissance cultural landscape in Central Italy (Mutnjaković 2003, 2010).



**Fig. 54**

Francesco Laurana,  
*Ritratto di Battista Sforza*, 1472-75  
(photo: Andrija Mutnjaković)

If there is a country in entire Europe which, next to Central Italy, could claim the title “Renaissance,” it is the territory of Dalmatia and Pannonia in the 15<sup>th</sup> and the early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Elsewhere, beyond the Alps, but even in Italy itself, the “Renaissance” is a late reflection of the art of the Florentine 15<sup>th</sup> century elite, and the elitists' centers which follow it – Urbino, Mantova, Rome – with a specific version flourishing in Venice. In comparison with Florentine and Roman classicism, the Northern Renaissance appears not infrequently silly. In Dalmatia in the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> and in Pannonia at the century's end various local idioms based on the most classical trends of Florence and Rome were elaborated. Ivan Duknović, Juraj Čulinović, and



**Fig. 55** Šibenik, Cathedral of St. James, 1431-1536 (photo: IPU)

Julije Klović creatively participated in the classical trend, but they also worked in their native country. Thanks to them, as well as to the presence in Croatia of some grand men of the Renaissance, e.g., Michelozzo in Dubrovnik, or such consummate masters as Nicola of Florence (if he is not himself a Dalmatian), the classical mode affirms itself in Dalmatia and Pannonia (Fig. 55). Furthermore, there are artists who are equally “at home,” both at home and at the sophisticated courts and cities of the Renaissance Italy. Such “travelers” are Juraj Dalmatinac (Giorgio da Sebenico) (Fig. 56), Andrija Medulić, Juraj Kolunić Rota. The Renaissance classicism is also enhanced by imports of the best among the best – works by Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto – to penetrate even to mere villages through the works of lesser but still solid masters such as Palma Giovane and the Santacroce family (Pelc 2007, 2010A).

Still the Renaissance in Dalmatia is not a culture of the *urbs*, although the cities call in the great Renaissance builders such as Michelozzo and Sanmicheli. It is first of all an expression of a highly sophisticated, Arcadian, countryside, of a sophisticated court, even royal, as in the case of Matthias Corvinus’ Visegrad, the Pannonian Urbino, which attracts the top minds such as Ivan Vitez of Sredna or Ivan Česmički (Janus Pannonius), or visual artists such as the sculptor Ivan Duknović, or the genius miniature painter Julije Klović (Giulio Clovio). Or of the court in Ilok of Nikola and Lovro Iločki (Ujlaky), the nominal Kings of Bosnia, a magnificent Renaissance palace inside monumental city walls. Refined albeit anonymous artists have made excellent tomb plaques of the said Nikola and Lovro in Ilok (Fig. 57), and of Bishop Luka Baratin in Zagreb, which was also the place of origin of the sumptuous Missal of Juraj de Topusko (Pelc 2007, 2010A).





**Fig. 56**  
Ancona, Merchants' lodge,  
Juraj Dalmatinac, *Caritas*, 1458  
(photo: IPU)



**Fig. 57**  
Ilok, Franciscan monastery,  
tomb of Nikola Iločki, 1477  
(photo: IPU)

At the other end of the Kingdom, at Dubrovnik of the refined ladies like Cvijeta Zuzorić and equally refined troubadours singing their beauty and fame, we encounter the other pole of the East Adriatic Renaissance. The style developed there sprang forth, just like Luciano Laurana, from the local medieval tradition fertilized by the rediscovered local Antiquity in which local intellectuals and connoisseurs relished (Fig. 58). The Gothic in the Dalmatian and Pannonian Renaissance is not an outdated relic, not a *corpus separatum* but a live offshoot of the local tradition given a new formal and conceptual meaning. And when such an idiom is crossed with the local cultural

and natural landscape the outcome are masterpieces of environmental harmony radiating a sense of enjoyment and a high quality of life. The material witness of that phenomenon is Dubrovnik with extramural mansions, along with the royal court the second most important carrier of the Dalmatian-Pannonian Renaissance. They are a true miracle of harmony between the work of the human hands and the environment, of search for beauty in buildings and their architectural detail, and of creative display within the natural space of paradise-like landscapes of Gruž, Lapad, Župa, Rijeka Dubrovačka, the Dubrovnik Islands. They mark the highest level in culture of life in our area, a wonderful setting for display of Dubrovnik Renaissance thought, and the literary and dramatic word of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. This fabulous practice is supported on the plan of theory by the outstanding Platonist of the Renaissance, Frane Petrić from Cres, author of the *Happy City (La città felice)* and advocate of human and humanistic environment-conscious urban design (Pelc 2007, Mutnjaković 1993, Bubrin and Grubišić 2015).



**Fig. 58** Dubrovnik, Lapad, Sorkočević mansion, 1521 (photo: IPU)

The countryside may be the shiniest mirror of the Renaissance in Dalmatia and Pannonia, but the city had its shiny moments too. The shiniest of such is the Cathedral of Šibenik (Fig. 55). Without raising the tricky issue of the authorship of the Cathedral and its parts, one must note the unique concept in which the roof is at the same time the vault that is faithfully followed by the trefoil façade, not a coulisse but a reflection of architectural function. One should also note, technically speaking, a perfect blend of the Gothic and the Renaissance creating in fact a special Dalmatian style of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, a correlative to Italian Classicism. That spirit is typical of the art of Juraj Dalmatinac, one of the architects of the Cathedral, who was familiar



with both the Venetian Gothic and Brunelleschi's Florentine Renaissance, whereas in sculpture his sources range from the Buons of Venice to the great Sieneese Jacopo Della Quercia, in which context one should see the frieze of heads on the chancel of Šibenik Cathedral as well as the wonderful *Caritas* in Ancona (Fig. 56) (Gvozdanović 1976, Marković 2010). In Trogir, the best sculptors available – Ivan Duknović, Nicola of Florence and Andrija Aleši created another jewel of Eastern Adriatic Renaissance, the chapel of the Blessed Ivan Orsini (Pelc 2007, 2010A). Trogir as a masterpiece of Renaissance urban planning and as a spiritual landscape of the highest class Humanism has been recently wonderfully discussed by Radoslav Bužančić. Through a careful analysis of the visual elements and tying them with the best in Renaissance architectural and urban design thinking – especially with the circle of Gian Battista Alberti, the author has demonstrated the links between the new urban regulation of Trogir and the greatest achievements of Central Italian and Roman Renaissance (Bužančić 2012).

These two brilliant works, Šibenik Cathedral (Fig. 55) and the Orsini Chapel (Fig. 59), clearly show that in spite of Venetian occupation the Dalmatian cities continued their outstanding creative activity. It came to an end only with the appearance, in the course of the first few decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, of Turkish hordes underneath their town-walls, as already lamented by the great humanist and writer of Split, Marko Marulić, in his *Judita* and *Molitva suprotiva Turkom* [The Prayer against the Turks]. Marulić, like the best among Croatian visual artists of the Renaissance, was a master of a number of idioms – Latin, Italian, Croatian, in short, European which made him an outstanding Renaissance character even beyond the limits of his native country. One of his works was translated into Japanese in the 17<sup>th</sup> century! The same multicultural soul rules the work of Petar Zoranić, Petar Hektorović, Hanibal Lucić, Marin Držić, and the other greats of the Croatian Renaissance word (Bubrin and Grubišić 2015).



**Fig. 59**

Trogir, Cathedral, Orsini Chapel, 1468  
(photo: Radoslav Bužančić)

This may be an appropriate moment to consider in some detail the question of the quality of life. Quality of life is not a new car, a new TV, or vacationing in the Maldives, but that serene feeling of security and pleasure which brings peace and quiet, and

enough means for a decent life (without exaggerated riches which make one anxious lest one should lose them). Such idylls are rather rare, do not last long, are tied to certain strata of the society, yet they are significant and could be used as a measure of the quality of life. I believe that culture is one such measuring stick as it points to the free time and energy invested to enhance the spirit and embellish the human surroundings. Culture is always an investment of time, funds, and labor, and it can be afforded only by those who do not need to waste their time, hands, and income on the preservation of life or some perverse illusions concerning the thirst for power and riches. Of course, in this part of the world there were also robbers, plunderers, exploiters. One sought power, plotted and schemed, stole, gossiped, swore falsely. Crowned heads were chopped off, nobles fought among themselves. So also did parties in medieval cities, just like in our contemporary states. Catholics burnt heretics, heretics burnt Catholics, provinces and kingdoms were bought and sold, conspiracy was rife, evil-disposed neighbors were called in as allies. Still, a view at Croatia before the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in my opinion indicates that all this everyday, pervasive evil did not affect the cultural life, and quality of life (Goss 2011).

#### Quality of life?

Peace and quiet depend on the orderly structuring of human relations, on the rule of law, we would say today. Such did not exist in Prehistory, when the world was ordered by a club and the law of the strongest. Still, somebody had enough leisure to fashion the Vučedol Dove (Fig. 9) and Orion, to wear the Illyrian-Celtic three faced pearls as did the people of Prozor and Donja Dolina, to create forts on the most beautiful spots in Istria and along the Kvarner coast (Fig. 8).

Rome was fiercely resisted, yet upon the failure of the only great rebellion, of Bato, four centuries of peace and quiet was ensued in the provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia. The land was urbanized, there appeared metropolises such as Salona, Sirmium and Siscia, and urban centers along the coast from Pola to Epidaurus; in the hinterland Cibalae, Mursa, Petovio, Iovio, elegant spa places such as Aquae Iassae and Aquae Balissae; and also numerous smaller centers where the heart of Rome beat with an equal strength – Andautonia, Ad fines, Pyrri, etc. The picture is rounded off by hundreds of *villae rusticae*, in the bays of the sonorous sea, on the fertile slopes in the land between the two rivers. This picture, albeit sadly incomplete still appears to me as one of a sophisticated but hard working and also relaxed countryside culture of life without the metropolitan excesses but also without primitive barbarism, a world in which one need not be born Roman to become one. Nobody rebelled which means that living was tolerable. Here and there the pagan government persecuted Christians, later on Christians persecuted pagans. That was the world which left us the fine, relaxed provincial sculpture, endless altars of Mithra and Sylvanus, the great Early Christian architecture of the Dalmatian Coastland always open to the winds from the Eastern Mediterranean. The leaders of the society built their residences to



indulge in safe enjoyment of life – Diocletian Palace, the palace of Polače on Mljet (Fig. 60), or by creating the enchanted cultural landscape of the Brijuni Islands (Fig. 11) (Begović and Schrunk 2006). They left us the Roman rational mode of urban planning, which we can still discern in coastal and even continental cities, and that gigantic intervention into the environment – the Roman roads with innumerable resting spots and watchtowers. The “Limes” took care of the dangers from abroad keeping the barbarians beyond the Danube. In the course of the four centuries of the *Pax Romana* fortunately little history was made in our area, although the Illyrian emperors, Diocletian, Constantine, Valerian and Valens shook the world elsewhere. The Roman Illyricum always participated in the destiny of the Empire but in a relaxed, pleasantly extra-urban way (Goss 2011).

Here are a few striking examples.



**Fig. 60**

Polače, Late Antique palace (photo: Vlasta Begović, Ivančica Schrunk)



**Fig. 61**

Mateško Selo, St. George, church built from Roman sarcophagi (photo: Vlasta Begović, Ivančica Schrunk)

A few kilometers from Generalski Stol there is a tiny village of Mateško Selo, the Roman Colecianum, later Kolečan, almost completely built from Roman ruins. This is where Rome quarried the stone needed for sarcophagi, which were roughed out at the spot and then shipped from the Highlands down the Mrežnica to the Kupa, down the Kupa to the Sava and the city of Siscia in Pannonia, where they may have been somewhat embellished and then shipped down the Savus to the rest of the Empire. In the Middle Ages, we still do not know exactly when, a chapel of St. George was built there, entirely from the lids and coffers of unused sarcophagi, such as we can still find in some of the caves in the neighborhood (Fig. 61). The little church, another rare jewel in the chain of Croatia's cultural wonders, is fairly well preserved and it tells us in the bush lands at the gate of the Croatian Highlands a story of the great local craft and the outstanding role that this today God-forsaken piece of land played under the Great Rome; and also of the ingenuity of future inhabitants, Slavs, as they used the scattered "panels" to glorify their favorite Saint, George (Juraj), the successor to the pagan God of Spring Juraj/Jarilo, son of Perun. At Križovljan near Ludbreg (possibly the Ancient Iovio) we find a rustic relief bearing seven male heads built into the western façade of a Crusaders' church. One might say, a fragment of a Roman stele or, else, Celtic or medieval. If it is not medieval, it would be a very interesting example of "resematization" of earlier, pagan material within a Christian context (Goss 2010). The same happened in Dalmatia on a much larger scale. Many churches and royal mansions from the period of early Croatian rulers systematically follow positions of Roman buildings – churches, *villae rusticae*, fortresses (a fine example is Badanj near Crikvenica), road stations, showing how our ancestors recognized as their own the heritage of the people they had conquered. The episode of Justinian's Re-conquest in the 6<sup>th</sup> century is a brief renewal of prosperity and security in Dalmatia endowing the land with some of its most magnificent monuments – Basilica Euphrasiana in Poreč (Fig. 14), or Santa Maria del Canneto in Pula (Vicolja 2007).

I do not recall anybody dealing with the issue of the quality of life in the Middle Ages. The period has never been seen as particularly idyllic or orderly (just read Thomas Archdeacon). Invasions and epidemics followed one upon another. Yet, from the period of Early Croatian national dynasty up until the end of the Middle Ages, from Borna to Matthias Corvinus, there is not a single major rebellion. In 1088 the nobles assassinated the best and most promising Croatian king, Dmitar Zvonimir as he, allegedly, wanted to force them into a Crusade. Pretenders to the throne butchered one another, but even in the period of horrible dynastic clashes during the reign of Sigismundus *rex et imperator*, there were no signs of any major popular discontent. The plebeians in Dalmatian cities lost their political rights but did not rebel. Churchmen quarrelled among themselves, the Bishops of Nin with the Archbishops of Split in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, anti-reformists Cededra, Vulfo and Potepa with Archbishop Lovro in the 11<sup>th</sup> century; the Kačićs murdered Archbishop Arnir, the pirates of Omiš periodically terrorized the Adriatic, the noblemen asked for the Golden Bull, the Anjou Kings battled with the Šubičićs. But the ordinary people did not rebel. The early Slavic

immigrants did not spend all of their time beating up the natives and tilling the fields as they had time to listen to the seer demonstrating the mythical landscape. The early Croatians embellished every hill, every promontory and every bay of the sea with a little, or not so little, church. They did likewise in the Continent. Otherwise we would not have indications of some 600 sites of medieval art before 1300 between the Sava and the Drava Rivers (Goss 2006A, 2012). Zadar was described as a populous and prosperous city by those who destroyed it in 1202. The great monuments of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries in Trogir, Split and Dubrovnik clearly show that the Dalmatian city did not spare money when it wanted to build itself a cathedral, a tower, a church door, or a portal. They knew how to find the best artists available for the task.

Croatia certainly had the bad luck that many prosperous moments were cut short by sudden disasters, but in the Middle Ages there was always a renewal after a catastrophe – after the death of King Zvonimir, after the Tartar invasion in 1242, or the internecine wars of the Sigismundus' reign; and at the Coast even after the sale of Dalmatia to Venice in 1409.

The culture of life could be gauged by noblemen's castles, and by homes of city patri- cians and rich plebeians, and by their foundations. Nobility, like Duke Novak, wrote poetry, and commissioned sumptuous manuscripts. The patricians, e.g., Marulić, were translated, two centuries after their death, into Japanese! Physical traces with- in the castles are minimal, yet Medvedgrad has a chapel worthy of a King built and embellished by one of the best workshops of the realm (Goss and Jukić 2007). Mere dimensions of great castles, of Ružica, Ozalj, Steničnjak, Komić (Karlovića dvori), Cesargrad, Samobor, eloquently speak of the potentials and expectations of their owners regarding the culture of life and residence. The same is true of architecture in wood, as testified by a post-medieval and still fairly well preserved Alapić Mansion in Novo Čiče, in the heartlands of the Turopolje oaks; or the fine two-story parish home at Velika Mlaka (Fig. 62) (Goss 2010).

The Čipikos at Trogir, the Papalićs at Split, the nobility of Dubrovnik did not fall behind. The afore mentioned even in the course of the fateful 16<sup>th</sup> century built their refined country homes throughout the Rijeka Dubrovačka, Župa, and the Du- brovnik Islands. Cvijeta Zuzorić and hosts of other Renaissance beauties promenade themselves through the lanes of their par- adise-like gardens, the Troubadours of Dubrovnik singing their praise. They are the stage of Marin Držić's pastoral plays, or of his comedies in which he lashed out



**Fig. 62**

Velika Mlaka, parish house



his sharp wit at his own patrons who happily laughed and applauded. Those country mansions as well as the urban palaces (e.g., the Palladian Skočibuha-Bizzaro) are comparable, or even surpass by their harmony, elegance and dialogue with nature the Palladian villas of Venetian hinterland. In 13<sup>th</sup> century Split there was no end to civic strife, yet, as we have seen, Archbishop Bernard commissioned Buvina's doors (Fig. 38), and some among his successors built the tower of the Cathedral, the tower of all Romanesque towers (Figs 40, 41, 42). In Trogir, beleaguered by heretics, Bishop Treguan initiated the building of a spacious cathedral and as the master of its portal invited the best late Romanesque sculptor in Europe (Fig. 39). Zadar was, as we have seen, admired by its plunderers in 1202. The monumental and highly expressive crucifix, today in the Franciscan church may have been among the icons the Zaratines showed on their wall to declare themselves brothers in Christ with the invaders. A few days before the arrival of the Turks, Petar Zoranić, from Zadar, poet, mountain hiker and ecologist peopled the heights of the Velebit Mountain with shepherds and shepherdesses and other bucolic figures in the best tradition of the Renaissance pastorals (Goss 2011, Pelc 2010).

Also on the Continent and already in the shadow of the moon sickle the already mentioned Ilok Dukes, nominal Kings of Bosnia, repaired and expanded the walls of Ilok, ordered tomb plaques of the royal red marble, and commissioned the church of Voćin in the best tradition of Benedict (Beneš) Rejt. In Zagreb, the western end of the Cathedral was being completed with participation of the famous Parlers, who left their trace also at the Gradec (Upper Town) church of St. Marco. Veliki Tabor (Fig. 49), paradigmatic castle of Croatian Renaissance was built around 1500 (Vukičević-Samaržija 2010).

In Dalmatia, to repeat, we encounter the finest names of the Renaissance, Michelozzo, Sanmicheli, or first class foreign artists who achieved full recognition exactly on our side of the Adriatic, such as Nicola of Florence in Šibenik and Trogir. Even small communities order from Titian or Veronese. Again, as we have seen, Dalmatia gave us the sculptor of papal tombs and Matthias Corvinus's castles, Ivan Duknović of Trogir, and the forerunners of the High Renaissance, Luciano and Francesco Laurana. Some worked both at home and abroad – Juraj Dalmatinac and Juraj Čulinović – or that miracle of Venetian late Renaissance, Andrija Medulić. As Master Radovan took the Romanesque art to its final, glorious point at Trogir, so Julije Klović (Giulio Clovio) took the art of book illumination to its triumphant end (Pelc 2007).

One might say: the majority lives in squalor and misery. Well, history teaches us that this is simply incorrect. And the conditions should be analyzed within the framework of their time. Look at the contemporary suburban development around Zagreb: bleak, faceless, uniform boxes built in a hurry, wallowing in mud, lost in an undefined, senseless space. That is the "urban sprawl" leading to drugs, crime, insensitivity, barbarism. On the other hand the "elite" has been destroying the environment build-





**Fig. 63**  
*Prigorje Apocalypse*



**Fig. 64**  
Cres, Drvenjak

ing “castles” on the slopes of the Medvednica (Fig. 63). They transformed barbarism into modernity. They have been doing it for a quarter of a millennium. In the suburban concrete boxes there is electricity, gas, hot water, inside howls TV, outside the metal boxes of cars crowd along the shiny gilded fences. The man from a half-buried hut used a candle, clear spring and clear creek; he told stories and sang songs, made music, danced, carved. He paid his dues, the labor rent, went to the battle field, and did not rebel unless the toll became too high. Try to raise your voice against taxes and other intolerable regulations of a modern state! What has survived of architecture in wood testifies of the high standard the “ordinary people” required from their homes. They are comfortable, warm, decorated in wood carvings. Inside they played tamburitzas, made “folk” costumes. Go make a short trip to Stara Subocka! Stone homes of the city and village “proletariat” at the Coast are a miracle of environmental building, of functionalism, of an artistic sense for surfaces and spaces. Just take a walk through Veli Varoš in Split or Varožina or Drvenjak, i.e., the “wooden quarter” in Cres (Fig. 64). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the city of Varaždin was still mostly wood. Virovitica used to be a wooden city wrapped around a huge fortress when King Bela IV spent weeks there issuing charters, including the Golden Bull of Zagreb, after the Tartar invasion of 1242. Even under extreme circumstances, would a King have held his court in a pig sty? So I repeat: before the Turkish invasion the life was good (Goss 2011).

Between 1500 and 1700 Croatia disappeared as a civilized European nation. When it was “revived,” or, better, call it “reconstituted” it had different rulers, different territory, and a largely different population. As we can witness today, it has never truly recovered.

### **Interlude: Nikola and Tale**

The period between 1500 and 1700 is an interlude wherein the main roles are played by such figures as Nikola Šubić Zrinski, a great hero of struggle against the Turks, who is claimed equally by both the Croats and Hungarians (for Hungarians Miklós Zrínyi), and Budalina Tale, the main hero of Croatian converts to Islam, and a famous slayer of Christians. What happened in those two hundred years was the destruction of a nation, and of its state and culture. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Croatia was annihilated, crushed by the Turkish hoof. Life became daily warfare, plunder, massacre, exile in Styria, Hungary, and Burgenland. Prayers against the Turks from the best of Croatian hearts and minds did not help. Christian Croatia was wiped off the map of Europe. Those who lived to see the “Liberation” around 1700, were a handful of tortured, scared to death barbarians and savages, cheap cannon fodder for Venetian, Austrian and other generals.

Matija Ivanić, Matija Gubec, and Juraj Doža (Dózsa) are typical 16<sup>th</sup> century figures, desperate leaders of a scared, dishonored and downtrodden people, and their rebellions became a hallmark of the times to come; a shriek of impotent despair resounding down to the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the Rakovica Uprising against the Habsburgs, the burning of the Hungarian flag in Zagreb in 1903, the “Green Cadre” rebels of the First World War, and the outbursts of hopeless ire, both left and right, throughout the two Yugoslavias. We have yet to return to the quality of life Croatia enjoyed around 1500 (Goss 2011).

About four fifths of Croatia was occupied by the Turks. Dalmatia, or what of it was not Turkish, choked under the rule of ever poorer and hungrier Venice, whereas in Croatia a new entity came into being – the Military Frontier District meant to control the Turkish border, a territorial unit randomly cut by the military, its only logic being defense, not of Croatia, but of the Habsburg lands beyond. Such a territorial aberration, settled by immigrants from the East, of a different culture and religion, had nothing to do with any Croatian tradition and it completely violated any sense of a coherent cultural landscape.

The main characters of that bloody and senseless interlude were Christian and Moslem Croats. Brave noblemen and military figures defending the people while also defending their own interests were, for example, members of the Zrinski and Frankopan and other leading families such as the already mentioned Nikola of Zrin (who as Miklós Zrínyi has a street in Budapest; important also because he stopped Suleiman at Siget), Petar Kružić, Nikola Jurišić, Petar Berislavić, Ivan Lenković, Toma Erdődy... On the Muslim side stands Budalina Tale, the greatest hero of Croatian Moslem epic poetry, and his comrades in arms – Mustaj Beg of Lika, Beg of Kaniža, and Pasha of Budim. They belong to a sophisticated Moslem culture which was swept away by the “Liberation” around 1700, a culture which was hardly ever acknowledged, and

never really studied. Material remains of that Croatian Muslim largely urban culture were destroyed, the rich “Aljamiado” poetry forgotten, singers of its tales scattered throughout the Balkans. Paradoxically, those “Croatian Turks” may have been among the best preservers of Croatian traditions. Budalina Tale refused the gift of a stone tower from Mustaj Beg of Lika: as Tale was born, in the best of the Croatian tradition, in a wooden one!

Croatia managed to keep some of its tradition alive only in those few unoccupied and relatively safe districts – in the Republic of Dubrovnik, which managed to preserve its liberty by cleverly dancing among the great powers, and in the far Northwest, in Transmontane Croatia and Međimurje. This region was a sort of a refuge of the culture of the continental countryside, but it lost its base with the downfall of the great families of the Zrinski and Frankopan after the failure of their conspiracy against the Habsburg rule in 1671, when the Zrinski capital Čakovec ceased to be a cultural center of European format. To make things worse, while preserving its autonomy, Dubrovnik was heavily damaged by an earthquake in 1667.

The defeat of the Turks at the walls of Vienna in 1683, led to a war which lasted over 20 years and ended with liberation of most of what is today Croatia. Dalmatia was “liberated” by Venice and remained in its hands until the fall of the Republic in 1796. In Continental Croatia this war meant the liberation of Slavonia, whereas little progress was made in the Highlands so “Turkish Croatia” (Western Bosnia) has never been reintegrated.

The demographic picture was anything but what we encountered around 1500. Dalmatian Highlands were heavily settled by the Orthodox people from the Bosnian and Herzegovinian hinterland. The “Military District” (Krajina) was not abolished but retained a large slice of Croatia, from the Drava down to the Venetian border in the Highlands, cutting off the newly liberated Slavonia from Croatia’s new core, the Northwest around Zagreb and Varaždin.

It is only logical that the first task upon liberation was to restore and repopulate Croatia. Unfortunately, this has not been fully accomplished to the present day.

### **From Croatia Rediviva to Croatia Rediviva**

In the year of 1700, just after the Liberation, the Croatian writer, linguist, publisher, and politician, Pavao Ritter Vitezović published a booklet of a mere 32 pages in Latin entitled *Croatia Rediviva*. Vitezović (1652, Senj – 1713, Vienna) is a typical Croatian figure; a man of great talent, energy and honesty, he immensely indebted his country and people to receive only scorn and poverty in return. His father was from Alsace serving as a Military Frontier officer and his mother was Croatian. The significance of Vitezović’s activity is underlined by the title of his book. He recognized the impor-

tance of the moment when Croatia could be put together and placed under a single rule again. The ruler of that new reunited Croatia would be the Habsburg Emperor, bearing the title of the King of Croatia. Of course, we know that Vitezović's proposal would not be put into effect before the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and even then with dubious results. Between those two *Redivivae* there were some attempts to apply Vitezović's ideas, but only partially, and without lasting results. What this has meant for the cultural landscape of the last three centuries we point out in the lines to follow (Goss 2011).

The 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Croatia are the time of primary accumulation of capital. Just like today, this meant opening the gates to aggressive and insensitive foreign capital, as the local entrepreneur had no means to resist, whereas the apparatus of the state, in spite of loud demagoguery, cared only for itself. In a few moments we will take a look at the present-day situation as evidence of the above.

Inside the physical oases which we have mentioned there were also oases of the spirit. The Republic of Dubrovnik would still bring forth a Gundulić or a Bošković; the mansions of Transmontane Croatia joined hands with a landscape of gentle hills and little rivers, and within its still closed, quasi military masses, domesticated the pomp of the Baroque and Classicism, and the sugary sweetness of the gallant period. The Northwestern Croatian Baroque and Classicism, not great but not without a certain confidence, respecting ambient values, was in terms of form and content the best the country, now far behind Europe, was able to produce. One may add the "cinktors" (closed courtyards around churches) at Trški Vrh (Fig. 65), Vinagora, Lopatinec, Miljana, Klenovnik, Lužnica, etc., or cascades of saints on the altars at Belec or Hrašćina. Reflections of that humble cultural landscape which, however, had its charm,



**Fig. 65** Trški Vrh, "cinktor", 1773 (photo: IPU)



persisted until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the First World War would rather rudely send the Illustrissimus Batorich – a well-known character of Ksaver Šandor Đalski – to the junkyard of history. Let us not forget the modest but genuine shine of the Kajkavian literature, which had been equally rudely pushed aside by joint efforts of Vienna and the dubious native “patriots,” imposing a language which should have guaranteed the Vienna court the rule over much of the Balkans, “patriots” – the Illyrians and then Yugoslavs – who urged brotherhood with the above mentioned dubious neighbors, so wonderfully ridiculed by Miroslav Krleža in his poem “The Planetarium” (Krleža 1946). Still, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century we had a Felbinger, we had the culture of suburban villas of Classicism and Romanticism, of



**Fig. 66**

Hermann Bollé, Mirogoj arcades, 1883-1914

Januševac and Okrugljak, we had a Hermann Bollé who wonderfully read the pulse of the local landscape creating at Mirogoj one of the most beautiful eternal resting places in the world (Fig. 66). We had the Biedermeier of the serious and hard-working bourgeoisie of Slavonian townships, and, just before the first Great War, a Matoš and Kamov (writers), Račić, Kraljević, and Becić (painters), Dora Pejačević and Blagoje Bersa (composers). They were all looking for a shortcut to Europe although they may not have been all that sure that this was the best way, to remain, in the end, both eminently European and also themselves, something that is beginning to be appreciated only today (Goss 2011, Horvat-Levaj 2010, Repanić-Braun 2010, Zajec 2010, Radović-Mahečić 2010, Kraševac 2010).

Truly great talents, not too numerous, often leave for Europe. For example Federico Bencovich (Federiko Benković), a great master of the Late Baroque left his dramatic vision in Venice, and at many a European court. The import is, however, mostly second rate stuff from neighboring countries, as centuries of warfare interrupted the domestic artistic tradition. Yet let us not forget the true immigrant masters we just mentioned who were able to creatively listen to the spirit of cultural ecology of the land where they had settled (Goss 2011).

Since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Croatia has not been following its own path inscribed into its physical and spiritual landscape, but has been trying to “catch up with Europe.” Still, one should note some outstanding achievements which are finally being recognized today. I would again refer to the relevant chapters in the book

*Hrvatska umjetnost. Povijest i spomenici* [Croatian Art. History and Monuments] (Pelc 2010A).

Here is our brief list...

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Croatia had a few truly great poets. Had Kranjčević, Ujević, and Tadijanović written in some world language, they would have been included into the most selective anthologies of world poetry. Their correlatives in music are Blagoje Bersa and Milko Kelemen. Dialectal poetry is another oasis of literary excellence, Miroslav Krleža and Ivan Goran Kovačić in Kajkavian, Mate Balota and Drago Gervais in Čakavijan. Croatia in fact has three “languages” and it is a great pity that the Kajkavian and Čakavijan are nowadays being ousted by a pushy “language standard,” foreign to most of the people. And this is happening in a new Europe promoting diversity! (Goss 2011)



**Fig. 67** Zagreb, Croatian Museum of Naïve Art, Ivan Rabuzin, *Among the Hills – Jungle*, 1960  
(photo: HMNU)

That diversity existed in Croatia in terms of script too. The Croats used Latin, Cyrillic, Glagolitic and Bosnian script. Fragments of medieval inscriptions in Glagolitic and Bosnian were discovered at the Abbey of Rudina, as well as the oldest Latin fragment in Croatian tongue “brat Ian” (brother Ian), from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Croatian Glagolitic, a truly idiosyncratic script which visually correlates quite well with the forms of Croatian Pre-Romanesque and Romanesque, should be taught in primary school! Croatian “naïve art” is a correlative to dialectal literature in fine arts, and at the same time a supreme and most legitimate aspect of Croatian modernity (Fig. 67) (Goss 2011).

The Secession in Croatia seems to get better press abroad than at home (Fig. 68). A few years ago I met in Zagreb an Israeli businessman and connoisseur, Gershon



Peres (Simon's brother). He said: "The architecture of Secession in Croatia is the best in the world! It grows naturally from the land, effortlessly and without noise." I answered: "You should also go to Rijeka and pay special attention to interior staircases."



**Fig. 68** Zagreb, Rudolf Lubynski, University Library, 1913 (photo: IPU)

The architecture of the Croatian *Moderna* is rich in outstanding creations (Fig. 6). Just take a walk through Tuškanac, Cmrok, Šalata, Trešnjevka or Borongaj in Zagreb. How many more names to discover, how much unrecognized beauty! With skill and tact the local architects humanized the dogmatic imported styles! What a wonderful blend of architectural forms with the ambient of a "forest city" as Zagreb was rightly called by Matoš. This concept was also applied to the downtown of Zagreb by Milan Lenuzzi when he planned and executed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century his "green hoof" of parks in the heart of the downtown. One may add hotels of Opatija and Lovran, the secession of Bjelovar, the architecture of Rijeka between the two World Wars, e.g., the church and cemetery at Kozala (Goss 2011, Čorak 2010, Laslo 2011, Medar 2008).

Thanks to some exceptional individuals, Croatia proved to be a country of progressive artistic tendencies even under the early communism. The EXAT 51 group is a world class phenomenon, the appearance of abstraction at the time of rabid social realism (Kristl, Rašica, Picelj, Srnec) (Župan 2007). The move toward abstraction centered further on a young and always meticulously elegant man who walked through my neighborhood around Zvijezda holding a pretty young lady by her hand. We knew that Edo Murtić painted, but it took time to fully recognize the volcanic power of his brush. Like Murtić, Dušan Đamonja is both local and global. I remember him as a dark young man with a big hat keeping watch over the exhibition of his sculptures

at the Katarinin trg in the Upper Town. Then he used to stick nails into wood which he subsequently burned. Later on he poured metallic monsters which crawled all the way to the heart of Brussels, the capital of the New Europe.

A series of great exhibitions around 2000 finally brought to light the true picture of some of the greatest names of Croatian art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Artists who deserve attention and praise not because they have mastered cubism, fauvism, expressionism, you name it, but because they digested foreign influences, and then, within the coordinates of their own milieu and their own artistic capabilities created, their own worlds – Gecan, Uzelac, Račić, Trepše... (Goss 2011)

Enough!

I have already offended too many artists and their fans, both by naming and leaving them out. I do not want to make a list of the one hundred greatest artists, or one hundred greatest art works in Croatia. What I have wanted to do throughout this monologue was to persuade the reader that by careful reading of both physical and spiritual characteristics of a certain space one may best learn what this space is and how to manage it.

Having this in mind I would like to ask myself a question: why even the second and apparently final revival of an old land and nation could not overcome the burden of unfortunate events of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and their dubious aftermath in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, once the country gained its independence and became a fully-fledged member of the greatest associations of the West, NATO and the European Union?

### **Breaking the Family Crystal (Croatia Rediviva II)**

At the public presentation of my book about Croatian Pre-Romanesque architecture in 1996, Professor Bedenko lucidly remarked that our attitude toward foreign culture is often that of complaining how little, humble, incompetent we are and how we beg that we be handled with consideration or be left alone; or of arrogant roaring how we are better than anyone else, as we have invented the Croatian interlaces, the Croatian sausages, the Croatian roasted ox... both attitudes being, as the esteemed colleague concluded, expression of one and the same inferiority complex. We must clearly state what we have and what this means, diligently collect facts, review them rationally, and present conclusions in a sensible way both to the professional and general public. The Croats either underrate their art as we do not have a Praxiteles, Picasso or Pollock, or they overestimate some phenomena in the spirit of the 19<sup>th</sup> century romanticism (“We did it sooner, bigger, better...”). Actually, they do not know what they have as they prefer imported junk. For this, critics and art historians are very much to blame.



I have already expressed my doubt on whether the newest *Croatia Rediviva* which has sprung from the smoke and tumult of the Liberation War would satisfy the dreams from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This really should not be so, as we have all the tools and facts we need to do better. So here are some conclusions, some of which may be temporary.

- 1.** The Cultural ecology of Croatia has always been determined by the specificities of natural ecology.
- 2.** One cannot have more cathedrals than bishoprics. Croatian cultural ecology was considerably affected by a relatively low density of population, and, linked to it, by a relatively low level of economic resources. But when the conditions were favorable, one performed on the highest level.
- 3.** Croatian cultural ecology did not come into being in a vacuum, but displays a clear influx of ideas from major cultural circles – Mediterranean, Central European, and Near Eastern.
- 4.** There is a high level of variety but also a certain unity determined (here we return to point 1), by the specificity of natural ecology which may appear to be different at the Coast as opposed to the Continent, but still has a common essence and measure.
- 5.** The Croats either underestimate their own art, or overblow certain phenomena. In fact, they do not know it, and often prefer imported rubbish. Again, for this we, art critics and historians, are also to blame (Goss 2011).

The last point takes us to the question of “foreign influences.” There are always exchanges of experience, and even today in some serious scholarly circles one debates, for example, who invented Romanesque sculpture, “France” or “Spain” at the time when there was really no France or Spain, making the judgments and conclusions a matter of political interpretations (Barral i Altet 2006). We have demonstrated the porous character of Croatian borders. The fact that in the medieval Slavonia we also have the “Saxons” is no offence to the Slavonian Middle Ages (Goss 2003). The rage for trend-following raises its ugly head in Croatia at the moment when the natives realized that “we” must be “more like them,” and that pressure was born and it grew throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Earlier, the borrowings were successfully assimilated by the Croatian cultural and total ecology. Nobody rushed to build a Versailles in Trnasmontane Croatia, or St. Marco’s on the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Without the art of the royal domain and Esztergom there would be no “Renaissance” of Herceg Koloman and Bishop Stephen II in Pannonia Savia of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century (Goss 2007). Without an experience of the Venetian Gothic and Florentine Renaissance there would be no Cathedral of Šibenik or the Chapel of the Blessed Ivan Orsini at Trogir. And yet all those monuments fit well with the local cultural landscape of the

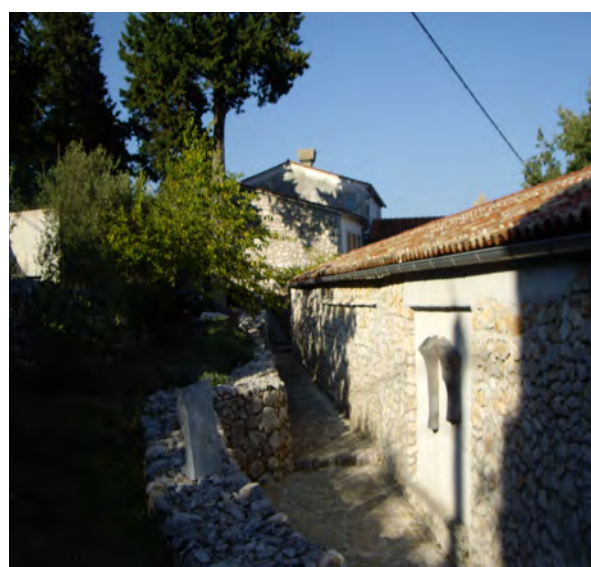
time. Our art criticism in the course of the last 100 years often judged the “success” of a certain artist by how much he imbibed foreign morphology. The recent grand retrospective of Josip Račić, one of the initiators of modern painting in Croatia, taught me that he was a much greater artist than I had thought, as I realized that Paris did not *hurt* him, that he remained what he had been, and yet somehow “enlarged” himself by new experiences. And what about Uzelac, who spent most of his life abroad, but who remained original, individual, even arrogant and yet superb painter (Goss 2011)? Speaking of exhibitions, one must not leave out the *Art Deco* exhibition at the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb in 2011, featuring a chapter of Croatian art totally otherwise neglected by students. Exhibits on display, ranging from architecture to film, show one aspect of Croatian cultural landscape of the 20<sup>th</sup> century tied to a major European trend, but they also reveal an extremely mature response of the local milieu. What a demonstration of artistic freedom yet within a very strict stylistic vocabulary! It had always been there but went practically unnoticed (Gašparović 2011), which brings about yet another conclusion...

**6.** Croatian cultural ecology has known how to integrate foreign elements in a creative and appropriate way making them its own. Let us take just a few examples. “The White Road” in Dubrova near Labin, an offspring of the creative mind of Josip Diminić, built over time by a select number of artists, primarily sculptors, is a fascinating blend of the creative spirit and the beautiful Mediterranean landscape, linked to another important manifestation of that selfsame spirit – the annual Mediterranean sculpture symposium in Dubrova (Fig. 69). The home and atelier of another great Istrian sculptor, Ljubo de Karina at Zagore near Brseč, on the precipitous cliff above the blue surface of the Adriatic, between the stone and waves, the sun and air, is a great blend of the natural ecology of rock, evergreens and sunlight, and of the living presence of a creative spirit (Fig. 70). The gallery of the works of yet another sculptor,



**Fig.69**

Labin, Park Dubrova, *White Road*



**Fig. 70**

Brseč, home and atelier of Ljubo de Karina

Marija Ujević, at Silba, is the simplest rectangular court under the open sky, ennobled by Ujević sculptures, numerous enough to hold the space, the sky and the earth together, and yet not so numerous as to impose themselves upon the volumes of light and air. Such phenomena as these are not appreciated enough by the professional and general public. “Buy Croatian!” (Albaneže 2009, Dubrović 2003, Šimat Banov 2007) which means: let us preserve the essence of our total and cultural ecology, our identity, our tradition, without closing ourselves behind some autarchic ramparts of “our national characteristics” as such has never truly operated in these parts of the world, and let us develop further all that beautiful and meaningful we have created throughout centuries. In a following chapter I will propose that it is far from impossible, as the Croatian total and cultural ecology fit with those of the rest of Western and Central Europe.

Bureaucracy, communism and etatism, the arrogance of political (and other) elites have induced disbelief in our own powers and values, so we looked for redemption at the hands of various imperial clerks, “comrades,” and, today, “politicians” and the EU (Goss 2011, Ježić 2006). We still largely believe that someone would bail us out, and, in order to oblige, we would give up all “bad old habits,” i.e., our identity, our values, and our cultural ecology. Take a city bus up to the church in Šestine, and walk back to Mihaljevac. If you are not totally blind, this is all you need (Fig. 63).

The valley of the Kraljevec creek is somewhat narrow and with rather steep sides. A half a century ago the building consisted of a few modest homes along the road, which in its upper reaches was lined up by old wooden houses. Here and there, they were joined by the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries single or multiple-story dwellings of equally modest format. We also come across a few good buildings from the *Moderna* period, and even the multi-story houses are not infrequently built of wood. It is a natural landscape requiring a simple and modest format, and reticence in color and texture. Today, first of all, there is no space left, no vistas, just general overcrowding in an incredible cacophony of shapes and colors, without any dialogue among individual buildings, just mad shrieking: look at me, I am bigger, better, the best, more modern than you; I am the boss, I have the biggest money pile. That architectural Apocalypse in the Medvednica Piedmont is the true picture of our savage, barbarian society which likes to call itself “liberal capitalist,” whereas it is but a mix banditry, impertinence, and greed trying to cheat the viewer and to conceal one’s own emptiness giving that same emptiness an aura of importance and “culture.” The visions written into the landscape throughout centuries are gone forever. If this is the picture of our society, then we are indeed doomed. Even very limited measures could have saved a lot: the simple ordinances concerning the height, the format, the color, the choice of material. Let us not forget: a cultural landscape could not be preserved, but when changed, it should be changed for the better. What we are doing all over our country is a mad drive to destroy anything meaningful and beautiful. Here, at the foot of the Medvednica, and so also in the Kaštela Field at the coast near Split, the two

most valuable Croatian historical landscapes, somebody has frittered away a good percentage of our identity, and will never be called to task. One should recall the words of Alexander Demandt: “Cultural losses in the 20<sup>th</sup> century are to a great extent the result of modernization...” (Demandt 2008) One can, of course, build well and with taste in any style, as demonstrated by the famous Rounded House on the Cmrok by Planić (1935), or the above mentioned home at Jandrićeva Street 17 (Fig. 6), which in spite of its cubic forms competes and yet cooperates by its corpus and texture with its wooded background. On a level of everyday building, a recently constructed family house above the canyon of the Raša in Ružići in Istria shows how one can build a true masterpiece of harmony of tradition, modernity and environmental values (Fig. 71).



**Fig. 71**

Ružići near Labin,  
home above the canyon of the Raša

Croatian Art History and so also the History of Visual Arts have attempted to find a theoretical framework for the understanding of Croatian Art. It has not tried very hard, and the results have not been great. The Croats are allegedly proud of their past. Yet, in the case of material witnesses of that past their attitude is dubious at best. In that there is little difference between the professionals and the public. There are entire periods and areas which have not been studied at all, and a few decades ago, as the theoretical stance, a theory claiming that Croatian art was a provincial, peripheral and frontier phenomenon was officially adopted, turning into a virtue its alleged modesty and humility (Karaman 2001, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Such in fact self-defeating attitudes are a very good illustration of what Mislav Ježić has called “Croatian induced inferiority complex” (Ježić 2006), meaning that all Croatian things are backwards, primitive and unworthy of attention. Needless to say, provincial, peripheral, and frontier phenomena occur in any milieu, and the proponents of the “positive modesty” of Croatian art did not understand or did not know the key monuments. There are in Croatia quite a few works of “great art,” but, as we have shown, Croatia has often been demographically less sufficient than, say, Germany or Italy, or even the neighboring Hungary. So there were fewer economically powerful patrons or communities, less dedicated public, and “great art” did not manifest itself in many monuments. But those were as great, as cosmopolitan, and as “modern” as those in any other European milieu. Indeed, when there was a need, one could always find a powerful and influential donor to support works on the highest European level. In medieval Slavonia there were two cathedrals, as there were two bishoprics (Zagreb and Pécs,



Djakovo and Sirmium being marginal latecomers). When faced with an interesting and well-funded project, our milieu could always employ excellent artists who created masterpieces such as the Buvina doors, Radovan's Portal, bell towers of St. Mary in Zadar and St. Domnius in Split, monastery churches at Topusko, Bijela and Nuštar, the rose window in Čazma, the chapel at Medvedgrad, the Cathedral of Zagreb, to list just a few top monuments from Croatia's mature Middle Ages (Goss 2010).

It is clear, I repeat for the umpteenth time, that the natural ecology, the eternal natural space, is the basis of all we spoke about when we tried to define the characteristics of Croatian total ecology – its splintered character, autarchy, poor flow, polycentricity, and demographic insufficiency. Some of those characteristics are of a purely physical kind, but some are not. Demographic insufficiency, low population density is a function of splintering; so also is polycentricity. But they are also a reflection of the human, cultural factors. Poor flow obviously depends on the relief, but the human factor may improve it, and the same is true of autarchy. Someone has to exist and act for autarchy to occur. Therefore we may invoke total ecology, not just the natural one.

This, of course, means that one should take into consideration the dynamic, human factor. In those terms there are in Croatia two clear turning points. One is the fall of the urban, Roman order, the other one is the Turkish invasion. In both cases there are extensive human, cultural and genetic changes. In the first case we have immigration of a group speaking Slavic languages, in the other an incursion of a foreign, non-European culture into the European system along with some, albeit not remarkable, genetic changes.

We have noticed that an average Croat has ca. 25% Slavic and 50% pre-Slavic genes. This may have offended some, but this is a tremendous discovery for the sphere of culture. For centuries we have been trying to incorporate into the “national” canon such cultural phenomena as the Illyrian “gradine” (forts), the Diocletian Palace, the Amphitheater in Pula, the Basilica Euphrasiana in Poreč, the Aljamiado poetry... Genetic discoveries enable us to list all those phenomena as “ours” as we are the natural heirs to their creators. The genetic constant has existed here since the beginning of time. And what about such phenomena as Nicola of Florence (Nikola Firentinac), Pavao Ritter Vitezović, Bartol Felbinger, Herman Bollé, foreigners acting within Croatia's culture? They also fit with the continuity, not by the way of natural genetics, but rather of a cultural one, and this is the language, be it a spoken one or the language of artistic forms.

Are we in fact at “a third turning point?” I would venture to say that we are. And so also is the entire Europe, if not Humankind. Knowing where we are, where we had come from, and by what paths and avenues, would greatly help us realize who we are. Without clearly answering that latest query, we cannot turn anywhere – *we are lost*.

#### **IV. Croatian Cultural Ecology and Europe**

We have demonstrated that the cultural ecology of the country today called Croatia is specific and unique. It has been defined by the natural ecology and the human factor. Croatia is a part of the world called Europe. Therefore one could assume that there are points of contact between Croatian cultural ecology and that of Europe.

In order to be sure we must first try to define the European cultural ecology. Europe is a geographic area the borders of which are the Urals, the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus, and the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the North Sea. This means that Europe has roughly the form of a triangle, the base of which is in the Urals, and the tip at the Iberian Peninsula. As this Europe gets thinner toward the West, its relief changes; the East is dominated by a spacious plain, and as the terrain rises, the units get smaller and smaller. The political map reflects that phenomenon. It is quite obvious in Central Europe, but even the large West European countries of today used to be conglomerates of smaller units. The eastern part is more uniform, but historically this was less obvious as smaller units were determined by watercourses and forests. As a culture is usually defined by the places which produce larger quantities of cultural goods, the paradigmatic space of European culture are West, Central and Southern Europe. This is the area, traditionally speaking, of Western Christianity (Catholicism, Protestantism) whereas Orthodoxy rules the Eastern plains.

That smaller Western Europe, displays a high degree of natural unity primarily characterized by splintering as a function of natural ecology. As in Croatia we notice the dichotomy: sea vs. continent. Along with splintering, there goes poliocentricity and the fact that Europe was but rarely and never completely unified under one scepter. There was Rome, the Carolingian, and Holy Roman Empire, the EU, but even then there were strong local trends. A division into the Mediterranean, Central Europe and the Northwest is a fact. The rivers both limited the flow-through while also acting as links in space. Relatively small and limited surfaces of arable land contribute to the sense of splintering and poliocentricity, which, paradoxically, would become one of the reasons why Europe would develop industrial production and long-distance trade. That "Western Europe" enjoys overall a relatively mild climate, with extremes occurring only at the far North and South. A lot of its surface is close to the big blue sea, one more factor favorable to long distance trade and the search for adventure (Cunliffe 2008). The people of Europe are mostly Indo-Europeans, they speak Indo-European languages, and the majority follow the western versions of Christianity. It is no wonder that a person in Portugal, Finland or Slovakia asserts: "I am a European!" It is not hard to imagine that the cultural ecology would have many points in common in various parts of that Europe. What follows is that Croatian cultural ecology should display quite a few characteristics of the rest of the Continent. Specifically, one can compare it to Greece and its natural ecology. It is true that Classical Antiquity was one of the pillars of the European cultural ecology. It provided it with anthropocen-

tricity, democracy, entrepreneurship, and private property to a greater extent than the neighboring regions. The relief of Greece and its maritime orientation are also built into the future vicissitudes of Europe. We are back to the logical postulate that there are people of the mountain and people of the plain, of the coast and continent, etc.

In spring 2011 at the conference *Heritage Reinvents Europe* in Ename in Flanders, I listened to the paper by Meier Thomas “From Landscape in Europe to a European Landscape” (Thomas 2011). I think that Mr. Thomas would not accept my analysis above, although it is explicitly written into his own system as one of the unavoidable factors – formalistic-geographic. The author insists on the “practice” of “landscape use,” with which I wholeheartedly agree, as my concept of cultural landscape is not merely physical and palpable, but involves also spiritual and impalpable values. If I understood correctly, one of the characteristics of the European landscape would be its “democratic” quality, i.e., higher accessibility than, say, “somewhere else.” Or, one might say, minimalization of taboos in the landscape. I agree with that, too. What happens in Croatia today when a tycoon fences in an entire mountain is anti-European behavior. Mr. Thomas, it seems to me, also considers the notion of private property, which in Europe, with its higher adherence to democracy, plays a more important role than “somewhere else.” All this is good and useful as a complement to the “geographic-formalistic” element, i.e., space, which is, ultimately, the only factor of eternity. It is interesting that as we go from the East toward the West the degree of democracy increases. This democracy we take so much pride in was not given to us by some supreme power, some inborn sense of justice, or some similar abstraction, but by the fact that we could rely only on ourselves, on our own individuality and initiative in the fight for survival, and, also, in smaller groups than “somewhere else.” Thus we learned how to appreciate our own initiative, and also the initiative and the needs of the others, what we call “tolerance.” A society of strong individuals is pre-disposed for democracy, as the strong individuals must know how to come to terms with each other. When they are successful all is fine and well, but when they are not, which has often been the case; we have crises and clashes from the family to the Europe-wide level. Still Europe was never particularly open to Oriental satrapy. When a fistful of Normans started out to conquer southern Italy and Sicily, when Yermak Timofeyevich set out with a few colleagues to conquer Siberia, when the immigrant to the U.S. went West, we witnessed the same European spirit of initiative and adventure. Inquisitiveness, the drive to explore, innovation, tolerance (not inborn but a result of need) – this is cultural ecology of Europe. And now tell me that Croatia does not participate in this phenomenon! That similarities we have quoted must be understood as unity in diversity seems to have been the conclusion of Mr. Thomas’ paper.

Croatian cultural ecology is, of course, not the same as that of Finland or Portugal. Herein lies another beauty of Europe: diversity which we can still recognize as our own, as in the most different situations we can recognize ourselves and our tradition.

This is definitely true of the art, too. Master Radovan, Buvina, the Lauranas, Račić, Murtić; Zoranić, Marulić, Gundulić, Kranjčević, Tadijanović, Vesna Parun, Slamnig; Sorkočević, Bersa, and Kelemen are ours and Europe's. A person familiar with the European artistic language can also "read" them.

Recognizing, accepting and further developing Croatian cultural ecology is not just an issue of identity, but also an obligation toward the broader European community; of course, in terms of unity in diversity. In the European context uniformity kills. An uncritical acceptance of foreign trash is not a sign of "being cultured," but a suicidal act and a crime toward the broader European community. Or, as Mr. Thomas neatly put it: "Practice is a specific way to approach diversity."



## V. Conclusion

Space... Substance... Sense...

Space – *Natura*, Natural Ecology, Material World, is definitely the eternal, physical substance of our existence. There are earthquakes, thunderstorms, floods, fires, wind, glaciers, yet the grand picture does not change much. Space is forever.

So also is Spirit, coeternal with Space. Spirit creates, brings about change. From physical and chemical processes, mechanical change such as erosion, silting, evaporation, through the acts of the Living Nature, plants, animals, and human beings, the degree of endowment with Spirit grows, and so also its influence on Nature. Thus, we are back to our initial equation: total ecology equals *natura plus cultura*.

In order to cope with eternity and infinity Culture has invented Time. Time is closely linked to Space, but is not a necessary condition for Space to exist. Thus it is less eternal than Space, or, essentially, trivial.

Time could measure space. We say: “From point A to point B it takes three hours.” If there is no space, and no points A and B, the measure called “Three hours” is senseless. If there is Space, the point A and B certainly exist, but they do not care about the “Three hours.” Yet, we do. We measure space for our convenience. By bringing “culture” into Space we make it more understandable, more convenient, more usable, more sensible... We organize Space in order to get better hold of it and to leave our imprint on eternity. We may succeed and make Space more sensible, more appealing, more livable, or we may fail.

By saying “appealing” we have brought in a dimension of judgment made by our senses when experiencing our surroundings. Presumably we find Space more livable and usable, if it is more sensible and more pleasing to our senses, i.e., “beautiful.” Presumably, I say, as from general experience one knows very well that people do all kinds of nasty things to their environment. And whereas the grand picture may just minimally change, the cultural landscape, a slice of cultural ecology linked to a certain place, time or group, does change. It, in fact, never stands still, it can never be preserved, but by intervening we should make our environment more sensible and more beautiful.

We have developed the above ideas and concepts working in the field, taking in both Nature’s component and the contribution of the Spirit, i.e., people. By relying on the concept of cultural ecology we have discovered traces of a cultural landscape we did not even dream of a decade ago. We managed to do so by using an integrated approach which maintains that there is an all-embracing art of the human kind, an activity whereby the spirit becomes incorporated into the inert matter and thus

accessible to human senses, primarily in terms of image, sound or motion. In our explorations we have attempted to discover those fragments and link them up into a system – a cultural landscape – a layer of cultural ecology of the land that is today called Croatia, and is mostly inhabited by the people calling themselves the Croats. The structure of the local natural ecology is the eternal, given framework; the variable, defining specific layers, is the specific spirituality of their creators. Placing artistic phenomena within the parameters of the space and their reading in an integral sense within the space-determined factors is, we believe, a way into a new type of art history, as Professor Milan Pelc neatly summed it up in the discussion after our session entitled “The Messages of Space” at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of Croatian Art Historians in Zagreb in November 2010. Croatian cultural ecology is a part of European cultural ecology, in particular West European. Whereas there may be interesting East European or Oriental-Balkan phenomena, these are exceptions to be expected in a frontier land. Since time immemorial, Croatia has been a land of countryside, the city has been an accident, a foreign body which at favorable spots domesticated rather well and which knew how to find its place within the local space, but imposed, savage and megalomaniac urbanization has always been a crime on Croatian cultural ecology. Much remains to be done, but we hope to have outlined some of the fundamental rules. We also believe that respecting those would lead to a better and happier future.

We did not pull our picture out of thin air. We did not play with hypotheses, we did not assume or surmise, but based our conclusions maximally on the facts available. If a mountain is called Perun, then it is dedicated to Perun and not to Zeus, and it was so named by a Slav and not a Chinaman. If we encounter such names as Dulepska (village) or Dulepski potok (creek) then it was the Slavic Dulebs who had lived there and left the imprint of their spirituality – not the Eskimos. If the word Glamoč (Glamač, Lamač, Dlamač) and the accompanying aquatic feature appears within a huge area from the Baltic to the Adriatic, then the same area is home to speakers of the same or similar languages. If we find the word Budinjak in Croatia and in Belarus, thousands of kilometers apart, it is highly likely that the meaning, i.e., a dwelling sheltering Veles, is the same, as Katičić has concluded on the basis of Belarus folk poetry (Katičić 2008). If in landscape structures which obviously retain traces of distant past we encounter the name Trem, then it is quite likely that the site hides traces of a hall of some early Slavic magnate. Dealing in facts with a minimum of imagination keeps the scholarly discourse closer to truth. Depending on facts also limits the thirst for “political correctness” as fashions in science come and go. I emphasize this in order to demonstrate the enormous documentary value of the human landscape, of the space that surrounds us, and of cultural landscapes we create on the basis of the given natural ecology. I repeat: all it takes is learning how to read it!

It is clear that without a vision of where we want to go and where we want to arrive there is little chance to start moving at all. Without erroneous hypotheses humans would still be sitting in caves. Hypotheses are needed, they must be tested, and if

they prove unacceptable, rejected, and new ones proposed. In our case, this would mean arriving at the state in which we could on the basis of our method credibly speak about artistic creativity on the territory of a country, say Croatia, and define how it fits with a larger, say European, model of cultural ecology.

In doing this, one should bear in mind that I am an historian of visual arts. I have no illusions about my ability to credibly speak from a position of an integrated approach. A curriculum of studies which would train us to do so, to the best of my knowledge, does not exist at any American or European university. Yet, this may not be all that important. In the already mentioned book, Denis Dutton has based his conclusion primarily on examples from music and literature, areas he knows very well. There is not a single example of architecture! Still the book has universal value as Denis grasped the gist of the problem, i.e., that a part may stand for the whole if we accept the interconnection of all “branches” of the arts as we know them today (Dutton 2009). This study has been based on what this author knows best, the world of visual arts, and, within it, on what is the most sacred to a human being, and that is his home and its surroundings, and other visual aspects within and in relation to this space. Some 45 years ago a friend from England told me: “You have so much beauty that you can afford to destroy some. In England, we cannot do so.”

We must learn what we have, how and why to preserve it, and wisely develop further. Otherwise, we will lose our identity which is anyway seriously threatened by “globalization” a hell of metal, glass, and concrete created for some very rich and evil men so they may feel secure in that brave new world of their making. As an American and also an EU citizen by “We” I primarily mean the participants in Western Culture. But it applies to humankind in general. I believe that the concepts and method I have advocated would substantially lessen the above mentioned danger. So, go tell your politicians that the school subject “I Love My Environment” should be taught as of the first grade of primary school.

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### Abbreviations

**AMZ** – Arheološki muzej (Archeological Museum) Zagreb

**HMNU** – Hrvatski muzej naivne umjetnosti (Croatian Museum of Naïve Art), Zagreb

**HPM** – Hrvatski povijesni muzej (Museum of Croatian History), Zagreb

**IPU** – Institut za povijest umjetnosti (Institute of Art History), Zagreb

**MHAS** – Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika (Museum of Croatian Archeological Monuments), Split

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Where no author is indicated the owner of the photo is Vladimir P. Goss.

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Vladimir Peter Goss (Vladimir Gvozdanović) was born in Zagreb in 1942. He spent 30 years, 1969–1999 abroad, mostly in the U.S. He is a graduate of the Classical Gymnasium in Zagreb, and he took a B.A. in English and a B.A. and M. A. in Art History at the University of Zagreb. He took his Ph.D. in Art History at Cornell University (Ithaca, N.Y.). He taught at the University of Michigan, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Tel Aviv. He is the author or co-author of 15 scholarly books and 94 scholarly articles, mostly on medieval art with an emphasis on the Pre-Romanesque and Romanesque. His works have been published in Austria, Croatia, France, Hungary, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and the U.S. As chair and or speaker he has appeared at 68 international scholarly conferences in the Belgium, Croatia, France, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Luxemburg, Slovakia, and the U.S. He was a member of the Organizational Board of the exhibition *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator* (Luxembourg-Budapest 2006), the Croatian coordinator of the EC project the *Cradles of European Culture* (2008-2012); he held 31 scholarly grants including NEH, IREX, ACLS, APS, Gulbenkian, etc., was a Director of the project “The Romanesque between the Sava and the Drava Rivers and the European Culture,” Ministry of Science of the Republic of Croatia (2003-2014). Currently he is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Rijeka, and a member of Graduate Faculty at the University of Zagreb.







