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**The Stuff of Christmas Homemaking:**  
*Transforming the House and Church on Christmas Eve*  
*in the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro*\*

**Abstract:** The domestic burning of Yule logs on Christmas Eve is an archaic tradition characteristic of the Christian population in the central Balkans. In the fifty years following World War Two, the socialist state suppressed these and other popular religious practices. However, ethnographic research in Serbia and Montenegro in the late 1980s showed that many village households, nevertheless, preserved their traditional Christmas rituals at home, in contrast to the larger towns, in which they were practically eradicated. Even in the micro-regions, such as the Bay of Kotor, there were observable differences between more secluded rural communities, in which the open hearth is still the ritual center of the house (on which the Yule logs are burned as many as seven times during the Christmas season), and the towns in which only a few households continued with the rite (burning small logs in the wood-stove). In the early 1990s, however, a revival of domestic religious celebrations as well as their extension into the public realm has occurred. This study shows how on Christmas Eve, houses and churchyards (as well as town-squares) are being transformed into sacred places. By analyzing the temporal and spatial aspects of this ritual event, the roles that the key actors play, the actions they undertake and artifacts they use, I attempt to demonstrate how the space of everyday life is transformed into a sacred home. In the end, the meanings and functions of homemaking are discussed in a way that confronts the classic distinction between private and public ritual environs.

**Key words:** Christmas, Yule log, ritual, homemaking, postsocialism, Montenegro

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## In Search of Home on Christmas Eve

Ethnographic evidence collected by Sir James Frazer and others pointed to the burning of Yule logs at the winter **solstice** in mid-nineteenth century Britain, parts of Germany, Flanders, France and the Balkans as the remaining examples of indoor ceremonial seasonal fires.<sup>1</sup> Reports from the late twentieth century confirm the presence of this domestic rite in a few countries situated along the northern Mediterranean coast, such as Portugal, Spain, France, Serbia and Albania.<sup>2</sup> However, only contemporary Christmas Eve practices in the central Balkans, among the Serbian Orthodox population in Serbia and Montenegro and other parts of former Yugoslavia,<sup>3</sup> reveal a wide-spread public observance of Badnjak burning – the Badnjak, a specially selected and shaped piece of wood, being the Serbian counterpart of the Yule log. This event represents a singularity on the European cultural map of open-air winter ceremonies.

Why is there a public celebration when Christmas Eve is traditionally a domestic event? What is the link between the private and public burning of the Badnjak, we might ask. In order to answer this question, I suggest a comparative viewing of the Christmas Eve homemaking ritual in the public and private domains. The intention is to point to similarities and differences between them, but also to find out about their mutual relationship in terms of form and structure. This inquiry thus assumes learning about the sources of homemakers' ritual knowledge, the temporal and spatial frameworks of their practice, the ritual structure, actors and materials involved. In the end, I hope to discuss the meaning and function of homemaking in a way that confronts the classic distinction between private and public ritual environs.

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<sup>1</sup> J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A study in Magic and Religion*. Macmillan and Co. London 1922. Evidence about the same ritual practices still existing in Scandinavia, Ireland and northern Italy may be found in R. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*. Oxford University Press. Oxford & New York 1997: 1-53. The earliest such accounts on the territory of the present Montenegro and the neighboring regions were given by V. Stefanović Karadžić, V. Vrčević, S. Nakićenović, M. Gavazzi, S. Trojanović and others (see Literature).

<sup>2</sup> Ethnographic accounts of domestic Christmas celebrations accompanied by Badnjak burning in mid-twentieth century and later were given by Š. Kulišić and R. Kajmaković (for Bosnia and Herzegovina), M. Gavazzi and D. Rihtman-Auguštin (for Croatia), J. Vukmanović (for Montenegro), V. Čajkanović, P. Kostić and M. Bosić (for Serbia). The most recent reports from Portugal, Spain, France, Serbia and Albania were presented at the international symposium entitled *L'Europe, son histoire et ses fetes (Europe, its History and its Festivities)*, Montpellier, 4-7 septembre, 1998 (unpublished conference papers).

<sup>3</sup> Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia.

## Themes and Contexts

The topic dealt with here belongs to the domain of religion in general, but also to a specific area in which church and popular religious practices meet and intertwine. This is a matter that touches upon themes such as traditional religious practices and the influence of politics on ritual, statehood and identity. It is also related to the changes that were taking place in postsocialist Yugoslavia. More specifically, it follows what happens to the inhabitants of Montenegro in the period of a revival of their national and religious identity within the new common state with Serbia in the first part of 1990s, but also with the first signs of the distancing of Montenegro from Serbia, characteristic of the later part of the same decade.

Now, a few words about this point in time. The postsocialist period in Yugoslavia started with the erosion of state and economic stability at the end of the 1980s, and the introduction of the multi-party system in 1990. It continued with the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991 caused by the secession of most of its republics. This whole process was accompanied by a four year civil war, which finally ended with the Dayton Agreement in November 1995. In the meantime, the only two former republics ready to succeed the previous state of the South Slavs; Serbia and Montenegro, reunited in 1992 within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

This was also the period of a turning back to old religious traditions, first at home and then in public, which emerged out of a need for a revival of national and religious identity, previously suppressed in the multinational socialist state. In those early days of postsocialism, parochial priests and their parishioners, in joint effort, "brought out" Christmas celebrations into churchyards and town squares. The Serbian Orthodox Church thus took over the dominant role in the articulation of public celebrations of Christmas. As the burning of Badnjaks is not canonically prescribed by the Church, the space for adjusting the ways of celebrating between the parochial priest and the local community was open for variations centered around the rite of "Badnjak christening". In each particular case, the rules for open air Christmas celebrations were being negotiated within the parish board in which the priest sat together with the delegated parishioners. These were the times when the inhabitants of Montenegro generally felt as one with Serbia, mainly exhibiting dual national identity, Montenegrin and Serbian.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In contemporary Montenegro, the Census is not a relevant measure of ethnic (national) affiliation of its inhabitants. Allowing the choice of only one category, the Census questionnaire does not take into account actual ethnic complexity, which is often expressed by two or even three simultaneous kinds of individual ethnic/regional affiliation.

Approaching the times in which the described events are embedded, the political situation started to shift in the opposite direction. During the winter 1996/97 Students' Protest in Belgrade, organized by the opposition as a reaction to the Serbian president Slobodan Milošević not accepting the parliamentary election results (from the fall of 1996), the first signs of distancing of part of the Montenegrin political elite became visible. Very soon, the Democratic Party of Socialists, the dominant political party in Montenegro, split into two factions; those who wanted a continuation of close relations with Serbia formed a new party, called the Socialist People's Party.<sup>5</sup> From then on, there was a struggle between two political alternatives in Montenegro, the first of which opted for a loose confederation and eventually independence, and the other which aspired to remain in tight federation with Serbia. This process of political differentiation put the citizens of Montenegro in a position to choose between one of two clear-cut ethnic/political identities – they were to be either Montenegrins or Serbs.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, the participants in the Christmas celebrations organized by the parishes of the Serbian Orthodox Church all over Montenegro were now exhibiting even more attachment to a Serbian identity and to the Serbian Orthodox Archbishop of Montenegro, as opposed to a Montenegrin identity and the recently founded citizens' group that called themselves the Montenegrin Orthodox Church.<sup>7</sup>

### Homemakers: Visiting a Domestic and a Church Host

I chose to study Christmas practices in the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro, among the Orthodox population who consider themselves to be either Serbs, Montenegrins, or both. Fieldwork was based both in rural and urban areas of the Herceg Novi municipality. On different occasions in the period between January 1996 and August 1998, I studied Christmas Eve practices via direct observation and detailed interviewing, based on a standardized survey questionnaire. Almost every host of the 100 permanent households in the northwestern part of

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<sup>5</sup> The Socialist People's Party of Montenegro (SNP CG) was founded in February 1998. See: [www.snp.cb.yu](http://www.snp.cb.yu) (dokumenti)

<sup>6</sup> This is explicitly visible in the data that came out of the presidential, parliamentary and local elections starting from 1997 onwards.

<sup>7</sup> The Serbian Orthodox Church Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral is the legal successor of the original Zeta Bishopric of the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church on the territory of Montenegro (founded in 1220), while the so-called Montenegro Orthodox Church was organized by a group of Montenegrin nationalists gathered around the party called Liberalni Savez in 1993, and three years later registered as a citizens' group. Since the mid-1990s, this group also started to organize Badnjak burning events in front of the old court of King Nikola I (ruled 1860-1918) in Cetinje.

the Luštica Peninsula<sup>8</sup> was surveyed. Intensive interviews with the parish priests in Hercegnovi and the nearby towns as well as the pilot study among 40 townsmen of Hercegnovi and Tivat revealed the common characteristics of Christmas Eve celebrations in various church and house-sites.

For this occasion I will present two concrete cases of Christmas Eve celebrations which I observed myself, and which are both in their constant features and in their variable components, typical representations of their own category.<sup>9</sup> Complete opposites are described in that one represents a rural domestic event with a continuous ritual tradition, while the second represents an urban public event with an interruption in its tradition during socialism. I attended the domestic celebration in the Luštica Peninsula in 1997, and the church celebration in Hercegnovi in 1998, both occurring on January 6<sup>th</sup>, which is December 25<sup>th</sup> according to the Julian calendar.<sup>10</sup>

Since a homemaker, by definition, is the one who manages the household, I shall present two people who are each, in their own domain, responsible for the organization and the implementation of the Christmas Eve celebrations. The domestic homemaker is a retired administrative worker of indigenous origin, who was a communist party member until the 1980s, and who manages a seven-member household comprised of three generations. He lives in one of thirteen Luštica hamlets in a new house built on the foundations of an old one, on the home-site inherited from his forefathers who came from Herzegovina at least three centuries ago. The public homemaker is a middle-aged parish priest of Montenegrin origin, born in Kosovo, who was posted to Hercegnovi in 1988 to restore the Old Town parish, and reactivate the church of St. Michael the Archangel. With his family and parents he lives next to the church in the parochial house which he rebuilt from the ruins that remained after the same earthquake that destroyed the old country house in Luštica.

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<sup>8</sup> Luštica is pronounced as "Lushtica".

<sup>9</sup> Detailed description of the domestic celebration in Luštica is given in V. Vučinić, Christmas Celebration on the Luštica Peninsula in the Bay of Kotor: Schedule of a Domestic Holiday. In: Dragana Radojičić (ed.), *Traditional and Contemporary in Serbian Culture*. Special issues of the Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Belgrade 2003. Church celebration in Hercegnovi was described in comparative perspective in: V. Vučinić-Nešković, The Public Burning of Yule Logs in the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro. *Ethnologia Balkanica* 5. 2001: 109-134. Description and detailed analysis of varied church celebrations in the Bay of Kotor may be found in: V. Vučinić-Nešković, *Christmas in the Bay of Kotor: Anthropological Essays on the Public Burning of Yule Logs in the Time of Postsocialism*. School of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade and Čigoja Štampa. Belgrade 2008.

<sup>10</sup> The Serbian Orthodox Church follows the "old", or the Julian Calendar, which differs by thirteen days from the "new" or Gregorian Calendar, adopted by the other Christian churches. Thus, the Orthodox New Year's Day falls on January 14<sup>th</sup>.

### Sources of the Homemaker's Knowledge

Ritual knowledge in both the private and public domains is based on individual family traditions from which techniques, body-movements, phrases and words applied in the ritual were transferred from one generation to another by the actual repetition of the procedures their forefathers observed previously.

However, while Badnjak practices in the Luštica household are primarily prescribed by the house traditions tied to the inheritance of the home-site, the analogous public practice is not regulated by any liturgical prescriptions or canonical rules of the Orthodox Church. It is in fact based on a creative blend of various sources of knowledge wrapped in the homemaker's theological interpretation of the Biblical description of the Holy birth. The parish priest holds on to his childhood memories of family traditions,<sup>11</sup> he accommodates to the predominant domestic traditions within the parish he serves, he looks up to the ideal ritual model performed at the highest level of the church hierarchy (which is Cetinje Monastery, the seat of the Serbian Orthodox Archbishop of Montenegro), and he looks about at the neighboring parishes. This particular priest could also look back into the history of the Old Town parish practices. Collective memories of the town natives preserved yet another important source of ritual knowledge.<sup>12</sup> The town-square on which the church of St. Michael the Archangel stands, served as the Christmas Eve ritual site in the late 1930s, when the soldiers serving the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941)<sup>13</sup> came from the nearby barracks to ceremonially place the Badnjak on the open fire. Thus, when the priest organized the Church Badnjak in 1991, one of the first such events in the Bay of Kotor,<sup>14</sup> he was actually reaching for the lost link with the monarchical tradition of open-air Badnjak burning. In that sense, the church celebration of Christmas Eve in Hercegnovi is, at least formally, a revival of a tradition that existed sixty years ago.

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<sup>11</sup> Originating from Montenegro three generations ago.

<sup>12</sup> According to the interview with the Old Town parish priest, and with one of the Hercegnovi old-timers (S. C.), conducted in July, 1998.

<sup>13</sup> The official name of this state in the period between 1918 and 1929 was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, while in the aftermath (1929-1941) it was called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

<sup>14</sup> Two years before (in 1989), his colleague from the neighboring parish of Topla inaugurated this celebration in the northwestern part of the Bay. According to the information acquired in the interviews conducted with the two priests (Dj. O. and R. B.) in July, 1998.

### Homemaking Time: Christmastide and Christmas Eve

According to domestic tradition in the Bay of Kotor, Christmastide begins on Christmas Eve and ends with "the final Christmas" on St. Sava's Day,<sup>15</sup> thus extending over the period between January 6th and January 27th. Practically, it means that Christmastide is marked by the beginning and the end of the Badnjak burning season. In the domestic domain of the Luštica household, Badnjaks are gathered on St. Ignite's Day (January 2) and burned four times during Christmastide, i.e. on Christmas Eve (January 6), on Orthodox New Year's Eve (January 13), on the Eve of Epiphany (January 18), and on the Eve of St. Sava (January 26).<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the partially burned remnant of one of the Badnjaks, which is perpetually added to the new Badnjaks, as well as the Badnjak ashes, is kept on the hearth throughout this three-week period, make a material link between all four events of Christmastide. By contrast, the open-air church celebration of Christmastide is concentrated into only one evening, Christmas Eve.

As the domestic Christmas Eve ritual in Luštica does not compete with any public event, the central ritual event of "Badnjak christening" begins, according to the traditionally prescribed timing, right after sunset, at around 6 p.m. By contrast, the Christmas Eve event at church accommodates two other schedules – the domestic ritual schedule of the townsmen similar to the one in Luštica, and the schedule of the neighboring church celebrations.<sup>17</sup> This way,

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<sup>15</sup> St. Sava is the most respected saint of Serbian origin. Stemming from the Nemanjić family, the longest ruling medieval Serbian dynasty, St. Sava (originally Rastko Nemanjić, the youngest son of the dynasty founder Stefan Nemanja) won autocephalous status for the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1219. He also founded bishoprics covering the whole territory of the Serbian medieval state, among which was the Zeta Bishopric in the Bay of Kotor, situated at Prevlaka in the vicinity of the Luštica Peninsula. This institution was the predecessor of the presentday Serbian Orthodox Archbishopric of Montenegro, officially called The Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral. S. Ćirković (ed.), *History of the Serbian People 1*. Serbian Literary Cooperative. Belgrade 1981: 315-327. M. Janković, *Bishoprics and Archbishoprics of the Serbian Church in the Middle Ages*. Historical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Belgrade 1985: 17-33, 61-78.

<sup>16</sup> Otherwise, the number of occasions on which the Banjaks are burned in Luštica varies between one and seven times. Next to the mentioned four occasions, they may also be burned on the eves of other holy days within the Christmas Tide period, such as the Eve of Congregation of the Virgin (January 7), the Eve of St. Stephen's Day (January 8), and the eve of St. John's Day (January 20).

<sup>17</sup> For example, the celebration of Christmas Eve in Savina Monastery starts at 5 p.m., while the celebration at Topla starts at 8:00 p.m. In both cases the Badnjak christening rite follows the Evening Liturgy, which in the first place lasts over two hours, and in the second, it takes about thirty minutes.

the Hercegnovi townsfolk may observe their house practices first, and then, besides attending the celebration of the church of St. Michael the Archangel (between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m.), visit other churches as well. It is thus obvious that the church event complements the domestic event and concurrently avoids overlapping with the public rituals of the neighboring parishes.

### Homemaking Space and Place

The domestic ritual space in Luštica is enveloped by the wall of the residential compound. However, within this private domain, not all spaces are of equal ritual importance. The spaces of primary importance are those which are marked by the Christmas greenery decoration and by the ritual actions performed in them. The core ritual activity takes place firstly in the detached courtyard building known as the "old kitchen" (*стара кујина*), and secondly in the multipurpose main house space, called the "new kitchen" (*нова кујина*). Badnjak burning on the open hearth takes place in the first room, and the Christmas Eve dinner in the second. The living-rooms of the main house and the renovated old house in which the icons are kept, the bedrooms of the younger generation, and the central courtyard, are also included in the fumigation activity. Conversely, the grandparents' rooms in the new house as well as the olive mill and the storage-place underneath the old house are not directly embraced by the ritual actions, however, their attachment to spaces of primary importance makes them part of the ritual whole.

The underbrush from which decorative greenery is cut, the olive groves from which Badnjaks are picked as well as small garden dells next to the house, all remain outside the ritual domain per se, and belong to the preparatory stage of the Christmas Eve event. The footpaths and local roads, which lead to neighboring houses, are used in the post Badnjak burning time for the intravillage exchange of male visits, ringing of church bells at midnight, and collective roasting of homemade sausages in the early hours of Christmas Day.

The public ritual space in Hercegnovi is concentrated in the town-square on which the church of St. Michael the Archangel stands. While the Christmas Eve Liturgy takes place within the church (at the altar, *naos* and *pronaos*), the whole Badnjak event takes place in and out of the churchyard (*paperta*), the sacral space surrounding the church which, according to municipal regulations, is three to four meters wide. However, since the borderline between church property and town property is invisible, the imaginary churchyard on this occasion expands onto the whole town-square. As in the domestic domain, the ritual stage is marked with symbolic greenery, which is first placed in front of the church, and then, during the Badnjak burning event, moved to its southern wall. The ritual center is an open hearth temporarily built of soil

and sand on which a large fire is built. The courtyard of the parochial house, i.e. the priest's homemaking domain, is the space in which all the preparations are made for his own and the church Badnjak events. The preparatory space also extends to all the parishioners' houses in which Christmas Eve is celebrated. The family Badnjaks are brought to the front of the house or apartment entrance, one of which will be carried to burn on the church fire.

### Homemaking Activities

Christmas Eve homemaking activities in both domains start with the picking of Badnjaks and close with the tolling of church bells as an announcement of the arrival of Christmas. If they are comparatively observed, they show close resemblance, which may be noted from the following list:

<b>Domestic domain activities:</b>	<b>Public domain activities:</b>
a. Picking Badnjaks	Cutting Badnjaks <sup>18</sup>
b. Notching Badnjaks	Notching Badnjaks
c. Making a fire on the open hearth	
d. Picking Decorative Greenery	Cutting Decorative Greenery
e. Decorating Badnjaks	Decorating Badnjaks
f. Decorating the house-site	Decorating the church-site
g.	Making a fire for the Badnjaks
h. Tolling the church bells	Tolling the church bells
i.	Christmas Eve Liturgy* <sup>19</sup>
j. Bearing Badnjaks	Bearing Badnjaks
k. Greeting Badnjaks	Greeting Badnjaks

<sup>18</sup> The distinction between "picking" and "cutting" Badnjaks in the domestic and church environs reflects different relationships to Badnjaks, the domestic one being more intimate and using softer words to denote the activity of cutting logs than the church one. The same relationship is expressed towards ritual greenery. In everyday life, the verb "to pick" (*brati*) is used when referring to flowers or fruits (*brati cvetne ili plodove*), while "to cut" (*sjeћи*) is used when referring to trees and branches (*sjeћи drvo ili granu*). Thus, in the domestic context, "to pick" is a euphemism for the ritual activity of cutting sacred trees and branches.

<sup>19</sup> An asterisk (\*) is placed by the ritual activities that are characteristics of only one of the events. Even though not always present in the same order, all the other activities are included in both events.

<b>Domestic domain activities:</b>	<b>Public domain activities:</b>
l. Showering Badnjaks with wheat	Sprinkling Badnjaks with wheat
m. Placing Badnjaks on an open hearth	Placing Badnjaks on hearth
n.	Fumigating Badnjaks (along with hymn singing)
o. Christening Badnjaks with red wine	Christening Badnjaks with red wine
p. Toasting to Badnjaks*	
q. Gun firing into open air*	
r. Sharing food (Christmas Eve dinner)	Sharing spiritual food (Christmas songs and verses)
s. Fumigating the house and the Badnjaks (along with the performance of prayers)	
t. Acquiring religious knowledge (virtual experience – through TV)	Absorbing religious knowledge (actual experience – <i>in situ</i> )
u. Keeping company with the Badnjaks	Standing around the Badnjaks
v. Indoor collective celebration	Outdoor collective celebration
w. Removing a Badnjak part off the hearth*	
x. Tolling church bells at midnight	Tolling church bells at midnight. difference

All but four of the listed activities are present in both the domestic and public domains of the Christmas Eve celebration. First, the Christmas Eve Liturgy is obviously *differentia specifica* of the church celebration. It should also be noted that gun-firing in open air, as a traditional sign that the Badnjak christening has been performed, is omitted from the official public activities.<sup>20</sup> The third difference is only in kind, i.e. while the domestic event entails sharing of physical food (Christmas Eve dinner), the church event includes the sharing of spiritual food (Christmas verses and songs).<sup>21</sup> This difference is probably connected

<sup>20</sup> However, it is substituted by the explosions of firecrackers thrown throughout the town as well as the sounds of firing in domestic environs. Otherwise, gun-firing has been legally prohibited in public celebrations due to accidents that had previously happened on such occasions.

<sup>21</sup> In the first years of the church celebrations on Christmas Eve, the food and spirits were served to the participants after the rite of Badnjak burning at the square. This activity comprised most of the post ritual phase of celebration by the Church of St. Michael the Archangel. However, excessive consumption of these substances was the reason that the parish priest decided to banish the serving of foodstuff from this event and, instead, to introduce the singing and recital of Christmas songs and verses. Interview with the Old Town Parish priest (July, 1998 and July, 2007).

to another, which is the absence of toasting at the church celebration. This folk custom which assumes the rising of a glass of wine in honour of the holiday, the household members and their guests (usually just before the meal begins), was obviously considered out of place for the church celebration. More specifically, it seemed unfitting before the "spiritual feast". Lastly, a part of the Badnjak is not removed from the open hearth by the church, as it will be done at home, since there will be no other public fire lit during that same Christmastide.

Apart from that, a sequential divergence appears in two cases. For example, the fire at the domestic hearth is set up in the morning and is used all through the day for food-preparation, while the fire by the church is lit in the hours of the mid afternoon solely for the purpose of Badnjak-burning. Also, while the succession of the ritual core activities is identical, the home-site ritual is characterized by: the postponed fumigation of the house and the Badnjaks (performed in the middle of dinner),<sup>22</sup> and the overlapping of food consumption and religious knowledge acquisition.

Observation of the intensity and density of ritual action procedures in the time-span devoted to the celebration of Christmas Eve, suggests a differentiation between pre-ritual, ritual, buffer, and post-ritual time. The pre-ritual phase is the time of preparation, which begins with Badnjak picking at dawn a few days before Christmas, and ends with the tolling of church bells as an announcement heralding the beginning of Christmas Eve. The ritual phase is the ritual execution time which begins with the bearing of the Badnjaks (except the church ritual includes the Evening Liturgy indoors) and ends with the conclusion of the Christmas Eve feast (of material or spiritual matter). The buffer phase is actually a religious knowledge acquisition time, which in the domestic domain overlaps with the real feast-time, and in public, follows the spiritual feast. In the first

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<sup>22</sup> There are two models for the fumigation of the Badnjaks and the house at Christmas Eve in Luštica. In some cases, this important ritual activity is performed in the middle of dinner, as in the referential household, while in others, it is done within the Badnjak burning rite, similar as in the described church ceremony in Hercegnovi. It seems that this split within the standardized fumigation tradition came about at the time when the Badnjak burning space (the old kitchen) was separated from the dining space (the new kitchen). In the "old times", everything and everyone was in one place at one time – the open hearth, the Badnjaks, the dinner, and the household members, and thus fumigation assumed one continual activity that could have occurred just after the Badnjaks were laid onto the hearth. After the shifting of the Christmas Eve dinner to the new kitchen (in the early 1960s), some families kept fumigation as part of the Badnjak burning rite and others attached it to the ritual dinner that followed, obviously keeping to the model of the Slava celebration (devoted to the cult of the house saint protector). In both variants the male who performs fumigation goes around the house, fumigating the Badnjaks, the food, the icons and all the rooms in the house. What varies is the order in which the places and ritual objects subject to this ritual act are visited.

case it is a virtual experience emitted by TV from the religious and political centers of Montenegro, while in the second, it is a direct experience of religious knowledge absorption from the local parish homemaker. Finally, the post-ritual phase is the time of socializing which begins with the keeping company of the Badnjaks and ends with the tolling of the church bells at midnight.

### Homemaking Actors

While the domestic host is the coordinator of preparatory male jobs and the lead actor in the ritual, his wife is his counterpart in the analogous female domain. The homemaking responsibilities are thus, in the first instance, shared between the two elders, and in the second, with the two younger generations of household members who take on their "traditional" work and ritual roles. Men are engaged with jobs concerning Badnjaks and house-decoration, women are busy preparing the foodstuff for the next few days, baking Christmas bread, washing and cleaning the house. As much as they share the preparatory work, they are all active participants in the ritual. Men bear Badnjaks and women greet them. The old host, however, performs all the main activities, such as: leading the Badnjak bearers, placing the Badnjaks on the hearth, the christening of the Badnjaks with red wine, making a toast to them, and fumigating the food and icons. He steps back as the theologian of Christmas and lets the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro and the Minister of faiths in the Republic of Montenegro emit their message over the media. The younger host is granted the responsibility for announcing the three focal ritual points – the arrival of Christmas Eve (by tolling the church bells), the christening of the Badnjaks (by gun firing into open air), and the arrival of Christmas (again, by tolling the church bells at midnight). He is also delegated to the group of middle-aged men who make post-ritual visits to their fellow villagers and thus participate in the collective celebration.

The parish priest, on the other hand, is the sole concept-maker, manager and the lead actor. He devises the plan, drawing upon different sources of ritual knowledge. He supervises the work of his assistants – the three middle-aged parishioners – who came either from Herzegovina or inland Montenegro anywhere between ten and twenty years ago, and thus are similar to him in age, origin and length of residence in the town. Some of these men, together with the church-committee members, will be appointed *ad hoc* to bear the church Badnjaks at the central event, the laying of Badnjaks on the open hearth. Like his domestic counterpart, the priest keeps all the main ritual roles for himself – the christening and fumigation of the Badnjaks – as well as the opening of the pre-ritual and the closing of the post-ritual phase (i.e. the cutting of Badnjaks, and the ringing of the church bells at midnight). Moreover, while granting the

community members the role of Badnjak bearers, he takes on the role of the hostess (from the domestic domain) who greets Badnjaks and their bearers. He is the sole preacher of the meaning of Christmas Eve to his "household" on the square. At last, while the domestic Christmas Eve ritual is strictly a private, almost esoteric event, the public church ritual is its complete opposite. What makes it public is the involvement of numerous community representatives, either as active participants, such as bearers of family Badnjaks, members of the church choir and recital sayers, or as active observers.

### Homemaking Materials

The Christmas Eve inventory of materials in the Luštica household consists of natural materials (the Badnjak, greenery, wheat grains), religious artifacts (red wine, incense, candles) as well as foodstuffs (Christmas bread, fruits, simple foods of non-animal origin, and homemade brandy). The church celebration inventory includes the first two categories of materials, but not the last.<sup>23</sup>

The material of central importance for the Christmas Eve celebration is certainly the Badnjak, the counterpart of the British *Yule log*, French *trefoir (la Buche)*, or German *Christband*. The Badnjak in the Luštica household is a specifically shaped olive tree log prepared for burning on Christmastide fires.<sup>24</sup> The number of Badnjaks required for the Christmas Eve ritual correlates with the number of their ritual bearers – in this case four household males.<sup>25</sup> Their size is adjusted to the bearer's size and age. Thus, the grandfather's Badnjak is the

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<sup>23</sup> The bread seems to be missing in the urban domestic inventory of the Christmas materials altogether, while the offerings (such as miniature doughnuts, dry figs, and brandy) were served in the first years of the public celebration, but due to the exorbitant consumption of brandy, have been abandoned in the last few years, and substituted by the program of spiritual contents.

<sup>24</sup> It should be accentuated that in the whole Bay of Kotor area, Luštica is specific for its olive tree Badnjaks. Everywhere else in the area, including Hercegnovi, the Badnjaks are dominantly cut from oak trees. In some Luštica households, however, olive Badnjaks are combined with oak and almond once, but they still dominate in number.

<sup>25</sup> The overall number of Badnjaks that this family picks is sixteen, the reason being that they repeat the sacred rite four times during Christmastide, i.e. on the occasions mentioned in the Homemaking Time section. Each family in Luštica follows its own tradition concerning the kind and number of badnjaks as well as the occasions on which they are christened. The importance of this house tradition is true for the whole area of the Bay of Kotor. A detailed account of the existing variations within this tradition in the neighbouring area of Grbalj is given in: V. Vučinić and N. Vuković, Principal Religious Celebrations in Grbalj Today. In: Miroslav Pantić and Vesna Vučinić (eds.), *Grbalj through the Centuries*. The Society for the Renovation of Podlastva Monastery. Grbalj 2005.

most potent in width, but somewhat shorter than the Badnjak of his son (the successor), while the two grandsons' branches are analogous to Badnjak's children.<sup>26</sup> After being picked, notched, and freed of leafed branches, the Badnjaks are brought to the courtyard and leaned against the wall facing the old kitchen. Their sequence from East to West follows their size, from the smallest to the largest. They are decorated by the random insertion of short leafed branches of local greenery between the Badnjaks and the courtyard wall.<sup>27</sup> Their arrangement on the open hearth at the time of their "christening" is said to follow the form of a Christian cross. However, accommodating the rectangular hearth form, this arrangement actualizes the form of a Cyrillic letter "X" ("H"), standing for *Христос* (Christ) in which the "heads" (thinner ends) of the Badnjak are turned either to northeast or southeast – East and North, according to the local folk beliefs, being the only auspicious cardinal directions. At last, the larger half of the younger host's Badnjak, the one turned towards north-west,<sup>28</sup> is removed from the hearth and brought into the courtyard garden to await the end of the Christmastide ritual cycle, when it would be burned completely to ashes.

Badnjaks for the church Christmas Eve event are all oak logs, somewhat longer and thicker than the grandfather's log,<sup>29</sup> notched angularly at the lower end and with attached decorations tucked in between their upper end and the front church façade.<sup>30</sup> Their overall number symbolizes the Twelve Apostles. However, an extra, thirteenth Badnjak is present as a mobile part of the ritual scenery. This large leafed oak branch, placed in a stand, is to be recognized as a Badnjak (in form) by the ritual participants who originate from Herzegovina and inland Montenegro.<sup>31</sup> The arrangement of 12 Badnjaks on the open hearth

<sup>26</sup> In 1997, when I observed Christmas celebrations in the Luštica household, the Badnjaks had the following dimensions: grandfather's was 1.2 m long and 15 cm in diameter, his son's was 1.4 m long and 11 cm in diameter, while the grandsons' were 116 and 90 cm long and 4-5 cm in diameter.

<sup>27</sup> Their form and mode of decoration more or less complies with the form and decoration of the Badnjaks of other Luštica households.

<sup>28</sup> This part of the Badnjak is called the Pridarak (*придарак*), meaning "the additional gift" or Pridavak (*придавак*), meaning "the one that is added".

<sup>29</sup> They were about 1.4 m in length, and 15 cm in diameter.

<sup>30</sup> A close look at the notching technique revealed an attempt to integrate the native Hercegnovi and the incoming Herzegovina domestic traditions of Badnjak decoration. The lower ends of Badnjaks were first cut under a sharp angle (as in Herzegovina) and then leveled off, partially resembling a step-like notch (made under a right angle) of Hercegnovi.

<sup>31</sup> Most of the Hercegnovi old-timers and post-Second World War migrants come from these areas. However, it is also worth reminding that the Hercegnovi parish priest and his assistants originate from highland Montenegro, and that most of the refugees from the 1991-1995 civil war who settled in Hercegnovi came from Herze-

perpetuates the shape of a cross whereby the first one always faces the East – "the direction from which the second coming of Jesus Christ is expected."<sup>32</sup>

Along with Badnjaks, the decorative tree branches are brought home as well. The Luštica household traditionally picks laurel, olive and savin juniper branches,<sup>33</sup> and with one of each decorates the Badnjaks, the Christmas bread, and the house icons. The floor around the hearth in the old kitchen as well as the floor under the dining-room table is spread with savin juniper only. Laurel branches are placed at the courtyard gate (along with an orange protruded by it), on the windows, and the biggest one of all, on the eaves above the house-entrance. A decorated pine, juniper, or fir tree, called the New Year Tree (*novogodišnja jelka*), is placed in the new kitchen, where it is kept from the last day of the Gregorian Year (December 31) until the first day of the Julian New Year (January 14th).

Homemaking at the church-site also assumed the presence of greenery, of which two kinds (olive and laurel) were identical to those of Luštica, while the third, the ivy, was specific to the Hercegnovi environs. Even though the church and domestic Badnjaks were ornamented in an almost identical way, the other church decoration was reduced to only two elements of ritual scenery. The mentioned leafed Badnjak and its counterpart, the big leafed laurel branch, were placed symmetrically at opposite sides of the portal. The first one was borrowed from the migratory regions from which most of the Hercegnovi townsfolk and the recent refugees originate, whereas the second one was taken from the indigenous domestic context (both rural and urban) as the original Christmas tree called Česnica (*чесница*).<sup>34</sup>

The same religious artifacts were common in both environs, except that in some instances they differed in origin and quality. The red wine in Luštica was homemade and poured from an old two-liter bottle while at the Hercegnovi town-square the wine was an industrial product poured from the bottle it was purchased in. The incense in both environs originated from the Monastery of Hilandar at Athos, the sacred center of Serbian Orthodoxy, which that year

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govina. Among all the towns in Montenegro, the Hercegnovi municipality ranked first as to the number of refugees received relative to the size of its population (which according to the 1991 Census was about 22,500). Two strong waves of immigration swept through Hercegnovi at this time. In the 1991-1993 period over 12,000 refugees from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina settled in. The majority were Serbs, but Muslims and Croats were among them, too. The next big wave of Serbian refugees came in August 1995, when 200 families (with about 1000 members) came after the Croatian invasion of Republika Srpska Krajina. This is information given by the Red Cross office in Hercegnovi in the year 2000.

<sup>32</sup> According to the interview with the Hercegnovi parish priest.

<sup>33</sup> The Latin name for Savin juniper being *Juniperus sabina*.

<sup>34</sup> Česnica (*чесница*) is pronounced as "chesnica".

celebrated 800 years since its foundation.<sup>35</sup> Fumigation in the domestic domain is performed with a small ceramic hand incenser, while in the church domain a lavishly decorated silver one suspended on metal links is used. In the Luštica house a natural wax candle is stuck in the center of the Christmas bread and lit just before the family Christmas Eve dinner, while in front of the church it is lit in a decorative candlestick at the beginning of the collective spiritual feast. Lastly, there is one ritual object which belongs to the category of traditional kitchen utensils – the sifter. While the hostess in Luštica takes the wheat grains from an ordinary ceramic bowl, the church host takes it from a large sifter.

As mentioned above, ritual foodstuff is specific for the domestic Luštica domain only. Specially decorated Christmas bread is mandatory on Christmas Eve,<sup>36</sup> as are natural, unprocessed fruits, doughnuts and domestic brandy served all through the day. Christmas Eve dinner in the house contains non-meat foods, such as fresh or cooked cabbage and other homegrown vegetables as well as sea fish.<sup>37</sup>

### The Meaning of Christmas Eve Homemaking

The previous analysis of Christmas Eve homemaking confronts us with the question: What is actually happening out there? The ritual procedures observed on the day before Christmas, and ending on Christmas Eve, certainly suggest that the Badnjak is either the main ritual object or the lead actor. Thus it is not certain whether the question about the Badnjak should be "What is it?" or "Who is he?"

When the described ritual actions are considered in combination with the local interpretations of the event, two parallel explanations appear – one is of domestic origin, and the other of church origin. The first one is metonymical, and the second metaphorical in character.

The Luštica host sees Christmas Day ritual activities observed in his house as the preparation for the arrival of an honorary guest whose name is Christmas – Božić (*Божих*). He draws his understanding from folk songs, such as

<sup>35</sup> It was founded by Rastko Nemanjić (St. Sava) and his father Nemanja (St. Simeon) in 1198.

<sup>36</sup> This ritual bread, also called Česnica (*чесница*), is of a round shape with its upper surface decorated with a flat sun-like ornament in the middle and three sphere-like ornaments at equal distance from each other along the rim (made from dough), as well as with one laurel, olive and savin juniper twig (tucked into the sphere-like ornaments). Similar Christmas breads may be found in other Luštica households, with some variations in their decoration. They assume the additional cross-like ornament in the center and various numbers of spheres.

<sup>37</sup> This family differs from most of the other Luštica families which observe "a stricter fast" at Christmas Eve dinner, and thus eat only seafood classified as "fish with no blood", such as squid, octopus or codfish.

the one recounting how men brought Božić in their boats across the sea.<sup>38</sup> In another situation, he was asked to what, or to whom is Christmas Eve dedicated, his answer being: "To Badnjak". The perception of Badnjak as a human being is also evident from the way the younger Luštica host was interpreting an old custom of "staying with Badnjaks" through the night: "That evening, Badnjak is a buddy to the host, he is his friend, he is his cousin, he is his brother."<sup>39</sup> Indeed, its personification is explicit in folk songs, such as "Hey Badnjak, my dear cousin" ("*Oj Badnjače, moj mio rođaće*"), and others.

Therefore this whole domestic event acquires the meaning of celebration in honor of Badnjak and Božić, with the intention of bringing joy to the organizers and their guests. Honorary guests are continuously mentioned in verses sung all through the night, whereby Badnjak is actually materialized, while Božić stays invisible. Beside retaining the imaginary human traits, the Badnjak brought into the house also starts to exist as a log supplying heat and light for the festivity. While explaining that Christmas Day is "dedicated to the celebration of the birth of Christ", the old host identifies Jesus Christ with Božić, who "is born tomorrow" and who "we await with joy, merriment, candles and prayers". Thus, the celebration organized in honor of Badnjak and Božić is aimed at supplying the wellbeing of the household members and the continuation of the house traditions. In both cases, no matter whether Badnjak is perceived as a human or a log, such an understanding of the Badnjak is of a metonymical character. This means that all the ritual actions, roles and materials are actually signs for festive homemaking, the difference between everyday and festive being only in the degree of formal elaboration of its constituent elements. Ritual actions, thus, repeat the actual homemaking actions, ritual actors reenact their daily chores, and ritual artifacts are in fact actual objects of everyday life.

According to the priest's understanding, open-air Christmas Eve is the commemoration to the birth of Jesus Christ through a communal prayer for spiritual peace and goodwill. "The Badnjaks crossed at the open hearth are symbols of Jesus Christ himself. The wood we see burning is Jesus, the heat which warms us is the Holy Ghost, and the light which shines over us is the Heavenly Father. The Father, Son and Holy Ghost – we here have the Holy Trinity."<sup>40</sup> By this understanding, the Badnjak is the "primordial image" of Jesus Christ, and thus

<sup>38</sup> Yet another song tells how the mother of Christmas tells the Christians that she will send her son to them with three flower stems, "the first stem is that of health and joy, the second of grapes and the third of wheat".

<sup>39</sup> The treatment of the Badnjak as a human being is also obvious during the period when the house Badnjaks are being placed on the hearth, carefully, one by one, when the old host addresses them directly, saying: "Hey Badnjak, God's Badnjak, ... " (*Oj Badnjače, Božji Badnjače, ...*)

<sup>40</sup> Quoted are the words of the Hercegnovi Old Town Parish priest. July, 1998.

the contemporary ritual is actually the recreation of this image.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the image points in the direction from which the second arrival of Jesus Christ is expected. The Almighty is present in His bodily appearance, but with no earthly needs, such as the satisfaction of hunger and thirst. Instead, He is given sacrifices in the form of wine and incense. Such an understanding of the Badnjak is metaphorical, wherein every ritual activity, role or artifact are symbolic representations of another, sacred domain.

Behind each mentioned meaning of the Badnjak (in domestic and church domains), there seems to be another, hidden one, which permeates both ritual treatments. Even though the Badnjak is understood in two contrasting ways, i.e. as firewood and as an embodiment of God, each treatment is concurrently permeated by an opposite quality (of its subject) – the domestic Badnjak is treated as a body of a human-like spirit, while the church Badnjak is treated as a spiritual *deus* with various physical needs that are like those of new born children.

## Finding the Lost Link between the Two Homes

### *a. The Construction of Home at the Town-square*

Based on the comparative analysis of the Christmas Eve homemaking process in the most traditional private ambience, and the most novel public one, it is possible to draw a conclusion as to how the similarities and the differences between the two ritual models could have been utilized in the construction of a communal home at the church-site.

Firstly, the public religious event contains enough resemblances to the domestic one to allow one to draw both formal and essential links between the church and the house. The celebrations share: individual family traditions as the sources of ritual knowledge, the male host as the prime ceremonial master, a temporal focus on Christmas Eve, a spatial concentration on the open hearth, fifteen (out of nineteen) common ritual activities, the main ritual roles, two out of three categories of ritual materials, and the similar shape and arrangement of the Badnjaks as the principal stuff of homemaking. This common

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<sup>41</sup> Other parish priests in the Bay of Kotor explain this ritual as a repetition of that same historic setting in which Jesus Christ was born. In other words, Badnjaks are logs used by shepherds to make the fire in the cave, and provide light and heat necessary for the survival of the new born Jesus and his family. In this case, the meaning of Badnjak within the Christmas celebration is of metonymical character since all the ritual elements are signs for a real historic event which marked the beginning of the Christian era. Unlike the domestic understanding of the Badnjak, in which the signs remain in the sphere of the secular, this church understanding operates within the domain of the sacred.

ritual core with its accompanying symbolism, which reaches back into the past for an ideal model of a patriarchal home, has been used as a foundation for the new spiritual home.

Secondly, ritual differences by which the church event diverges from the house event invite symbolic associations to any of the contrasts between Biblical and folk narratives, concentrated urban and extended rural time, lineal and cyclical time, church and civil space, unified and segmented sacred space, female fertility and male strength, collective and family memory, open and esoteric practice, virtual and actual experience, indigenous and adopted Badnjaks, original and imported Christmas trees, spiritual and material foodstuffs. These divergent ritual elements serve as the skeletal system of the new communal home.

Thirdly, certain specific features of the public Christmas Eve celebration break up the actual borderlines between the domestic and the church domain, and thus allow symbolic fusion of those two realms into one. For example, the ambiguity of borderlines between the church and public property at the town-square on which the church of St. Michael the Archangel stands, allows the extension of the celebration onto the whole square, and thus the drawing of a direct connection between the religious and civil, i.e. public and private domains. The practice of the church Badnjaks being carried by the townsmen is yet another area in which religious and civil domains merge. The shift of ritual roles between the priest and his parishioners allows direct contact between the community and the sacred objects/persons. They are granted the honor to carry the sacred logs or Jesus himself, to the sacred fire or his warm bed. This way, representatives of local society become the actors in the myth recreation process. At the same time, by taking over the role of the hostess, who in the domestic domain greets the Badnjak bearers and throws grains at them, the priest symbolically involves the ritual presence of the female part of the community.<sup>42</sup> The form of the church Badnjaks, primarily in the way they are notched, as well as the presence of both laurel and oak Christmas trees, represent the synthesis of native and imported domestic traditions. It also speaks about the symbolic integration of two distinctive parts of the town population; the old-timers and the newcomers. Lastly, being placed to burn with their church counterpart, the family Badnjaks of townsfolk establish yet another link between the domestic and church domains. These links may be understood as the filling of the skeletal system of the newly constructed ritual home.

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<sup>42</sup> From the early 2000s onwards, this role was partially fulfilled by female representatives of the community, chosen among the members of the Circle of Serbian Sisters (*Kolo srpskih sestara*), the traditional institution reestablished in the 1990s with the aim of helping the needy and participating in different public events organized by the church, mainly by preparing foodstuff. The priest now still greets the badnjak bearers, while the honored hostess throws wheat at them.

Altogether we may conclude that the lost connection between the church and home sacred domains has been reestablished once again after half a century. This connection, however, is not of the same kind as the one that existed preceding the Second World War. At that time, this link had been established during *litija*, the annual religious processions which circumambulated the town's or country's territory on a chosen saint's day.<sup>43</sup> The historic open-air Badnjak event affirmed the connection between the state (via the army), the church and the people, while the present events affirm the relationship between the church and the people.

#### *b. The Function of Homemaking*

The ritual construction of home is modeled in such a way as to affirm the old and introduce new meanings to the traditional celebration of Christmas Eve. The actual procedures and their symbolism apply to the needs of the family, be it a domestic celebration or a church communion, starting from the most practical, such as finding a place to burn the Badnjak, and ending with the most expressive, such as defining religious and ethnic identity.

Utilizing the well defined traditional popular symbolism (of the ritual core elements) and the ambiguity of religious symbolism, the Badnjak event helps in the search for individual, collective, and institutional identities. The loss of identity is a consequence of the fifty-year long existence of an atheist state which suppressed any religious affiliations (especially in Montenegro), and at the same time encouraged further segmentation of Serbian ethnicity into groups founded on the basis of religious (Catholic equaled to Croatian and Islamic to Bosnian Muslim) or regional difference (e.g. in Montenegro or in Vojvodina). The search for ethnic identity started in early 1980s, but was articulated in the latter part of the same decade, with the massive protest meetings with the aim of establishing the political unity of the Serbs. Thus, the separatist-oriented political leadership of Vojvodina (1988), and the rigid party bureaucrats of Montenegro (1989) were overthrown, to be substituted by the new ones.<sup>44</sup> These events,

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<sup>43</sup> The reason being that *litija* (*nošenje krsti*, as is locally called) was organized by the Church and the People, i.e. the parochial priest and his parishioners.

<sup>44</sup> These small "democratic revolutions" occurred on the wave of supporting the integration of the Republic of Serbia with its two autonomous regions, Vojvodina and Kosovo, where separatist forces were growing strong, as in the Yugoslav republics. The wide-spread public protests were a new mode of expressing dissatisfaction with the political and economic situation in the country, which initially grew out of open support for the Serbs and Montenegrins living in Kosovo and Metohija, who were being pushed out by the Albanians. A detailed account of these events in Montenegro may be found in V. Strugar, *The Great Rebellion of Montenegro 1988-1989*. Književne novine and NIP Univerzitetska riječ. Belgrade and Nikšić 1990.

and the ones that followed with the civil war on the territory of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1991-95), were the direct stimulus for the open demands for ethnic/national unity through revived affiliation with the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>45</sup>

Individual identity is sought through the definition of ethnic/national via religious identity. My research has shown that the ethnic affiliation of the Bay of Kotor residents was not a stable category; in fact, it changed in correlation to the actual and virtual quality of the political relationship between the two Yugoslav republics, Serbia and Montenegro. During the mid-1990s, you could hear any of the following affiliations: "I am a Bokelj",<sup>46</sup> "I am a Maritime Serb", "I am a Montenegrin", "I am a Montenegrin of Serbian origin", or "I am ethnically a Serb, but regionally a Montenegrin". Thus, it is important that when "I participate" in the religious Badnjak burning event, "I belong to", or at least "I respect" the Serbian Orthodox faith.

The search for individual identity in this case is paralleled by the search for collective identity through belonging to the present communities in the neighborhood, clan, parish, and settlement, and at the regional and national level. Thus, at Christmas Eve it became important that "my family Badnjak" will burn either at home, "like the Badnjaks of my neighbors and clansmen", or at the town-square, together with the Badnjaks of other parishioners. Also, the Badnjaks of "my parish church" somewhat diverge in form from those of the neighboring parishes. Lastly, "my region" is represented in the central religious ceremony in the Cetinje Monastery as the counterpart to the Badnjak of inland Montenegro. "Our old olive Badnjak", notched at both ends, contrasts with their young leafed oak Badnjak.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The terms "ethnic" and "national" when referring to "identity" are here used simultaneously. It is my perception that at this point in time, the citizens of Montenegro (the same as the citizens of other former Yugoslav republics) were searching for an identity in both of these terms. First, they were trying to see themselves belonging to "a group having a common cultural heritage, as distinguished by customs, characteristics, language, history, etc. (def. of ethnic)", but also to reestablish themselves as "a stable, historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture and language in common (def. of nation)". *Webster's New World College Dictionary on Power CD*, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1994. It should also be noted that in everyday speech, only the term "national identity" (*национални идентитет*) is used and not the term "ethnic identity" (*етнички идентитет*).

<sup>46</sup> *Bokelj* would be the sign of regional belonging to the Bay of Kotor, which is *Boka Kotorska*, or even shorter, *Boka*.

<sup>47</sup> Since the mid 1990s, next to the traditional Highland Badnjak, the Maritime Badnjak has been introduced in the Cetinje Monastery celebration. Thus, the oak Badnjak brought by the Bajice tribe for 300 years is now crossed at the open hearth with the olive Badnjak brought by the representatives of the Miholjska Prevlaka Monastery.

As an institution independent of the state, finding itself in a more liberal environment, the Serbian Orthodox Church, from the late 1980s, started to rebuild its identity by establishing itself as the church of all Serbs. Its principal strategy was to establish a direct link to the people, and somewhat later, to distance itself from any kind of political divisions. The creation of this new image could incorporate hosting a unique religious event, specific only to the Orthodox Serbs. Now, that the Badnjak was burned domestically by other faiths (e.g. Catholic and Muslim),<sup>48</sup> its public burning could become an exclusive feature of the Serbian community. Thus, as an emblem of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Badnjak burning was raised from the private, family level, to the public, community level. However, this event was created by both the people, who were in the process of searching for an ethnic/religious identity, and the parish priests who "lived with people and by the ways of people."

Another important component of the Church image is its distancing from politics. In the period after the introduction of the multi-party system (1990), nationalistically oriented parties competed in exhibiting their affiliation with the Church. "Everyone then expected that the Church would embrace its own party as the Holy party", explained the Hercegnovi parish priest. Thus, in the first years of the church celebration of Christmas Eve, representatives of the Radical Party and the People's Party brought Badnjaks three meters in length and one meter in diameter, carried by five to six men. However, when the Church Synod officially distanced itself from any political divisions (1992) by proclaiming that the Orthodox Church is above all parties, this practice disappeared as well.

### *c. The Future of Open-air Homemaking*

"The best way of breathing is to breathe with both lungs" – these are the words of the Hercegnovi parish priest when he described the importance of both the house and the church celebration of Christmas Eve. "The communal gathering at the church is a big celebration, while the family gathering is a small celebration. God is ever-present, but His presence in the church is the strongest. The most beautiful human experience is the one of communal gathering in front of God.

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Thus, the historic and symbolic connection between the present Archbishopric of Montenegro in Cetinje and its first predecessor, the Zeta Bishopric founded in the Bay of Kotor in 1220, was reestablished through the Christmas ritual.

<sup>48</sup> My fieldwork has shown that some Catholics who live in the Bay of Kotor in the predominantly Orthodox environs, (some of which still keep the memory of being Orthodox), observe the domestic burning of the Badnjak in most ways similar to their Orthodox neighbors. My colleague who has done fieldwork in the southeastern part of the Montenegro coast has also noticed Badnjak burning among the Muslim population.

Then, you can see Him, feel His arms around you, be with Him, and be one with another."

It still remains to be seen what will happen to Badnjak burning at Christmas Eve. The local priest thinks that it should survive in both homes, private and public. Is there a danger that people might forget their domestic traditions by coming out to the Church Badnjak? The pilot study suggests that generally very few people who come to the church ceremony consider it a substitute for their home ritual. This event is complementary to their domestic celebration.

It is obvious that the contents of religious homemaking and its inherent symbolism accords with the definition of *home* and its derivative meanings – such as *homeless*, *homing*, *homelike*, *homey*, etc.<sup>49</sup> The church-site is a physical environment in which "a social unit based on the family", the family being the Serbian Orthodox nation, resides. Church is "the place of the origin and the base" of religious operations. It is also "a source of radiated energy". It is "a cheerful and cozy, simple and wholesome place". Christmas Eve homecoming for this bewildered, shaken group of people has the meaning of a return on this special occasion to "a place formerly frequented or regarded as home".

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<sup>49</sup>Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Inc. Publishers. Springfield, Mass, USA 1983.

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Vesna Vučinić-Nešković

Elementi kreiranja božićnog doma:  
Transformisanje kuće i crkve na Badnji dan u Boki Kotorској,  
Crna Gora

Ritualno nalaganje Badnjaka na Badnje večе predstavlja arhaičnu kućnu tradiciju, karakterističnu za hrišćansko stanovništvo centralnog Balkana. Tokom pedesetogodišnjeg perioda nakon Drugog svetskog rata, ateistička država potiskivala je narodne religijske prakse. Međutim, etnografska istraživanja u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori tokom kasnih 80-ih pokazuje da su mnoga seoska domaćinstava ipak očувала своје tradicionalne božićne obrede, što predstavlja kontrast većim gradovima u kojima su oni bili skoro iskorenjeni. Čak i u mikro-oblastima, poput Boke Kotorске, postoje uočljive razlike između izolovanih seoskih zajednica u kojima je otvoreno ognjište ostalo obredni centar kuće (na kome se badnjaci nalažu i do sedam puta u toku božićne sezone) i gradova u kojima je samo mali broj domaćinstava nastavio sa

obredom (nalaganja malih badnjaka u šoretu na drva). Međutim, početkom 90-ih došlo je do obnavljanja kućnih verskih proslava, kao i do njihovog širenja u domen javnog. Ova studija pokazuje kako se na Badnje večer kuće i crkvene porte (kao i gradski trgovi) transformišu u sveta mesta. Analiza vremenskih i prostornih aspekata ovog obrednog događaja, uloga koje glavni akteri igraju, radnji koje preduzimaju i predmeti koje koriste, pokazuje kako se prostor svakodnevnog života transformiše u sveti dom. Najzad, o značenju i funkciji kreiranja doma raspravlja se na način koji se suprotstavlja klasičnoj diskinknciji između privatnog i javnog obrednog okruženja.

*Ključne reči:* Božić, badnjak, obred, kreiranje doma, postsocijalizam, Crna Gora

Vesna Vučinić-Nešković

Eléments de création du foyer de Noël:  
Transformation de la maison et de l'église la veille de Noël  
dans les Bouches de Kotor (Boka Kotorska), Monténégro

La pose rituelle du "Badnjak" (bûche de chêne) au réveillon de Noël représente une tradition domestique archaïque, caractéristique de la population chrétienne du centre de la péninsule des Balkans. Au cours des cinquante années qui ont suivi la Deuxième guerre mondiale, l'état athée a réprimé les pratiques populaires religieuses. Cependant, les recherches ethnographiques en Serbie et au Monténégro effectuées vers la fin des années 80, révèlent que de nombreux foyers ruraux avaient réussi à conserver leurs rituels traditionnels de Noël contrairement aux foyers dans les grandes villes où ces rituels avaient pratiquement été éradiqués. Même dans les micro-régions, comme les Bouches de Kotor (Boka Kotorska), des différences sensibles existent entre les communautés rurales isolées dans lesquelles l'âtre ouvert était resté le centre rituel de la maison (sur lequel l'on pose les bûches de chêne, "badnjak", jusqu'à sept fois au cours de la saison de Noël) et les villes dans lesquelles un nombre minime de foyers ont continué à pratiquer ce rituel (la pose des petits "badnjak" dans les cuisinières à bois). Toutefois, au début des années 90 les célébrations religieuses domestiques ont été renouvelées, et même étendues au domaine public. Cette étude démontre que la veille de Noël les maisons et les parvis d'églises (de même que les places des villes) se transforment en lieux saints. L'analyse des aspects temporels et spatiaux de cet événement rituel, le rôle qu'y jouent ses principaux acteurs, les actions qu'ils y entreprennent et les objets qu'ils utilisent, montre comment l'espace de la vie quotidienne se transforme en foyer saint. Enfin, la signification et la fonction de la création du foyer est discutée ici d'une manière qui s'oppose à la distinction traditionnelle entre l'environnement rituel privé et public.

*Mots-clés:* Noël, bûche de chêne ("Badnjak"), rituel, création du foyer, post-socialisme, Monténégro