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## **THE RESTORATION OF PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS OF MUNICIPAL 'SLAVAS' AND RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS IN BELGRADE AS A SYMBOLIC DEMARCATION BETWEEN POLITICAL SYSTEMS<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract:** This work analyzes the process of restoration of public celebrations of municipal 'slavas' (patron Saint's day) and religious festivals, taking as an example the celebration of the Pentecost and the Epiphany in the municipality of Čukarica. The restoration of the public celebrations of religious holidays in local municipalities started after a series of political changes in local authorities at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has continued particularly after the 'democratic' changes in 2000. In most Belgrade municipalities, as well as in the Municipality of Čukarica on the day of the municipal 'slava' there is a procession and gathering around the sacred tree – 'zapis'.<sup>3</sup> Representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church, members of the local government and citizens take part in the event. The celebration of the Epiphany also includes the traditional diving/swimming for the Cross of Honour. With this practice from the start, the new municipal government symbolically cut ties with the former regime which abolished or reduced to the minimum the 'traditional' religious practices. This sort of 'return to the tradition' aroused problems in the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the customary practices. Therefore in the first years of the celebrations, often appeared fabricated, even mutually conflicting elements. Together with considering the processes of creating tradition, this work pays special attention to the roles of the individuals in organizing and creating the "scenarios" for the celebrations as well as

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<sup>2</sup> A paper for the International Conference entitled "The urban public space and the health culture in Belgrade", organized by the Scientific Society for the History of Health Culture and the New Balkans Institute, together with the Faculty of Philosophy University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture University of Belgrade and the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade, which took place in Belgrade on 19-20 November 2012. The text is result of the work on the research project no. 177018, supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

<sup>3</sup> Serbian term, literally – "Inscription"

to the roles of political structures in the restoration of the public celebrations of religious festivals.

**Key words:** municipal slava, public celebration, religious holidays/festivals, political structures, tradition, reconstruction

### **Introduction**

In the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a tendency for the restoration of the public celebrations of religious holidays appeared in many Belgrade municipalities, above all, the restoration of so called municipal 'slavas'.

It's enough to take a look at the site of Belgrade on the internet and the pages of the municipalities to observe that most of them, apart from the municipalities of Barajevo, Mladenovac, Sopot and Surcin, include data about the celebration of the municipal's 'slava' as obligatory.<sup>4</sup>

Even though the phenomenon of the religion revitalization in Serbia, recorded in literature as "the return to faith" relates to a bit earlier period, i.e., to the strengthening of the national entrancement in Serbia under the guiding hand of Slobodan Milosevic's regime, not before the assumption of power in the municipalities by democratic parties have public religious celebrations completely been institutionalized.

The issue of this work is to consider the way the restoration of the public celebration of religious holidays can be qualified as the restoration of symbolic boundaries towards the former structure of local authorities, as well as the role of individuals in the process and the ways of interpretation of previous "tradition" which we were supposed to "return to". With this as a goal, we are going to consider the public celebration of 'slava' of the municipality of Čukarica whose celebrations of Christmas and the Epiphany also play an important part in its calendar of public celebrations. Besides the relevant literature, the empirical sources for this work are based on the interviews with representatives of the local authorities and the employees in the town hall of Čukarica who organized and participated in the celebrations. The municipality of Čukarica outspreads to 15650ha of the central part of Belgrade area with the population of about 195000. This makes it the second most populated municipality of Belgrade (the municipality of New Belgrade being the first). It has the fastest increase of population.<sup>5</sup> The municipality of Čukarica was founded in 1911 after being separated from the municipality of Žarkovo, after the proclamation of the hamlet of Žarkovo a village (Popovic, 2012, 49-51; Savković, 2012, 227-228).

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.begrad.rs/cms/view.php?id=1906>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cukarica.rs/>

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The 'slava' of the Municipality of Čukarica is the Pentecost, that is, the Trinity – the most common name among its inhabitants. The festival falls in the seventh week, that is, fifty days after the festival of Easter and is one of the most glorified movable festivals.

It is celebrated after so called Withsuntide and Trinity Panakeheda – on Saturday before the Pentecost). People celebrate it for three days, and the common belief is that the festival is dedicated to St. Trinity (Bandić, 1991, 333).

### The municipality 'slava'

On the day of the festival of Trinity in 1908, Serbian Journalists' Association organized a mass celebration on Ada Ciganlija, on the suggestion of Branislav Nušić, their president. Although it was intended to last for three days at most, due to a great interest of the citizens of Belgrade, the celebration had to be extended for five more days. The event was mostly of secular character and was held on the back end of Ada, which was specially arranged for the occasion. The courts and the promenade were prepared, many taverns and constructions were built, as well as the grandstand for observing the sports events. The participants in the cultural and artistic programme were the singing associations from Belgrade and Pančevo; the musicians from the Royal Guards had/held a concert, and the fighting club 'Serbian sword' had a public performance. The daily newspaper 'Politika' published the news about the event daily, and at the end of the celebration even King Petar I Karadjordjević visited it (Bojović, 2011, 225-229).

After gaining independence in 1911, the festival of the Trinity has become the 'slava' of The Municipality of Čukarica. However, at that time the procession wasn't being organized, probably due to the fact that by the year 1932 and the construction of St George's Church, the citizens of Čukarica belonged to the Topčider parish and went to St. Peter and Paul's Church in Topčider or the monastery of Rakovica for their religious needs. (Ibid, 185).

After the Second World War, i.e., after Yugoslavia became a communist country the municipal 'slavas' weren't celebrated in public.

The first renewed public celebration of the Trinity in Čukarica was held in 1997, shortly after the political coalition 'Zajedno' came to power. Its organizers and participants estimate that the largest number of people took part in that first procession, about 10 000 people, and the procession's marchroute was longer than today – all the way to the groundwork of St. Petka's Church in Čukarička padina.

The public celebration of the Municipality of Čukarica's 'slava' has its concept and a detailed schedule of all of the activities.

The celebration begins at 8:30 am with the solemn liturgy in St. George's Church, in Kirovljeva Street at Banovo Brdo. Since it is a prelate liturgy, it is

common for the competent prelate and prelate vicar 'Beogradsko-posavski' to participate (the competent vicariate for Čukarica according to the ecclesial organization). i.e. currently the first priest Branko Mitrović, the principal of the church in Žarkovo. After the liturgy the procession is formed the first of the four sacred trees is being consecrated in the front churchyard (read more below), and then, the procession is formed in the street in front of the churchyard. The procession visits other sacred trees on the territory of Banovo Brdo, and according to the schedule, about 12h it arrives at the town hall of Čukarica, where the ritual continues. The consecration of the slava's cake, wheat and wine is performed in the central hall on the first floor, in front of the municipal 'procession', i.e., in front of the flag with a picture of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and is followed by Troparions reading and cutting the cake with the slava's host, elected on annual basis. Then the principal of St George's Church reads prayers and addresses the organizers, the host and the citizens. The final 'formal' part of the ceremony is addressing of the host. The celebration ends with a cocktail in the banquet room.

The procession has its own basic structure – it generally consists of six parts, some of which change spontaneously every year, as a result of the initiative and consultation of the organizers.

Thus someone carries the Jerusalem cross in front of the procession, followed by the presentation of the Trinity and church banderoles. Priests, the host and his guests are in the next row and in the last one, the citizens. There are no official records about the number of participants, but it is estimated that 450-500 people take part in the celebration each year.

The priests come from churches in the municipality of Čukarica, as well as from other municipalities. The priesthood is composed of representatives of all the local churches in the territory of the Čukarica and guests from other municipalities together with the officer priests of the other vicariates.

Some of the guests are also the representatives of the fraternized municipalities of Kumanovo, Macedonia, Budva, Montenegro, Istočno Sarajevo, Republic of Srpska and the municipality of Bač.

In the procession behind the clergymen, there are always representatives of 'Svibor' association (Serbian order of chivalry),<sup>6</sup> carrying their special signs and wearing costumes of medieval knights. On that day the association organizes an international tournament at Kalemegdan with 'knights' mostly from Slovene countries. It takes place at the same time as the celebration at

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<sup>6</sup> In the first years of the celebration, 'Svebor' association took part in it. (Serbian fighting skills). In time, Serbian 'Svibor' association (Serbian chivalric fighting) got separated from 'Svebor' and has been participating in the celebration since 2004. (See more on <http://www.svebor.org.rs>; <http://www.svibor.co.rs>.)

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Čukarica, therefore if the event at Kalemegdan demands an extra organization due to a large number of spectators, they can only participate in small numbers in the celebration in Čukarica.

Occasionally horsemen participate in the procession. They are usually dressed in traditional costumes on their own initiative and the last time it happened was when the church representative for Žarkovo got the permission for it from the principal of St. George's Church.

After the description of the plan and schedule of the celebration, the structure of the procession and its participants, we would like to present the procession's route and its rituals.

On its route along Banovo brdo, the procession visits the sacred trees. There are four of them –the first one is in the court of St George's Church, the second in the main park above Požeška Street, the third is in the schoolyard of The School for Chemistry and Alimentation Study in Lješka Street, and the fourth is on Šumadija Square, near the town hall.

In order to visit all of the sacred trees, after the service in St.George's Church the procession moves down Kirovljeva Street, Požeška Street, Straška Pindura Street, part of Lješka Street between the 13<sup>th</sup> Belgrade Secondary School and The School for Chemistry and Alimentation Study until it reaches Šumadija square. In front of each sacred tree priests perform the same rituals for years – a priest carves a cross in wood, that is, renews the previous cuts and fills them with wax. Then a wreath is made around the tree. The wreath and cross are sprinkled with wine and oil while the priest says a prayer and sprinkles people with basil dipped in consecrated water. After the prayer wheat is sprinkled on people and it is believed that everyone should eat at least several wheat grains. The same ritual is repeated in front of each sacred tree until the procession reaches the town hall where another part of celebration takes place, as we have presented before.

The most important role in the organization of the celebration is the one of the clergymen from St. George's Church and of the local authorities. The mayor and vice-mayor of the municipality of Čukarica are also the president and vice-president of the committee for the organization of the celebration. A very important role is the one of a 'host' of the 'slava'. He is also elected from the authorities every year. If the political situation permits it, the host to be is elected a year in advance, however, it can also be elected only several weeks before the celebration. That's also the time needed for the preparation of the celebration. The municipal public relations representatives also participate in the organization of the celebration. The expenses are covered by an annual budget.

In the municipality there's also 'The Council for Religious Affairs', which was until 2004 known as 'The Council for Religious Communities Affairs'. It was established just after the arrival of new authorities- this is specified as a

distinctive element by the people I talked to about the subject. The role of the Council is mostly administrative, bearing in mind that the major part of its activities relates to receiving and preparing reports and decisions for acceptance at the town council meetings. Some individuals from the Council also take part in organizing public celebrations of religious festivals- the people I enquired have a distinct role in organizing and suggesting the activities for this purpose every year. As they say, bearing in mind that these celebrations have been taking place for fifteen years, the organization of these celebrations runs smoothly. According to them, most of the ideas for the celebrations come from the priest Slavko Božić, the principal of St. George's Church and this meets their approval since the celebrations are of the religious nature.

The entire event is followed by the media since the restoration in 1997, but since the democratic changes of government at the national level in 2000, the media presentation and promotion has become more organized and massive.

Initially, only the Belgrade media transmitted information from the celebrations, but nowadays a much larger number of media is involved in it. But bearing in mind that this is a local event, the public media service prepares its reports for the shows about events in Belgrade.

### **The Epiphany**

The Epiphany is a Christian holiday celebrated on 19th January according to the Julian calendar, in memory of the day when St. John baptized Jesus in the River Jordan. According to the biblical text, immediately after the baptism, the heavens opened and a voice of Our Lord announced that Jesus Christ is his son and then the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus' shoulder in the form of a dove. People believe that on the night before the holiday the heavens open up to indicate God. Anyone who would make a wish at that moment, the wish would be granted. A special role in this festival is the role of water. On the day of the Epiphany water is being consecrated in churches, springs, rivers and streams, and in urban areas a cross made of ice or metal is put in the river and the most hearty men can swim or dive and take it out of the water (Bandić, 2004, 308-310; Nikolić i Tešić, 2010, 15-19).

The first celebration of the Epiphany in Belgrade (after the collapse of the medieval Serbian state) was held at the foot of Kalemegdan fortress in 1807. The religious service was performed by a first priest Matija Nenadović. After the liberation from the Turks the Epiphany celebration was very significant for the Serbs, and the street where there were the Large/Main church and the Metropolitanate (now the Episcopal Church and the Patriarehate), and

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Princess/Duchess Ljubica's Billet was named Epiphany Street (upper and lower). Members of the Holy Episcopal Synod, the Serbian Government, the general staff and Serbian Royal Academy participated in the procession which took place after the liturgy. This public celebration of the Epiphany and swimming for the "Holy Cross", as one of its most attractive elements, were banned by the German occupying forces in 1941, and after the Second World War, the communist authorities only confirmed the ban. (Nikolić i Tešić, 2010, 18).

The first public celebration of the Epiphany in Čukarica was held in 1999 and this event is looked upon as a renewal of tradition, even though it was never before organized in the municipality. As recommended by the principal of St. George's Church, members of the 'Svebor' association made a proposal to Zoran Alimpić, the mayor of Čukarica, to organize the celebration at Ada Ciganlija. In the first year of the celebration, the procession was led by horsemen dressed in traditional costumes and a carriage with children, wearing angel wings. At several points people could drink consecrated water and the whole event was recorded only by a camera from Studio B Station.

The authorities in Čukarica pay much more attention to this celebration than to organizing the celebration of the municipal 'slava'. Thus a lot more institutions and individuals are involved in organizing the celebration of the Epiphany, and the whole event is very well covered by the media, particularly after the political changes in 2000 when the atmosphere in the whole country was much more receptive to information about religious events. The preparations for the Epiphany celebration begin at least two months before the festival and the municipal budget for the event is significant. That speaks for the importance of the celebration for the local authorities in Čukarica. Since 2003, the authorities in Čukarica set the legal basis for the organization of the celebration by adopting "The resolution on important dates and holidays", which also includes the celebration of Epiphany, also regarded as the central celebration of the Epiphany in Serbia (Ibid, 34).

Both the celebration of the municipal 'slava' and the Epiphany are carefully planned, and have (their) clear structure.

On the day of the Epiphany, a liturgy takes place in St. George's Church at Banovo Brdo, followed by the procession formed in front of the churchyard. The procession is different each year since, according to the people I talked to, "it keeps developing". Its structure is in some part similar to the procession organized for the municipal's 'slava', but with several significant differences. That is, at the very front of the procession there is the cross of Jerusalem, but behind it there is no municipal procession, i.e. the flag featuring the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, but a number of church banners. Behind the banners moves a ceremonial row of 'Svebor'/'Svibor' members, Police Forces or Military Academy. These three groups of participants take turns in

organizing the ceremonial row and other supporting activities. Behind the row move clergymen from the Serbian Orthodox Church, followed by municipal officials and their guests and finally, the citizens.

The procession moves along Visoka Street, Paštrovićeva Street, Radnička Street towards Ada Ciganlija, where on the grandstands near the 'Lake' restaurant the central part of the celebration is taking place. At this spot the Cross of Honour made of ice is lowered into water which is then being consecrated and the participants of the 'Race for the Cross' and the audience receive a blessing. The municipal's mayor and the priest give appropriate speeches, followed by cultural and artistic programme. On the pontoon from which the contestants for the Honourable Cross jump into the river there is a ceremonial row of members of the Military or Police forces. The celebration ends with the ceremonial bestowing rewards on winners in the 'Lake' restaurant. Since 2002, family members of the Karadjordjevic Royal Family – Princess Jelisaveta (in 2002), Prince Aleksandar and Princess Linda, wife of Prince Tomislav Karadjordjevic and his sons – Prince Mihajlo and Prince Đorđe (in 2003) have joined the celebration. Patriarch Pavle participated for the first time in the celebration of the Epiphany in 2004. He was greeted at Ada Ciganlija by the Guard Orchestra playing 'March on the Drina' and then a gunfire, which was introduced for the first time. Our new Patriarch Irinej, attended the celebration in 2011.

This year, 2013, the anti-terrorist unit of Ministry of Interior of Republic of Serbia participated in the celebration for the first time, and one of their members jumped with a parachute from a helicopter above Ada and thus lowered the Cross of Honour in the Sava Lake.

Apart from the first priest and priests of St. George' Church and local authorities in Čukarica, in organizing public celebrations of Epiphany also participate JP Ada Ciganlija enterprise – their 'slava' is the Epiphany, Ministry of Interior, that is, the police forces, which among other things provide divers and protection for the participants in the swimming race, then the Military, the Military Academy, the anti-terrorist unit of Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia, 'Svibor' and several public enterprises, institutes and departments. The cultural and artistic part of the program has been organized for years by Nikola Rackov, a full professor in the Faculty of Music, and the performers are usually celebrities performing so-called traditional and authentic music, for example, Svetlana Stević, Simonida Stanković, Bora Dugić or Ljuba Manasijević, and the quire from St. George's Church, dressed in traditional clothes.

The Organizing Committee for the celebration of the Epiphany consists of representatives of organizations and institutions participating in the event. The first chairman of the Board was at that time mayor of Čukarica. After the initial year it has been Slavko Božić from St. George's Church. Furthermore,

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apart from professor Rackov, the mayor of Čukarica, the representatives of several municipal departments, committees, protocols, and public relations section, representatives of the Police Forces, the Army and the Military Academy, 'Svibor' and the chief of security from JP Ada Ciganlija are also involved in the activities of the Committee.

The people I spoke to think that the presence of the Military and the Police Forces contributes to the festal atmosphere of the celebration. The organizers of the celebrations believe that these institutions together with the Church presented the 'pillars of nation', at the time of "national rapture" existing among the people of Serbia at the turn of the millennium and inspired by political changes and the birth of the idea of returning to Serbian roots and its "being", and will lead to a different future. They also point out that swimming for the Cross of Honour in an icy water shows, in fact, "mental and physical health of the nation".

Apart from these public celebrations, very popular ones in Čukarica in the sense of 'renewal of customs and spirituality' are: Christmas and Easter celebrations, spiritual discussions and the 'Vidovdan' Academy (held on St. martyr Prince Lazar and Serbian saint martyrs' day). (Ibid, 21)

The public celebration of Christmas in Čukarica started in 1998. Since the political coalition 'Zajedno' had formed a majority in February the year before, the Christmas festival in 1998. was the first opportunity for its public celebration. In addition to the 'preparation' of the Yule log in the church yard, the ceremony of getting it inside on Christmas Eve was organized in the town hall of Čukarica in the years after the change in political structures. The solemn ritual, the prayer, the censing of the Yule log, the speeches and blessing of the present citizens are performed with the participation of the representatives from local authorities and head staff of the municipality.

### **The tradition and symbolic boundaries**

Based on mentioned so far, we can draw several preliminary conclusions and raise several questions.

Firstly, the tradition of public celebration of the municipal 'slava' and the Epiphany, in the way it has been manifested since the end of the twentieth century is in fact 'reformed' or, as Hobsbaum described it, 'invented', although it is considered to be 'renewed' (Hobsbaum and Ranger 2002, 5-25).

After the previous description of the municipal celebration of 'slava', it is clear to everybody with the knowledge of folk religion of the Serbs that the celebration doesn't differ from the celebration of village 'slava' or 'zavetina'. In the domestic science little attention is paid to village 'slava' or 'zavetina' celebrations, but few studies of this phenomenon can be considered relevant.

One of them is certainly the study of Slobodan Zečević about 'zavetina' in northeastern Serbia. (Zečević 1973, 43-66).

It is interesting for us that in his work Zečević identifies, describes and tries to interpret the key elements of the village 'slava'. In his opinion, the elements that make 'zavetina' are: the ritual encirclement, the sacred tree and the rituals below it, which in more advanced forms include blood sacrifice, and the sacred fiest.<sup>7</sup> Zečević concludes that the village 'slava' is a public celebration of pre-Christian origin, and belongs to agrarian rituals with the main purpose to influence the weather conditions and encourage general fertility (Ibid,65).

Therefore, in the public celebration of the municipal 'slava' in Čukarica we can notice parallels with the rural celebration of the 'slava', ie, 'zavetina'. The public celebration of the municipal 'slava' in Čukarica, except for the blood sacrifice, contains all the crucial elements of 'zavetina' described by Zečević. The ritual encirclement starts from the church, the procession visits four sacred trees and the rituals are being performed below them and, apart from restoring the cross and blessing the tree and the participants, they involve sprinkling with corn and wheat. As for the sacred fiest, usually prepared under the tree, is transferred to the town hall of the Municipality. This information is very interesting for our work because the organization of the public celebration of the municipal 'slava' follows the instructions of the clergymen of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and, as we mentioned before, some of the "knights" associations and occasionally horsemen in traditional costumes also participate in the event. These obvious elements of pre-Christian religion only add to the impression that some non-complementary elements meet in the organization of the celebration, those considered to have been an exemplary representatives of our history and tradition, and that the whole event is a good example of "folk orthodoxy" (Bandić 2004).

In the past the celebration of the Epiphany wasn't held on Ada Ciganlija nor in the municipality of Čukarica, but presents a renewal of practices taking place at the foot of the Kalemegdan fortress and being banned in 1941 by the German occupation powers. The whole event is always planned in detail and involves many ritual elements as well as local representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church and some particular individuals. This celebration also combines several diverse elements, such as the service, the procession, cultural and artistic programme and the swimming for the Cross of Honour and the participants are the representatives of 'Svibor', the Army, the Military Academy, the Police forces and anti-terrorist units of Ministry of Interior. In this way, there has been a bricolage of symbols considered to present the

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<sup>7</sup> Zečević also points out the elements from the cult of the dead which is particularly widespread in northeastern Serbia, his field of research.

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pillars of the Serbian nation. It is very difficult to combine them in a sensible way within a public religious celebration. As already mentioned, the "knights", soldiers and policemen take part in the Epiphany procession and in its early years were led by horsemen dressed in traditional costumes and children with angel wings, also in traditional costumes, and traditional music, reciting and orations are included in the artistic part of the program. The organizers' idea was apparently to present in an 'instant' manner several elements they considered to be both 'Serbian' and 'traditional'.

As we have described, public religious celebrations in the municipality of Čukarica have been renewed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the political changes in local authorities in Belgrade and its municipalities.

In February, 1997, the coalition 'Zajedno' formed the majority in the parliament of Čukarica. It involved 18 members of the Democratic Party and 11 members of the Serbian Renewal Movement. The minority consisted of 24 members of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Radical Party. The first mayor or, the way the people I spoke to like to point out, the first democratic mayor of Čukarica was a Democrat.

The process of religion revitalization and the renewal of tradition in Serbia is usually connected to the period of strengthening of Serbian nationalism in the late eighties.<sup>8</sup>

Marked as key events for the official start of the "return to religion" were the celebration of the raising of the dome of St. Sava's Church in Belgrade and Vidovdan Assembly at Gazimestan in 1989. (Naumović 2009, 146-147).

However, much as it was the case with the introduction of religious education in educational system and in local public religious celebrations in Belgrade – particularly the celebration of the municipal 'slava', the new democratic authorities went a step further than their predecessors and introduced them into secular institutions.

The purpose of the renewal of public celebrations of religious festivals in the municipalities of Belgrade marks an intention to symbolically draw a clear line from the previous regime and its protagonists, considered to be the heirs of the communist ideological system, who had abolished the practice of the religious tradition. This may be best described by the words of the mayor of Čukarica elected after the triumph of the coalition 'Zajedno' in 1997:

"With new local authorities also came a different attitude towards the Church, religion and old tradition and customs. Since 1997 Čukarica has celebrated its 'slava' - the Trinity again, with the traditional procession through the city; the Yule log has been brought into the town hall – a home of all citizens of Čukarica; the Easter and all

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<sup>8</sup> For the specification of periods in the (process of the) renewal of tradition in Serbian politics see: Naumović, 2009, 51-55.

major religious festivals have been celebrated. The Municipal Council for Religious Affairs has been formed, and the mayor and the municipal officials have been seen on liturgy on Sundays or taking the 'slava's cake to the church'. (Alimpić 2010, 13).

Everything stated so far can be presented in several general views, recognizable in the activities of the democratic authorities in Čukarica:

The return to democracy is also the return to tradition, since our society is considered to have been democratic and the guardian of its own glorious tradition which was deliberately and completely suppressed by the communist regime. At the local level, the return to tradition is most explicitly reflected in the return of public religious celebrations, seen as an element of tradition that has been endangered most by the previous political regime and ruling ideology. During the "renewal" of religious customs we face the fact that there are no "blueprints" and clear "instructions" for their revitalization, so the ultimate outcome and the form of the event, i.e. "the content of the renewed tradition" depends on the scriptwriter of the celebration, and on inspired individuals participating in the organization.

As Slobodan Naumović emphasizes, in Serbian public, there is a considerable degree of consensus on the issue of what constitutes Serbian national tradition. Naumović believes that the common notion about it can be classified within four basic elements-traditions: historical, i.e. state and political, Orthodox religious, folk and cultural tradition. (Naumović, op. cit, 80-81).

The proposed classification is also substantiated by the example presented in this work, since it is presenting the renewal of tradition at the local, municipal level. As it has been mentioned, the first and most significant steps in the renewal of tradition in Čukarica, were connected to the renewal of public celebrations of religious festivals such as the celebration of 'slava' and the Epiphany. So, in the celebration of formal Christian religious holidays, we find many elements of folk culture – various traditional beliefs and customs, even the participants in traditional costumes and a parade of horsemen. As for the elements related to different historical, national and political traditions there's the presence and participation of the Karadorđević Royal family in the celebration of the Epiphany, the participation of various military and police branches and the Patriarch welcomed with the Guard Band's sounds of "March on the Drina" and canon fire. In these celebrations we also find the reminiscences of a foggy, ancient, "heroic" period of time through participation of the 'Svebor' and 'Svibor' associations, which cherish "knightly skills" and, in the end we find the elements of cultural tradition, first of all the organization of cultural and artistic programme with singers of traditional music, poets and writers. All this "concentrating" of tradition in one kind of celebration is logical and expected, given the fact that, at this level of political organization and public administration, the manipulation with

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important levers of society, as well as a large media promotion, are not generally available. In this case religious festivals prove to be one of the few choices for the presentation of all the organizers' ideas and for sending desired political messages.

All the above also fits in the idea of the Fall and Restoration, which, relying on Smith, Naumović develops by analyzing the Serbian neo-traditional narratives (Ibid, 157-163).

The historical decline represents the idea that the Serbs are facing a historic defeat as a consequence of renunciation of cultural tradition and national identity during the Communist rule, while the idea of the Restoration demands the recovery of collective identity by the renewal of common tradition. In our example, however, the idea of restoration appeared with a new political group from the opposition, whereas the former regime in the political arena was using the same idea more effectively. The Concepts of the Fall and Restoration survived the frenzied instrumentation in the years of crisis and war, to find themselves again in the focus of new political groups in a somewhat changed context where they were used to set boundaries regarding their political predecessor, claimed not to have been 'genuine' or 'true' tradition keeper.

This is a kind of re-revision of the relationship between the church and state towards the "tradition", motivated by the idea of withdrawing clear lines between political ideologies and emphasizing the historical discontinuity, i.e. by the need for establishing a clear distinction between –

'We' (the new, democratic authorities) : 'They' (the Communists, "the ones with a traditionalist and nationalist robe").

Finally, we conclude that the phenomenon of neo-traditionalism. i.e. "the return to tradition" in politics, at the local level of organization, provides plenty of material for understanding this process in general. However, in order to offer answers to many arising questions, a thorough contextualization is needed and, furthermore, a more comprehensive research which would primarily deal with the phenomenon of transfer of a sort of traditionalist 'syndrome' from those who have skillfully used it in the years of Crisis and Fall to their after-comers who came into power after offering new programmes and guide-lines, but that's a subject for some of the following works since here it would exceed the purpose and intent of this text.

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Primljeno: 11.09.2012.

Prihvaćeno: 9.12.2012.

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#### **OBNOVA JAVNOG PROSLAVLJANJA OPŠTINSKIH SLAVA I VERSKIH PRAZNIKA U BEOGRADU KAO SIMBOLIČKA GRANICA IZMEĐU POLITIČKIH SISTEMA**

U radu se razmatra proces obnavljanja javnog proslavljanja opštinskih slava i verskih praznika, na primeru obeležavanja praznika Silaska Svetog Duha na apostole i Bogojavljenja na opštini Čukarica. Do obnavljanja javnog proslavljanja verskih praznika u lokalnim samorupravama dolazi nakon niza promena lokalnih vlasti krajem 90-tih godina prošlog veka, i posebno nakon "demokratskih" promena 2000. godine. Na opštini Čukarica, kao i u većini drugih beogradskih opština, na dan opštinske slave se organizuje litija i okupljanje oko svetog drveta – zapisa, u kojem učestvuju predstavnici Srpske pravoslavne crkve, lokalnih vlasti i građanstvo, dok je za proslavu Bogojavljanja pored litije organizovano i plivanje za časni krst. Nove vlasti su na ovaj način, već u prvim danima upravljanja lokalnom zajednicom, i simbolički prekidale sve

### Municipal 'slavas'...

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veze s prethodnim režimom, koji je, kako se smatra, obeležavanje "tradicionalnih" religijskih običajnih praksi ukinuo ili sveo na minimum. Ovaj, svojevrsni, "povratak" tradiciji nije prošao bez problema kada se posegnulo za rekonstrukcijom i reinterpretacijom običajnih praksi, pa su se u prvim godinama obeležavanja praznika u ceremonijama zatekli, često izmišljeni, pa čak i religijski međusobno "suprotstavljeni" elementi. Pored razmatranja procesa kreiranja tradicije, u radu se posebna pažnja obraća na uloge pojedinaca u organizaciji i izradi "scenarija" proslave, kao i na uloge političkih struktura u obnovi javnog obeležavanja verskih praznika.

**Ključne reči:** opštinska slava, javna proslava, verski praznici, političke strukture, tradicija, rekonstrukcija