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Between archaeology and anthropology. Collective memory, liminal spaces, and mythical landscape

Anthropology in Slovenian Archaeological Research

In the thematic review dedicated to the question of directions of archaeological research in Slovenia, the aim of this article is to reflect on the interdisciplinary connection between archaeology and ethnology, cultural anthropology and folkloristics,[1] which could enable new possibilities of interpretations in the interpretative field.

Although the interest of the so-called *narodopisje*[2] in ethnology after World War II was focused on "ethnographic typification" and "cultural elements" trying to give a historical interpretation (origin, developments, change, disintegration) (Slavec Gradišnik, 2000, 627), similar to the positivistic archaeologists, there was no outstanding research at the edge between the two disciplines of archaeology and ethnology. The first to dare to reflect on this interdisciplinary collaboration was Ivan Šprajc (1982) in his (published) master's thesis for the conclusion of his study of archaeology and ethnology entitled *On the Relation Between Archaeology and Ethnology*. However, with the focus of his research shifting to the archeoastronomy and archaeology of Mesoamerica, he has not continued in this line of work, and for many years there has been no interest in collaboration in both disciplines. The only element that was interesting for archaeology from the domain of ethnology was the oral tradition, even if archaeologists treated it as a non-historical, non-reliable source. The use of oral tradition in archaeology has for long been limited

1 Instead of ethnology I'm using the term anthropology. In the general view ethnology has been perceived as a historical national science, opposed to anthropology, considered to be a research of peoples and their cultures from a non-historical cultural point of view, usually outside Europe (Šmitek et al., 1992, 259–261; Slavec Gradišnik, 2000, 88–89). However, in recent decades we can observe a growing convergence between American cultural/social anthropology and European ethnology (Slavec Gradišnik, 2000, 105–110; Brumen, 2001, 194; Muršič, 2003, 8–9). A similar blurring of the disciplines can be observed in folkloristics, which, due to the recent thematic and problem-oriented expansion of ethnological topics is increasingly merging with ethnology (Kremenšek et al., 2004, 118).

2 Narodopisje is a name given to ethnology until the mid-20th century, which, like the German Volkskunde was concerned with the study of one's own nation (as distinct from Völkerkunde), especially its folk, traditional culture in the past (peasants, countryside) and its continuity (survivals) in the present. It was historically oriented, and positivist in its methodology (see Slavec Gradišnik, 2000).

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only to archaeological topography – as an indication for archaeological settlements based on oral traditions about treasures, castles, *ajdi* (Eng. Giants, pagans), abandoned roads and so on (Slapšak, 1995, 17–20; Slapšak et al., 2005, 302). The archaeologist Božidar Slapšak was the first to draw attention to the question of the possibility of using folklore in archaeological research. When he researched the prehistoric and Roman settlement of Ajdovščina above Rodik he drew attention to the local unusual narratives about *ajdi* and a possible cult place above the Roman cemetery in the vicinity (Slapšak, 1995; 1997). He reflected on the meanings of oral tradition for archaeological research when this was strongly positivist in its orientation. With Svetlana Kojić, he also wrote a short attempt at the use of oral tradition in the case of a mythical figure called Šembilja, who leaves material traces in the landscape linked to Roman or pre-Roman roads (Slapšak et al., 1976). These first reflections with no significant echo in archaeology inspired me as a young student to research the possibilities of the use of oral tradition in archaeology for a master's thesis on archaeology (Hrobat, 2003; 2007) when this interdisciplinary collaboration seemed rather unimaginable. In parallel to Božidar Slapšak, but in a different direction, the only archaeologist taking oral tradition seriously in the study of the past was Andrej Pleterski. He was the first to combine archaeological findings with oral traditions about places in his study of the Slavic religion and mythical landscape. In contrast to Slapšak, who had only some reflections, Pleterski continuously researched in this direction (including a PhD thesis on ethnology and Slavic mythology), beginning with his influential article on the structures of three-partite ideology in space among the Slavs (1996).

After these first reflections beyond the edge of archaeology of that time and after publishing my research a decade later (Hrobat, 2007), this kind of interdisciplinary research oriented towards interpretative aspects of (material) culture by combining archaeological and ethnological findings slowly became acceptable in archaeology.

Collective memory, folklore and landscape

In his study of space in the 1990s, the anthropologist Tim Ingold mentioned that the common points between archaeology and anthropology are landscape and temporality. A landscape is perceived as a durable record and testimony of the life and work of generations that have lived in it. In a landscape, both archaeologists and local inhabitants search the past, even if their methods, rules and narratives differ (Ingold, 1993, 152–153). The difference in perception of time and space between archaeology and oral tradition can be shown in the case of the prehistoric mounds. In the eyes of the archaeologist, mounds are of one period, defined by the period of their creation and use, and their function is burial. Whereas mounds in folk tradition belong to an alternative time, where time passes in a different way and is accessible to ordinary people through mounds. In this way, mounds can retain their original meaning in the landscape as an

entrance to the "other world" (Gazin-Schwartz et al., 1999, 16; see Thompson, 2004). Similar is the traditional perception of caves (see below). As places characterized by a supernatural passage of time, certain caves can be perceived as an entrance to the "world beyond" (Hrobat Virloget, 2015).

Space was first perceived by processual archaeologists only as a territory of (ecological material) sources for subsistence. It was only with post-processual archaeologists in the 1980s that the space was transformed into the landscape in the phenomenological sense with its specific cultural, symbolic and other values. The landscape was finally perceived as a human artefact, as a result of the symbolical representation of the world, as perception, an arena of social relations, place of memories, traditions and so on (Novaković, 2003, 168–179). As anthropologists and post-processual archaeologists argue, a space can be turned into place if it is endowed with meaning, given by tradition (Kockel, 2008, 14; Casey, 1996; Novaković, 2003, 170–178). Spaces do not provide grounding for identities, while places do (Kockel, 2008, 14).

My research into symbolic landscapes in the case of the Karst has shown that oral tradition attached to the landscape can preserve long-lasting collective memories. Similar to the so-called indigenous people, the people in Europe "read" about their past in their local landscape (Hrobat, 2003; 2007; 2010a).[3] For example, the Apache people learn about their mythical ancestors and moral principles through their symbolic embodiments in the landscape (Basso, 2002, 105–149). Keith H. Basso call this activity "sensing of place", which expresses "the ordinary way of engaging one's surroundings and finding them significant" (Basso 2002, 143). The practice of remembering is equivalent to a person's movement in the environment and is therefore embedded in the perception of the environment (Ingold, 2000, 148). Deriving from Bourdieu's (1977) theory of praxis, the archaeologist Peter Jordan in his study of the material culture of the sacred landscape of Khanty people in Siberia argued that the meanings of places are not fixed, but they derive from their context in the landscape and, more importantly, they are activated by the social praxis, memorial traces and contexts in the biographies of the groups that inhabit these landscapes (Jordan, 2007). Whereas some researchers argue that for indigenous people memoryscapes with their ancestral connections are not merely places which trig-

3 Anthropologists have for long interpreted the representations of the past of "primitive communities," therefore, communities "without history," as the manifestations of "mythical thinking". The memory of these communities was reduced to mythical thinking, non-history, which was contrary to history, understood as "scientific" memory of past events of the developed, "rational" communities, the masters of the concept of linear time. However, the memory, even though there understood as myth and as history here, has in the process of identity formation always the same meaning and function: to provide an answer to the needs of the present through the selective forms of remembering (Nora, 1989; Lowenthal, 1995, 197–198, 210; Fabietti, Matera, 1999, 13–14). Moreover, Lévi-Strauss's (1966, 233–234) differentiation between two different worldviews, one based on linear, chronological, scientific view and the other on myth have been disregarded by folklorists (Dundes, 1984; Eliade, 1963; 1974) by showing a share of myth (temporal, sacred narratives) and history in modern Western society and the existence of such genre distinctions in nonliterate communities (Thompson, 2004, 336).

ger memories, "but rather places where memories and knowledge nest independent of human agency" (Thor Carlson et al., 2020, 145).

For Maurice Halbwachs, the founder of the notion of collective memory, memory is not an issue of time but a matter of space and localization (Halbwachs, 1994 [1925]; 2001 [1950]; Gensburger, 2020, 69; Jaisson, 1999). Apart from linking the collective memory to social space (Gensburger, 2020, 70), Halbwachs was the first to note the interdependence between the symbolic space or landscape and collective memory. He argued that collective identities are structured on time-space references, which strengthen the memory of a common past (Halbwachs, 1971; 2001, 143–177; Jonker, 1995, 17; Fabietti et al., 1999, 35). What is important for archaeological research is his idea that to fix and preserve a collective memory it must be presented in the concrete form of an event, person or place (Halbwachs, 1971, 124). His case study shows how the Christian collective memory provided the illusion of continuity by inscribing itself in the places of the Holy Land. What makes beliefs to endure is not the material itself, which is changeable, but the image, which has been replaced by itself. On one side the collective memory lies on a material, figure, place, or monument, and on the other hand on a symbol, a spiritual meaning, which is anchored in the spirit of the group and superimposed on this reality (Halbwachs, 1971, 117–164). According to Halbwachs, "there is no collective memory that does not take place in a spatial context" (2001, 157), because it is place that gives the illusion that a community has not changed and that it can find the past in the present. The landscape has embodied the ancestors' tradition which gives support to the community identity and a "stable" material basis for collective memory. Communities draw their forms on the ground, in which they also enclose and locate their collective memories (Halbwachs, 1971, 130; 2001, 143–177).

The interdependence of place and memory was already mentioned by Claude Lévi-Strauss (2004 [1955], 207–214), who noticed that the entire complex tradition with its rituals of the Bororo people from Brazil was conceptualized in the material space of their circular village. Once the Christian missionaries destroyed their conceptualized topography by transferring them to a new village with parallel houses, they lost their spatialized religious tradition and were successfully converted to Christianity.

Use of oral tradition about landscape in archaeology

It has been argued that the embedded memory and narratives in the landscape or memoryscapes form the basis for the interdisciplinary collaboration between archaeology and anthropology because it enables the understanding of the symbolic values of space (Hrobat, 2007; 2010a). The forms of traditional knowledge of the communities that inhabit the researched landscape can provide multiple understandings of the layers of conceptualizations of landscape (Sinamai, 2020, 155–156).

Tok Thompson, one of the first folklorists who showed how the study of folklore can enrich archaeological understandings of the (Neolithic) past, argued that folklore can provide information about the past when it is not taken as history, but as cultural information about the past (through rituals, tales, art, landscape, language, and all aspects of social and cultural life) (Thompson, 2004, 336–339). He asserts that it is not that the traditions associated with the monuments do not change over time, but that these changes often incorporate earlier material. A key element in understanding archaeological remains lies in the emic view. Thompson has shown that by avoiding the use of the scientific terminology for Neolithic "megaliths" and by using the native Irish word *síd* (mounds) for them, indicating "spirits of the mounds", a whole range of different connotations, meanings and narratives open up. He has demonstrated that the traditions of *sí* spirits living in the megaliths are intimately connected with the dead in this way preserving the same cultural idea of the connection between landscape, i.e. megaliths and the dead from Neolithic times (Thompson, 2004, 341–345). Interdisciplinary collaboration can therefore start when archaeologists look beyond specific archaeological sites and remains, and also try to find information about the past in folklore, native languages and an emic view (Thompson, 2004, 363–364).

Most interdisciplinary research between anthropology and archaeology has been carried out in the so-called New World, in Canada, the United States and Australia, where frequent disputes between indigenous peoples and colonial powers question the historicity of the oral tradition (Thompson, 2004, 337–340; Hrobat, 2010a, 14–15).[4]

In the Slovenian frame, research has been done on the conceptualization of landscape in the case of the Karst by studying oral tradition, linked to the landscape by employing anthropological and archaeological methodological tools (Hrobat, 2010a). For the first time, the oral tradition was analysed from the context of its position in the landscape, which can be primarily perceived as an archaeological methodology. This research has shown certain long-term continuity in tradition, where even historical aspects could be preserved (Hrobat, 2007; Hrobat Virloget, 2012). The research of the narratives of the *ajdi* of Ajdovščina above Rodik has indicated the possibility of getting some fragments of historical information in that part of oral tradition which deviates from the general patterns of folklore and which is linked to a specific site (Hrobat, 2007; Palavestra, 1966, 5, 52–53; 1990, 185; Slapšak et al., 2022).

4 In the 1950s a new discipline emerged in America, ethnohistory, which combined the methods of ethnology (especially oral tradition) and history, as a result of the disputes between colonial powers and indigenous people over the ownership of the land (Viazzo, 2000, 77–79). Recently the combination of the two disciplines have been employed by ethnoarchaeology, which could be defined as a study of living traditional societies using archaeological methods and theories (Gonzáles-Ruibal, 2016).

The link between collective memory and landscape has given the conceptual framework for recent research studies by some archaeologists on the Slavic mythical landscape (e.g. Pleterski, 2014; Belaj V. et al., 2014).

The case study of liminal spaces in the landscape

Valuable for archaeologists is the symbolic value that oral tradition can preserve about certain places. The analysis of the spatial positioning of oral tradition in the landscape (Hrobat, 2010a) has shown that the majority of traditions about apparitions, sacrifices, and burials of folklore creatures from the world in-between appear at or along cadastral boundaries (e.g. Rodik, Lokev) (Hrobat, 2010a, 64–90, 105–106; Hrobat Virloget, 2014, 359–382).[5] Similar motifs can also be found in the wider Slovene and European folklore, where deaths and killings take place at territory boundaries, which some folklorists link to sacrifices (Grafenauer, 1957; 1959; Dragan, 1999, 99; Kvideland, 1993, 13–19).

Comparisons with folklore thus indicate the special significance of territory borders, which is reflected in the positioning of sacred places and ritual processions along them (Risteski, 2005, 216–217; Šmitek, 2004, 213–214; Radenković, 1996, 182–183). Among the analogies in archaeology is the border line called *pomerium*, which was supposedly ritually ploughed by the mythical founder of Rome, Romulus, at the founding of the city, and had symbolic significance. It was sacrosanct, with special importance in both ideology and practice, and was linked to special rules concerning behaviour, burials, and cults. It was also part of rituals carried out on the founding of other towns (Segaud, 2008, 121). In ancient Greece, temples, presumably protected by gods, were positioned along uncultivated zones around territory boundaries (Guettel Cole, 2004, 67Y68, 77), whereas in Roman times, sacrifices to the god *Terminus* were performed at boundary markers (Dilke, 1971, 98–108). The burying of specific objects at the endpoints of newly established territoria; boundaries is recorded in Indian Sanskrit sources from the 1st century BC (Dragan, 2010, 93, 101). Similar traditions were also found recently in Slovenia (Hrobat, 2010a, 67).[6]

Research on the marking of boundaries with the supernatural (Hrobat, 2010a) was confirmed by the folklore historian Simon Young (2020; 2022). By mapping the spirits in the 19th century landscape of northwest England, he argues that public bogies

5 It is interesting to note that locals are not aware that a large number of "frightening places" are located at cadastral limits.

6 A ritual was recorded by the division of estates in the village Sveti Peter, where a boundary marker was partly dug into the ground with a stone slab, called a "witness", on each side. Similar remnants of the delineation of property's boundaries are called "death witnesses" or "witnesses" and are found on the Karst on both sides of the Slovenian-Italian border. This particular example is in the form of a stone built into a house which delineates the boundary between family properties (Počkar, 2020/21). I'm thankful to the ethnologist Darja Kranjc for showing me this research work from the primary school.

(celebrated local spirits) concentrate around settlements, sometimes in radial patterns, and they are found at strategic points such as junctions, boundaries, bridges and rivers. As he writes "spirits dwell in relation to humans, but not in their midst" (Young, 2020, 15). Reflecting on my words that supernatural forces protect boundaries (Hrobat Virloget, 2014, 372), he adds that they do not only terrify the population but "they mark out the territory" (Young, 2020, 15). The difference between this research and similar work by folklorists who study the functions of narratives in the construction of space and time (e.g. Mencej, 2005) is in the analysis of the concrete landscapes, which is closer to archaeological methodology.

The village boundaries in the Karst region are marked also by ritual behaviour, seen in the phenomenon of "dead resting sites" (*mrtva počivala*[7]). These were ritual places in which funeral processions stopped and prayed, pallbearers were exchanged, and the coffin/deceased was placed on the ground. When mapping these places onto the map it was found that "dead resting sites" are not arbitrarily located in the landscape, as the majority of them are situated precisely at or along cadastral boundaries (Hrobat, 2010a, 107–119; Hrobat Virloget, 2014). A few exceptions can be found by the water, which was in Slavic folklore and elsewhere considered the mediator with the world beyond (Mencej, 1997; 2004, 183–197). In these cases, it seems that water could have the same function as village boundaries, as will be argued below.

The reason why ritual activities took place precisely in these places can be explained by van Gennep's theory of rituals of passage, which are, according to him, part of the traditional concept of boundaries. *Rites de passage* are thought to regulate the passages between different social positions in human life, different time limits, and territories. The passages through boundaries and thresholds were marked by rituals, for instance, when crossing territorial boundaries, which were often marked by special objects or boundary deities (Van Gennep, 1993, 7–8; Leach, 1983, 55).

It is commonly known that all customs and rituals surrounding death were intended to pull the dead person from the world of the living because of the danger of contamination from the world beyond (Bacqué, 1997, 247–276; Baudry, 1997, 225–244). In certain areas, all funeral processions had to travel the routes of the dead, which were known throughout Europe, even when this meant travelling far afield. Similarly, when returning from a funeral the procession had to take a different path home, and not the path of the dead, while in some places (e.g. Idrija), there was a separate funerary path for the "unclean" dead, the ones who committed suicide (Hrobat, 2010a, 107; Hrobat, 2010b, 37). Ritual acts thus served to maintain the boundary, the division of space, and to ensure the elimination of the dead and thus death itself (Dragan, 1999, 153–157; Lehr, 1999, 225–244; Risteski, 2001, 154–179).

7 They can be denoted differently, for instance "Dead hill/slope" (Mrtvaški hrib/breg) or "Cross tree" (Križen drev) (Hrobat Virloget, 2010, 107–116).

Funeral customs of resting and marking the place with the dead are known all across Europe, among them are places called *mirila* (Littoral Croatia[8]), *karsikko* (Finland), *offerkast* (Sweden), *cairns* (Ireland) and *cross-tree* (Estonia, Finland, Latvia) (Katić, 2017, 95–144, 264). Traditions similar to the *cross-tree* tradition were widespread across republics of former Yugoslavia, where at a stop with the dead a cross was marked in a tree (usually an oak tree) (Katić, 2017, 113–119). This ritual was known in Rodik and Brezovica on Karst too (Hrobat, 2010a, 70–73; Hrobat Virloget, 2021a, 27).[9] *Mirila* could be interpreted as part of dead resting sites with the difference that they have evolved into individual stone memorials. The term *mirila* involves a stone construction marking the resting place of the deceased. On the funerary procession, a ritual was performed at the place of the future *mirila*, in order to separate the body and the soul and set the soul to rest. After the burial of the deceased at the cemetery, the coffin carriers returned to the ritual place to build a stone monument for the deceased (with or without the data of the deceased) (Pleterski et al., 2010; Katić, 2010).[10] A similar tradition was the *cross-tree* tradition in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Sweden, with the difference that, in the interpretation of Janne Vilkunna, the ritual bound the soul to the tree, while the *Karsikko* (Eng. "pruning of the tree") tradition in Finland had the same function, but also included memorial inscriptions on boards, building walls, or rocks (Vilkunna, 1993, 135–152).[11]

In the context of van Gennep's theory, such traditions linked to marking the place of resting with the dead are interpreted as man's last passage – from the world of the living to the world of the dead. Material remains are here understood as a symbolic limit between these worlds, with the soul bound to the stone/tree, which prevents its return to the world of the living (Vilkunna, 1993, 149; Katić, 2010, 119, 129). Mario Katić interprets two main roles of such places as *mirila*, or places of marking the place of resting with the dead: on one side, as an informant noted, to retain the soul till the dawn when it has to return to its place, but on the other side to protect the community of the living from a wandering soul, and therefore marking a place of danger, a liminal space for the living (Katić, 2017, 93, 140). Different beliefs about the souls of the dead seem inseparably linked to the places of the deceased and death, no matter if someone died in this place or if the dead body was placed on or in it, or if resting with the deceased was performed there. All these practices indicate a liminal space,

8 Middle and north Dalmatia, Lika, Primorje, Velebit, and Podgorje (Katić, 2010, 15).

9 On the basis of archival sources, the historian Aneja Rože confirmed the information from the oral tradition on the cross incised into the oak tree on Križen drev, lecture 21.10.2022, Mythical Park, Rodik (https://www.slovenskenovice.si/novice/slovenija/v-mitskem-parku-zimzeleni-hrast/, retrieved, 11.7.2023)

10 Analogies are made with the medieval stećki (Katić, 2017, 143; 2010, 27–32).

11 In both cases, the monuments could also be dedicated to missing people, people who had drowned or died far away (Vilkuna, 1993; Pleterski et al., 2010). In some cases mirila mark places of death and killing (Katić, 2017, 93–94).

which is dangerous for the soul and community of the living, if the rituals for separating the soul from the body and the community are not performed properly (Neil, 1946; Katić, 2017, 142).

On the other hand, these kinds of funeral practices remind one of the custom of crossing the water upon returning from a funeral. This is explained by some researchers as a way to protect the community from the return of the dead man's soul, as it would be unable to cross the water. On the other hand, Mirjam Mencej interprets this custom with the principle of sympathetic magic, which was used to help the deceased to cross over to the other side of the water to the world of the dead (Mencej, 1997). These kinds of funerary traditions, especially if we think of "dead resting sites" on community borders, could be interpreted along similar lines, namely that they were carried out to help the soul of the deceased at places where the passages between the worlds are maintained – at village borders.

The oral tradition about the supernatural and rituals mark liminal areas, liminal places in the landscape where the "supernatural" enters "our" world, the world of the living. The border zones thus represent the boundaries of "our world" in a functional sense, i.e. as the boundaries of a village with its neighbour, as well as in a cosmological sense as the boundary between the "world of the living" and the beyond (Hrobat, 2010a, 62–106, 180–182; Hrobat Virloget, 2014). If we take the sacred in the spatial sense that Radu Dragan uses to denote the beyond or, in French, *altérité*, "otherness" (Dragan, 1999, 62), we could perceive village borders as sacred. In these liminal places the village border functions as an entrance into an alternative reality; by crossing from one territory to another, one finds oneself in a material and magico-religious sense between the two worlds (Harte, 1994, 6; Van Gennep, 1981 [1909], 24; Young, 2020, 15).[12]

The research on *mirila* (Pleterski et al., 2010) represents an exemplary case study of an interdisciplinary collaboration between archaeology and anthropology. Without the anthropological knowledge of the *mirila* as places where the dead and their souls rest, the archaeologists would remain in front of an enigma of a whole cemetery of "cenotaphs". Of course, in this case, the advantage was that the memory of the use of monuments was still alive in the community.

Other liminal places and elements of mythical landscape

The landscape is interwoven with numerous liminal places through which the forces

12 Similarly, the word meaning "sacred" was used as a category boundary in the prehistoric Baltic Area to mark off and set strategic points in the landscape not only as markers of territorial border between groups of settlers, outer border of the inhabited area, but also as sites to carry out transformative rituals. The term was used for marking places and boundaries in the landscape, which entailed rule-governed behaviour, places that the community wanted to differentiate as "separate", "marked", "designated", "prohibited" or "dangerous" (Anttonen, 2003, 298; 2000, 230).

from the beyond intrude into "our" world. By performing rituals, man endeavours to restrain, activate or prevent them (Dragan, 1999, 157–158). According to folklorists, the conception of space in traditional thought is governed by a binary logic of the system, with which the world is kept in constant balance (Mencej, 1997; Dragan, 1999, 340; Risteski, 2001, 171–173).

Within cadastral boundaries, the transition between the worlds is most permeable at crossings and crossroads. In the case of funeral rituals, for example, most of the "dead resting sites" were positioned at crossroads. Burial processions performed stops at practically every boundary: at the courtyard gates, at crossroads, and finally at the gates of the cemetery (Dragan, 1999, 153–154; Ložar-Podlogar, 1999; Hrobat et al., 2008). Already in antiquity, a crossroads was considered a place of contact with the world of the dead. For example, the underworld opened up to Ulysses precisely at the confluence of two rivers (Odyssey K, 512–518, Λ–XI, 20–50; Petrović, 2000, 8), that is, at an intersection shaped in the letter Y, which is one of the most archetypal representations of a crossing (Dragan, 1999, 151). Folklore from the Slovenian Karst and Istria bears evidence of meetings with supernatural, liminal beings, of hailing the Devil at crossroads, of benevolent creatures fighting others with malevolent intentions at crossroads (the wizard against *Kresnik*), of witches gathering or appearing there, while also the majority of magical, purification rituals (or rituals including elements of a crossroads) are performed at crossroads. According to tradition, the crossroads had to be consecrated, and on St. John's Day bonfires were lit there "to banish the witches" (Hrobat et al., 2008; Dragan, 1999, 151–158; Puhvel, 1976; Hrobat, 2010a, 130–139). Magical rituals are therefore placed at this border between "one's own" and "foreign" space (Radenković, 1996). Protection rituals, preventing the intrusion of the forces from beyond, are thus performed precisely at crossroads during the most dangerous periods, such as on St. John's Day (the summer solstice).

Like space, time is also not conceived homogenously. In both dimensions, liminal breaks can happen, allowing the invasion of the world beyond. Space thus has different values at different times: certain periods of the year, for example, the summer solstice and the Quarter days, or certain parts of the day, such as dusk and night, are more responsive to transitions between the worlds – and thus special behaviour is attached to them (Mencej, 2005, 179).

Folklorists have shown that the "sacredness" of space decreases by moving away from the centre: from the house (e.g. hearth, "bohkov kot"[13] over the threshold to the fence, the yard's border, the border of the village towards the forests and uninhabited territories, marshes, and so on (Risteski, 2001, 155–159; Mencej, 2005, 179). Some research, however, indicates that there are many liminal places in the landscape

13 A corner in the house where holy cards were kept.

(e.g. houses, stables, yards, corners, thresholds, fences, roads, archaeological sites, cemeteries, forests, waters, caves, etc.; Mencej, 2005; Risteski, 2005; Hrobat, 2010a, 119–129, 154–156; Young, 2020), but the majority of the narratives and rituals connected to the world beyond are located outside of the living space, at village borders.

Notwithstanding this, there are certain narratives that suggest the liminality of the centre, the hearth of the house, which was replaced by the stove in the kitchen. According to the Karst tradition, the fire from the stove emitted sounds of the dead from purgatory (Hrobat, 2010a, 140). In the Balkans, the hearth was considered the ritual centre of the house, the place of the guardian snake, the protecting souls, or the stone God (Risteski, 2001, 133–135; Vukanović, 1971, 174–175), traces of which are hinted at already by the Balkan's Neolithic culture (Naumov, 2006, 85). According to Jean-Pierre Vernant, the sacred centre in ancient Greek spiritual culture was established through *Hestia,* the Greek goddess of the family and the public hearth in the town. Through the hearth, *Hestia* established communication with the chthonic world and, through the smoke from the hearth, at the same time, with the world of the Olympic gods (Vernant, 2001; Segaud, 2008, 109–110). Similarly, Susan Guettel Cole (2004, 74–78) identified the centre in the *prtyaneion*, the public hearth in the town, with the sacred fire. It presented the sacred and the political centre of the *polis* and, at the same time, the connecting element between different *poleis,* which shared the same fire.

As mentioned above, the perception of liminality in traditional cultures is also linked to certain caves in the landscape, and indicative of this are several narrative motifs. Caves are usually dwelling places of supernatural beings. By entering certain caves in traditional narratives people experience another dimension of time – a "supernatural passage of time" – a time that runs differently than it does in the human world. A different passing of time is an indication of the entrance to another world, another dimension, which has the connotation of otherworldliness (Mencej, 2009, 193–202). Certain caves in traditional narratives are connected to new-borns and/or with the female mythical being Baba (Eng. a hag; see below), who helps in birthing or gives new-borns. On the other side, Baba also keeps (dead) children in the caves or cooks/bakes them, in this manner linking caves to death (Hrobat Virloget, 2015; Mihelič, 2013). According to some traditional beliefs, newborns come from another world or from the very world of the dead (Risteski, 2002, 167; Dragan, 1999, 287, 292, 299–98). Mirjam Mencej argues that if it is known that fertility in the traditional worldview derives from the other world – and thus from the same place where dead souls go after death – then in ideas about where babies are kept before being born certain notions of this other world can be detected (Mencej, 2005, 199). By analysing the motif of "supernatural passage of time" in narratives across Europe and beyond, she has shown that the connotation of otherworldliness can be found in spaces such as mountains or hills, caverns, graves or mounds and forest and waters (Mencej, 2009). The symbolic

meaning of mountains was reflected in the megalithic architecture of mounds, which functioned as places of connection with the deceased ancestors and other mythical beings (Šmitek, 2019, 41).

Moreover, the analysis of the traditional narratives and rituals from the Karst and Western Slovenia has shown that certain caves are linked to beliefs about entrance into the world beyond. Especially indicative is the motif of the supernatural passage of time and rituals made in certain caves (Čok, 2012; Medvešček, 2015[14]; Hrobat Virloget, 2015, 158–160). Among the latter, the narratives of rituals in caves with sexual symbols in the form of stalactites and stalagmites (Čok, 2012, 21–23; Medvešček 2015, 313–323) indicating fertility are reminiscent of the archaeological findings of ceramic,s and animal bones from the 4th century BC in the cave in front of the stalagmite in the form of a phallic symbol in Spila Nakovana by Donja Nakovana on Pelješac in south Dalmatia (Menalo, 2005, 8, 20, 25–27). If the new life and fertility indicated in the folklore material come to the world of the living through the caves, it is logical, therefore, that religious rituals for fertility were performed in the caves. The analysis has shown that certain caves functioned in the local landscape as places of transition to the world of the dead, from where fertility comes into the world of living (Hrobat Virloget, 2015).

The oral tradition about the Baba (Eng. hag) is also interesting, which gives meaning to some places, caves, hills, and especially stones named after this folklore figure. Oral tradition and rituals linked to her indicate a remnant of an archaic mythological being, materialized in the landscape. It can be interpreted as the Slavic goddess Mokoš,[15] but also as a much more archaic and widespread phenomenon with analogies in Italy, France, and Spain. Children's grotesque folklore about kissing the Baba when passing by for the first time, widespread in the Slavic and Romance linguistic world, can preserve some memory of a territorial *rite de passage* (van Gennep, 1981) or initiation rites (Delavigne, 1982, 422), linked to a specific point in the landscape or to entering the territories of the "other", indicating again liminal spaces (Hrobat, 2010a, 183–224; Hrobat Virloget, 2013; 2021a, 28–34).

Conclusions. On the archaic traditions enabling interdisciplinary collaboration

The move from mythical to rational thinking has never been concluded. Many patterns of human symbolic thinking and functioning from oral tradition are comparable

14 Recently an intensive discussion has developed about the "authenticity" of primary sources on Staroverci ("Old Faith tradition"), written by Pavel Medvešček (2015) (see Kozorog, 2020; Hrobat Virloget, 2021b; 2022; Kozorog, 2022; Toplak, 2022).

15 From these findings derive the research of the Slavic mythical landscape and mythology (e.g. Pleterski, 2014; Katičić, 2011; Belaj V., Belaj J, 2014; Vince-Pallua, 2018; etc.).

with each other, and therefore universal and comparable between different periods and cultures (Šmitek, 2019, 42, 52). Such is also the case of the Baba, for which the only dates from its depictions we have are not that old (16th and 15th centuries, see map Panjek, 2015, 124; Vince Pallua, 2018; Hrobat Virloget, 2021a, 30). While most of the researchers interpret the Baba in the context of Slavic religion (Belaj V. et al., 2014; Katičić, 2011; Vince-Pallua, 2018; 2011), my opinion is that this and certain other traditions can be much more archaic.[16] Indicative is the same oral tradition of kissing the Baba (or other kind of ritual) when passing by which extends beyond the Slavic world (as far as Brittany in France; Hrobat Virloget, 2015, 61; Dellavigne, 1982; for comparisons with the Palaeolithic see Mihelič, 2013). A renowned Slovenian scholar of mythology, Zmago Šmitek (2019, 391), convincingly argued that the modern human has spiritually not evolved much more from the stage of the Palaeolithic hunter. After he demonstrated thousands of years old ideas in the recent oral tradition, Šmitek asked whether Sokrates was not right when he considered "whether human knowledge is not just remembering" (Šmitek, 2019, 392).

It is this archaic memory or this *longue-duree mémoire* that enables the interdisciplinary collaboration between archaeology and anthropology. This collaboration can enrich our understanding of the cosmological perceptions of the cultures we study, even if these cultures belong to the remote past. However, being educated in both disciplines, archaeology and anthropology, I can see one obstacle in the interdisciplinary collaboration. Usually it is archaeologists who are more interested in the anthropological findings than anthropologists in archaeological research. The reason can be found in the recent anthropological constructivist discourse in which traditions are primarily seen as "invented", and therefore "nonauthentic". In the current anthropological discourse any positive valuation of the past or emphasis of continuity over change is seen as emotional regressive and as escape from the contemporary world (Kockel, 2008).

Even if archaeology has realized that the reconstruction of the past world is impossible (Novaković, 2023), because "the past is a foreign country (Lowenthal, 1999)", and even if the interpretation of the past can derive only from our present (Novaković, 2023), it can be argued that this present can conserve very archaic (and universal) ideas. As has been shown in several case studies of oral traditions (Thompson, 2004; Hrobat, 2010a; Pleterski, 2023; Šmitek, 2019 etc.), the ideas behind them can be traced in undatable, archaic and remote traditions and their materializations.

16 The reflection on the archaicity struck me when I saw identical mythical figures large distances away from each other: on one side a masked figure all in green vegetation from the Western Alps (seen in the Museo delle Alpi, Forte di Bard, Val d'Aosta, Documentary film Rivamonte Agordino, 1996, July, 2023), and on the other side in Eastern Alps an almost identical mythical figure of Pust in Cerkno dressed all in green (using moss), both of them carrying a young tree. The figures remind also Zeleni Jurij from Bela Krajina and Western Croatia, which is mostly interpreted in the context of Slavic mythology (Belaj, 1998).

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Med arheologijo in antropologijo: kolektivni spomin, liminalni prostori in mitska pokrajina

Ključne besede: interdisciplinartnost, arheologija, antropologija, ljudsko izročilo, liminalni prostori, mitska pokrajina

Članek premišlja možnosti interdisciplinarnosti med arheologijo in kulturno antropologijo oz. etnologijo. Kar se je še pred nekaj desetletji zdelo nemogoče zaradi izmuzljivosti in netočnosti ljudskega izročila, kot ga je videla arheološka stran, je v novejšem času ponudilo nove perspektive v razumevanju prostora, ključnega koncepta, ki povezuje obe humanistični vedi. Članek predstavlja nekatere temeljne teoretske koncepte, ki omogočajo sodelovanje arheologije in antropologije. Ključni elementi te zveze so prostor, ljudsko izročilo, ki o njem govori, in kolektivni spomin. Percepcija prostora v ljudskem izročilu omogoča boljše razumevanje nekaterih arheoloških objektov. Ustno izročilo, ki je vsajeno v prostor, nam lahko pomaga pri razumevanju kontinuitete simbolnih vrednosti krajev kot so liminalni prostori oziroma elementi mitske pokrajine.

Between archaeology and anthropology. Collective memory, liminal spaces, and mythical landscape

Keywords: interdisciplinarity, archaeology, anthropology, oral tradition, liminal spaces, mythical landscape

The article discusses the possibilities of interdisciplinary collaboration between archaeology and cultural anthropology/ethnology. What seemed some decades ago unthinkable, due to the elusiveness or inaccuracy of oral tradition perceived from the archaeological side, has recently provided new perspectives for understanding space, the key concept that links both humanistic disciplines. The article shows some basic theoretical concepts, enabling interdisciplinary collaboration between the two disciplines. The key elements which connect the two disciplines are space, the oral tradition attached to it and collective memory. The traditional perception of space can offer a better understanding of some archaeological materials. The oral tradition embedded in the landscape can give us some understanding of the continuity of symbolic values of places, such as liminal spaces or elements of mythical landscapes.

O avtorici

Katja Hrobat Virloget je diplomirana arheologinja, doktorat na temo koncepta časa in prostora v ljudskem izročilu Krasa pa je pridobila na Oddelku za Etnologijo in kul-

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About the author

Katja Hrobat Virloget graduated from archaeology on the use of oral tradition in archaeology and made her PhD in ethnology on the concept of time and space in oral tradition of Karst. Currently Vice-Dean for Research at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Primorska, Slovenia, and Head of the Department of Anthropology and Cultural Studies She has recently received several prizes for her Slovenian book *V tišini spomina. "Eksodus" in Istra* (published in English by Berghahn Books as *Silences and Divided Memories: The Exodus and its Legacy in Post-War Istrian Society*), including a nomination for the Excellence in Research Award 2022 by the Slovenian Research Agency, and the Murko Award – the national ethnological prize (2021). Apart from the anthropology of memory and migrations, she continues her research on the interdisciplinary field between archaeology and anthropology.

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