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## BUREKALISM – A SLOVENIAN VIEW OF BUREKS AND BUREKPEOPLE

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### ABSTRACT

*Burekalism is a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between a population and place defined by the burek and a population and place not defined by the burek, or in other words: between “immigrants” and “Slovenians”. And further, burekalism is a style of domination of a population defined by the burek by a population not defined by the burek.*

**Key words:** burekalism, orientalism, immigrants (and their descendans), Slovenia, media, popular culture

### “BUREKALISMO” – IL PUNTO DI VISTA SLOVENO SUL BUREK E SU “QUELLI DEL BUREK”

#### SINTESI

*Con la parola burekalismo (burekalism) ci si riferisce a un modo di pensare, riconducibile a una distinzione ontologica ed epistemologica tra la popolazione e l'ambiente definibili come orientati verso il burek e quelli definibili come non orientati verso di esso, vale a dire – grossolanamente e in modo semplificato – tra immigrati e sloveni. Inoltre, il burekalismo identifica lo stile con cui la popolazione non orientata verso il burek esercita, ristruttura e implementa supremazia e potere su quella orientata verso di esso.*

**Parole chiave:** burekalismo, orientalismo, immigrati (e loro discendenti), Slovenia, mezzi di comunicazione, cultura popolare

## ABOUT THE BUREK AND BUREKALISM

The burek – a pie made of pastry dough filled with various fillings, well-known in the Balkans, Turkey (bürek), and also in the Near East by other names – probably arrived in Slovenia in the 1960s. Slovenia, industrially the most ambitious of the republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), needed a workforce. And with that workforce – immigrants from the former republics of the SFRY – came the burek. To paraphrase Max Frisch: We called for a workforce and we got bureks!<sup>1</sup>

However, the subject of this analysis is not the burek itself; the subject of this analysis is burekalism. Burekalism? Burekalism is, in Said's words (1978, 2), "a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between" a population and place defined by the burek and a population and place not defined by the burek. Furthermore, burekalism is, again in Said's words (1978, 14) a "style" of the non-burekalized population "for dominating, reconstructing and having authority over" the burekalized population. To understand the concept of burekalism we will therefore rely on Said's concept of orientalism.<sup>2</sup> Here of course we have to make it explicitly clear that burekalism can in no way be equated with Said's orientalism. While it is true that we will understand burekalism, similarly to Said's orientalism, as a discourse or a system of representation, this system is however based on quite dissimilar references – historical, geographical, and also conceptual.

But in this paper we will not be searching for the differences between burekalism and orientalism (or the concepts which orientalism evoked, e.g. balkanism)<sup>3</sup>, but we shall to a great extent focus on the opposite project: using the example of burekalism we shall attempt to underscore the flexibility of Said's conceptual premises and Said's theoretical vocabulary. That is, despite the plethora of modern texts that deal with the issue of the production of the other, i.e. the currently very popular criticism of orientalism, essentialism, and the objectification of the other, Said's thoughts, at least with respect

to the understanding of burekalism, are still fresh and inspirational, surprisingly useful and clearly irreplaceably fundamental. Of course our project is not an attempt to import Said's concept of orientalism wholesale or to explicitly apply Said's critique. While Said was the person who made it possible for us to even conceive of such a discourse as "burekalism", Said's model on its own cannot tell us what that might be.

Burekalism is a specific discourse,<sup>4</sup> made in the kitchen, as we described very briefly at the beginning of the paper. Of course I am not saying that burekalism has to be understood as an entirely new-age product, merely a consequence of the migrations of inhabitants of the former SFRY to Slovenia starting in the nineteen-sixties. Our project is not so much about the genealogy of burekalism as its ontology.

But why should we even speak about burekalism? Burekalism is a discourse which uses a specific rhetoric, style, objects etc. which is noticeably spiced with burek. But of course burekalism never bites into just a burek. Burekalism can bite into many very different things. But it is particularly fond of anything redolent of bureks, anything which, more studiously put, belongs to the imaginary, symbolic space of the burek, i.e. the Balkans, the "South". However, in this paper we will experimentally set before the hungry maw of burekalism – mostly the burek. And this mostly for one reason: to show that we have named burekalism correctly. So let's take a look at what the burek actually signifies in Slovenia.

\* \* \*

The burek in Slovenia can signify a lot of things. It can be filled with very different contents. It is a kind of hollow dough into which fillings can to some extent or within certain conditions be added at will. What sort of fillings then?

-Bosnians, Bosniaks, as we can read in the story "How a Bosnian Loves" (nm, 2003, 55), which tells of three Bosnians in Slovenia and their three blow-up sex dolls:

1 Originally: "We called for a workforce, but we got human beings!"

2 In his introduction, Said gives not one but three definitions of orientalism, which were shown in detail by Aijaz Ahmad (2007), to be "conflicting definitions". In addition to the two stated above, which we can understand as (1) a mentality or even an epistemology and (2) as a "Western style of dominating /.../ the Orient" (Said, 1978, 14), thus in the Foucaultian sense as a system of representations; Said also understands orientalism as (3) an interdisciplinary field of academic knowledge.

3 Here we shall mention only the regionally tinged and current research on the Balkans, which is characterized by an accumulation of scholarly works concerned with the mechanisms through which the Balkans have been transformed into an "internal other" within the European imagination. Such studies, for example by Larry Wolf (1994), Maria Todorova (1997) and Vesna Goldsworthy (1998) established the basis for the deconstruction of western discourses through which Balkan societies were orientalized, or, to use Todorova's words, balkanized. (For more see also footnote 11).

4 We shall understand discourse – in the words of Michel Foucault (2002, 54), as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak". Or, as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001, 108) state more didactically: "What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence." Things thus acquire meaning and become objects of knowledge only within discourse – they then do not reflect any "natural" essence of things, but only constitute them. Again following Foucault (1991, 18), discourses shall be treated "as violence which we do to things".

Soon Fikret and Mirza also came from their birthplace. They rented a flat together and created an island of nostalgia, a true Little Bosnia, in the middle of the city neighbourhood. After some hard work it was just right. It smelled of freshly ground coffee, cigarette smoke swirled beneath the ceiling, there was a fresh burek on the tray, and the Bosnian national anthem emanated from the speakers. The heroes' hearts warmed and they perked up their ears. The neighbours, of course. (nm, 2003, 55).

-Albanians, "Šiptarji", as depicted in this image from the weekly magazine *Mladina* (*Youth*) – in which an "evil" Albanian (the ethnicity of the character is revealed by the "typically Albanian" cap) holds a burek in his hand – published in the humour column Manipulator (Anon., 1989, 12) which uses jokes with Serbo-Albanian motifs which were current at the end of the eighties:



Fig. 1: An "evil" Albanian (*Mladina*, 15 December 1989, 12).  
Sl. 1: "Zlobni" Albanec (*Mladina*, 15. december 1989, 12).

Or, as the following amusing tale tells us:

Schollmayer [a well-known Slovenian businessman] was also known to be exceptionally rude. In an interview with the sports magazine *Ekipa* he said: "Some 'Šiptar' bought that company (SGP Galjevica), and doesn't do anything, all he does is sue us for the principal, which amounts to 2.5 million tolar, now it's 30 million." Dragan Lazić, the Commercial Manager of SGP Galjevica, recognised himself in the description of a Šiptar who doesn't do anything. He told journalists: "My business acquaintances have started to ask me when I'm going to bring them bureks." (Praprotnik, 2004, 32)

-Immigrants of the Muslim faith, as we can see in this picture from a humour supplement to one of the political weeklies, with the headline: "We'll trade bureks for a mosque!" and the words on the sign in broken Slovenian: "No mosque for us, no burek for you" (Anon., 2004, 72).



Fig. 2: "No mosque for us, no burek for you" (*Mladina*, 12 January 2004, 72).

Sl. 2: "No džamja za nas no burek za vas" (*Mladina*, 12. januar 2004, 72).

-The Balkans, as we can read in letters to the editor in the most popular Slovenian newspaper *Delo*: "Then he took the role of a paper tiger, although he could easily have prevented the last Balkan war. Perhaps it would even have happened if the Balkans were known for their oil and not for bureks and kajmak!" (Nardin, 2004, 5)

-The continuity of the former Yugoslav political system, as we can read in the humour supplement to a Slovenian daily:

Whoever doesn't read shouldn't eat, said the leader for the life of our republic Milan Kučan in an interview for the Saturday supplement to *Toti* list, when speaking of his cooking skills. 'Čevapčiči with onions, burek & roštilj [barbecue], are more important for communists than the battle for Šentilj [one of the

most significant operations in the ten-day “war of independence” in Slovenia]. (Anon., 1998, 42).

-The Orient, as we can read in the *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* (*Dictionary of Slovenian Literary Language*) (Anon., 1970, 226): “Oriental cake made of pastry dough with filling: burek with cheese; burek with meat.”

-Etc.<sup>5</sup>

Of course we can ask in each case separately, what strategies, if any, the individual burekstatements<sup>6</sup> support. For all of the above statements it would be hard to say that they are clearly, explicitly politically or nationalistically motivated. But for all of them it seems that some kind of implicit strategy of domination is at work. A strategy of naturalisation, the essentialisation of differences and identities. A strategy of symbolic violence, or in short, stereotyping.<sup>7</sup>

In order for an identity to exist there must be a distinction between it and another, and here it seems that it is not even very important what we fill it with. It could be simply a difference in the manner of eating, either with added sugar or without for the same dish, as the Bosnian immigrant Božo, the hero of the film *Kajmak in marmelada* (*Kajmak and Marmalade*), learns in a humorous way. *Kajmak in marmelada* is one of the most popular “Slovenian” film of all time, and tells about the (in)compatibility of the partnership between Slovenian Špela and immigrant Božo. What do you think Božo calls the things the mother of “his” Slovenian Špela cooks, which all Slovenians cook? “Burek sa šečerom” (“burek with sugar”) – a strudel [a pastry which is the product of German cuisine, and an important part of Slovenian cuisine]. (Djurić, 2003)

Of course I am not saying here that there are no differences in the ways of eating, cooking and other material

and non-material practices between ethnic, national, and other groups. In other words, the invention of meanings is not arbitrary; it doesn't occur in a vacuum, it is not without reference, as is naïvely assumed by (too) numerous constructivism-oriented social scientists. But the fact that meanings cannot be invented at will does not mean that the burek has some kind of essential, absolute meaning.<sup>8</sup>

Let's return for a moment to the film, which is (overly) richly structured on stereotypes, as critic Marcel Štefančič tells us in his colourful review:

The Bosnian (Branko Đurić) in *Kajmak in marmelada* finds a Slovenian girl (Tanja Ribič) mainly through romance. Then he loses her. And then gets her back again. Obviously, in between we will get a lecture on comparative ethnology. Before you can say Na planinah [a traditional Slovenian song], they are already telling endless jokes about Mujo [a stereotypical Bosnian figure in Yugoslavian humour] & a Slovenian: Bosnians are lazy, they steal, they don't clean up after themselves, they drink in public places, pick their noses and eat bureks – while Slovenians work two jobs, insist on eating beef soup, sing national folk songs, blow German tourists, commit suicide, and eat burek with sugar (that is, strudel). Wow, good thing they're both atheists. (Štefančič, 2003, 74)

But – somewhat paradoxically – the writer and director of this film is a Bosnian immigrant to Slovenia (Branko Djurić). Pretty complicated, ain't it? Or maybe not. Through induction we can conclude that stereotypes (also) affect the self-recognition of those who are the subjects of stereotyping. This however means that stereotypes (can) have real consequences.<sup>9</sup> Of course, such induction can be highly problematic. We could conclude all kinds of things from the above example. For in-

5 For more on the burek and its symbolic aspect in Slovenia see Mlekuž (2008a). For more on recent representations of immigrants in Slovenia see Kralj, 2008; Mlekuž, 2008b; Žitnik, 2008.

6 For more on the concept of burekstatement, borrowed from Michel Foucault's concept of statement (2002), see Mlekuž (2008a).

7 In this context I should add that stereotyping generally occurs in places where there is a clear inequality, that is, major differences in the power of groups (cf., for example, Hall, 2002, 258). Stereotypical representation is therefore undoubtedly a place where power intrudes into processes of signification. More than it would appear! Through stereotyping, as Stuart Hall (2002, 258) summarises the great authors, the social and symbolic order are maintained.

8 Here it would perhaps not be amiss to ask why the burek is so often reached for when fleshing out these differences. Is it just its widespread popularity, its conspicuousness? Or is there some more sophisticated, perverse strategy at work here? A strategy which through fixing meaning at the level of nutrition naturalises the essence of immigrants at the level of primary needs, that is, biology? This question was impressed upon me by Frantz Fanon (2002). In his study of (stereotypical) representations of black people he pointed out that the concentration of meaning around their genitalia fixes the essence of blacks at the physical level, in contrast with representations of whites, which are usually focused on intellect.

9 Regarding the issue of the consequences of stereotypical representations we should mention the study by Ayse Caglar (1995), which is especially close to the subject of this paper. The study shows how the “doner kebab” which was brought to Germany by Turkish immigrants played a central role in the recognition of the migrant group. At the places where Turks first sold doner kebabs as an exotic ethnic food (which was mainly bought by Germans) and was used as a positive symbol of cultural connection in multicultural discourse, the effects of the changing attitude towards foreigners led to a loosening of the association between “Turkishness” and the doner kebab. Stands and chains appeared with names like McKebeap and Donerburger. At the same time, “doner” became a sobriquet for Turks. A multicultural youth festival in Berlin in 1987 was called “Disco doner”, and the following slogan appeared in controversies about foreigners (Ausländerfrage): “Kein doner ohne Ausländer!” (No kebabs without foreigners!). In this political chaos the doner kebab sold better than ever. But for Turks the continued association with it means a further denial of their increasing social mobility. The final irony is that in the attempts to loosen and move away from the association with the doner kebab, the sellers of this food have moved into selling Italian food.



stance, that Bosnians make rude jokes at the expense of Slovenians, and therefore have to be silenced. However, numerous statements tell us that the burek has become an important element in the self-recognition of immigrants, Bosnians, Albanians, and all the rest. In a profile of academically trained Albanian painter Gani Llallosi, who lives in Ljubljana, we read: “Only through an ironic question do we arrive at the most common Slovenian stereotype about Albanians: ‘What would Slovenians be without baklava and burek?’” (Černe, 2003, 24). As Karl Marx (1967, 106) would say: “They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented.”

### BUREKALISM ON THE BUREK

At this point it would seem fruitful to invite Edward Said to join the debate. With his immeasurable assistance it would be possible to establish some sort of “burekalism”, that is, “a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between” (Said, 1978, 2) a population and place defined by the burek and a population and place not defined by the burek. In order not to lose our place in these long sentences, our last paring of definitions will be translated, contracted to the conceptually not completely equivalent categories adapted to the needs of this research: “immigrants” and “Slovenians”. To continue with Said’s (1978, 5) thoughts and words, the concept of burekalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between burekalism and the burek, but with the internal consistency of burekalism and its ideas about the burek, despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a “real” burek.

Therefore, to believe that the burek was created or burekalisised simply as a necessity of the imagination is, I believe, mistaken, or as Said (1978, 5) said, “disingenuous.” The relationship between the burek and the non-burek “is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said, 1978, 17). The burek was burekalisised not just because it was established that it is “foreign”, “Balkan”, in short “burekish”, but also because it was possible – that is, that it was forced to the point where it was possible – to make it foreign, Balkan, burekish. The people defined by the burek, that is, immigrants, very rarely speak (about the burek) on their own behalf. And when they do speak, it

seems that they usually speak in a way that is suitable for non-burekalisised people, that is, Slovenians. Think back to *Kajmak in marmelada* and the profile of the Albanian academically trained painter. Of course, what most frequently retains is Marx’s famous motto, quoted above, that is, that non-burekalisised people speak on behalf of burekalisised people and also represent them. Just look at the spotty list presented above. It is truly fascinating that in these very colourful and innumerable burek statements in the media, statements which put the burek into the family or wider milieu of immigrant groups in Slovenia almost never appear.<sup>10</sup> Immigrants never or almost never speak burek statements in the media, except in statements which reproduce burekalism (for instance, the jokes by Branko Djurić in the film *Kajmak in marmelada*), that is, statements which are custom made for Slovenians. On the other hand there is a huge pile of various stories published mainly in the print media which discover bureks in foreign countries, and which expose well-known Slovenian individuals and families preparing and eating bureks.<sup>11</sup>

This brings us to the next qualification. I should add that Said’s *Orientalism* (1978, 6) is still of invaluable help to us here. One ought never to assume that the structure of burekalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away. We must try to grasp the sheer knitted-together strength of burekalisised discourse, and its redoubtable durability. Burekalism is much more formidable than a collection of falsifications and lies, it is not just an airy Slovenian fantasy about the burek, but a created body of theory and practice in which there has also been considerable material investment. Continued investment made burekalism, as a system of self-evidence, knowledge, and signification, an accepted grid for filtering through the burek into Slovenian consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied the statements proliferating out from burekalism into the general culture.

Burekalism, still following Said’s (1978, 7) thought, therefore depends for its strategy on a flexible positional superiority, which puts the non-burekalisised person (Slovenian) in a whole series of possible relationships with the burek without his ever losing the relative upper hand. Starting in the second half of the eighties within the umbrella of the domination, hegemony, and superiority of non-burekalisised people over burekalisised people

10 The only such example that I found is a report on the celebration of Ramadan in Jesenice, which deals to a great extent with fasting and eating during this period of fasting, as indicated by the title of the article (“Fasting and the Abundance of Goodwill During Ramadan”). The description of *iftar* – the supper which follows an all-day fast – (of course) included cheese and meat burek (Mlinarič, 2002, 14).

11 For more on this see Mlekuž (2008a). These examples raise the question of the relationship between orientalism and balkanism, which we have not specifically addressed in this paper. Many authors feel that it is reasonable to draw a distinction between them. Maria Todorova (1996), who among other things introduced the concept of balkanism, e.g. maintains that the Orient is undoubtedly Other, while the Balkans are a part of Europe, and are somehow internal or half Other. This is the source of the difference between the explicit exoticizing of the Orient (the Land of Dreams, escape from civilization) and on the other hand that of the Balkans, as if of the lack of all this abundance. Of course there are also many authors who place the mechanisms of discursive formation of the Other in the Balkans in an orientalist analytical framework (e.g. Močnik, 1998; Bakić-Hayden, Hayden, 2007). For more on the relationship between orientalism and balkanism see Fleming (2009) and Petrović (2009).

there emerged a complex burek, that is, a meta-burek, suitable for the more or less entertainment and metaphorical needs of popular culture, the media, colloquial language, literature, and so on.

According to Said's (1978, 8) thought and words, one must repeatedly ask oneself whether what matters in burekalism is the general group of ideas overriding the mass of material – about which who could deny that they were shot through with doctrines of Slovenian superiority, various kinds of racism, nationalism, and the like, dogmatic views of "burekalism" as a kind of ideal and unchanging abstraction? – or the much more varied work produced by almost uncountable individual writers, whom one would take up as individual instances of authors dealing with, tripping over, touching on the burek.

I think that in the case of burekalism both are true. It is conditioned by both a dogmatic group of ideas and by the creativity and originality of individual authors. But I also think that between dogmatism and productivity, at least on a certain manifest level, there is an important difference, which is also reflected in methodological limitations: that is, they cannot be dealt with by using the same tools. Burekalism thus pretends to be something relaxed, productive, open, and on the other hand, it secretively conceals its strict, closed, orthodox nature. It pretends to be a trifle, but the limitations which are created invisibly indicate its power. A power which should not be underestimated. First of all, this limitation is about the fact that burekalism dictates, as we have already mentioned, which things should be noticed and emphasised, and which should be silenced and unobserved. This analysis of silence is however a problematic, tricky, never completely convincing and consistent task. It is, for example, difficult to say how much substance burekalism contributed to a particular silence, if anything at all. For example? For instance, nowhere, neither in the media nor in everyday speech nor in professional and scientific literature, have I found any mention or even hint of there being a dish or dishes whose shape or style of preparation was very similar to a burek, of course with a different name or names, in the territory of present-day Slovenia before the arrival of immigrants during the time of the SFRY.<sup>12</sup> But it does not seem that all foods keep so silent about their similarities, connections or even relatedness to other foods. For instance, when I asked in pubs in Prekmurje about "retaš" (a pie well known in the Prekmurje region), I often received the categorical response that it is a strudel. A

strudel, which was developed in southern German and Austrian kitchens! These two examples of course suggest a number of other, primarily developmental-historical, contextual questions, which demand specific and precise treatment, and for which therefore there is no time or space in this paper. However, we can pose one question. Did burekalism have anything to do with this avoidance of Slovenian dishes having similarities with the burek in the Slovenian ethnic territory?

Furthermore, burekalism dictates, and it seems, dictates very specifically, where the burek belongs and where it does not, what kind of opportunities bureks are appropriate for and what kind of opportunities bureks are not appropriate for, and in what ways. Where therefore does it not belong?

Clearly it does not belong in the *Slovenski etnološki slovar (Slovenian Ethnological Dictionary)* (2004), in which we find slang words such as avtostop (hitchhiking), avtostopar (hitchhiker), disco klub, golf, grafit (graffiti), hitra hrana (fast food), lepotni ideal (the beauty ideal), letoviščar (holidaymaker), nakupovalni center (shopping center), nudistični kamp (nudist camp), papiga (parrot), pedikura (pedicure), piknik, Ponterosso, rally, sex shop, sindikalni izlet (trade union excursion), and many other popular culture phenomena. And there are dishes such as grahornjak, krapec, kuc-kruh, kvasenica, kvocnjak, mauželj, mešta, and modnica, which many Slovenians have never heard of. Well, that should be enough to flummox you. You can find them all in the *Slovenski etnološki slovar* (2004), of course next to potica cakes and Carniolan sausage, but as stated above, not next to the burek.

It would seem that it does not belong in Slovenian cookbooks. Of course, we have to be careful here. We can find a relatively large number of recipes for burek on the Internet and in magazines. But on the other hand, burek denial slaps you in the face in both cookbooks that contain the root "Slovenian" in their titles and more general cookbooks, written for or adapted to Slovenian cooks. The place of the burek in Slovenian nutritional ideology is therefore (still) excessively, to put it mildly, marginal. And thus it still waits behind the closed doors which lead to the more hallowed world of cookbooks – that is, the world of (Slovenian) books and not just the plebeian world of magazines and the Internet. In a survey of several dozen cookbooks I found a recipe for burek only in *Kuhinja naše družine (Our Family Cuisine)* (Grafenauer, 2002, 195–96).<sup>13</sup> Perhaps it would not be out of place to mention here that the majority of these

12 Various sorts of cakes and pies made from pastry dough which are similar to bureks in appearance, preparation, and ingredients were popular primarily in the south-western and south-eastern parts of Slovenia (for example, prleška oljovica, presni kolač, pršjača, belokranjska povitica, prosta povitica). These are mainly holiday ritual foods and foods prepared at the end of major farming jobs. Of course, technical and other similarities cannot be an argument for this or any other kind of influence or even for a shared origin of the foods. Filled pies made of pastry dough – including the burek – can also be found in other Slavic nations, while cakes made of short pastry dough or leavened dough are characteristic of other, primarily central European nations (Bogataj, 2007a; 2007b). Of course, a burek is not necessarily a filled pie, as there are also spiral rolled bureks.

13 Recipes for burek could probably be found more easily in various more topical cookbooks, for instance we found one in *Kuhinje Balkana (Balkan Cuisine)* (Mrlješ et al., 2005).



on WE'VE GOTTA DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM  
THERE ISNT ANYONE WHO HASNT HAD BAD EX-  
PERIENCES WITH THEM I SEE THEM WHEN THEY  
GO THROUGH THE JUNKYARDS TO COLLECT  
THINGS AND NEXT TO THEM THE KIDS ARE PULL-  
ING ON CABLES YEAH WELL THEYRE GOOD FOR  
ONE THING THEY ONLY KNOW HOW TO BUILD  
and one day ALL THE HOUSES will be MADE BY  
BOSNA



was responded to concisely by an author who used the pseudonym “NIET, the BIG Kahuna”, in one of the forums on the “Sloport” website, in a debate titled “ČEFURJI”: “at least someone agrees with me... but I still like bureks anyhow.” (Niet, 2006)

Of course, numerous burekalist statements are less explicit; they are not necessarily the direct product of the process of stereotyping and are not connected with the print, electronic, or other media. They can also refer more directly to the unconditional burek. When, in 2003, bureks were served at Cankarjev dom – the main Slovenian cultural and congress centre – at an exhibition upon the centennial of Slovenian graphic artist and painter Nikolaj Pirnat – of course much smaller, therefore more chic and fancy than those served at Slovenian burek stands and shops – there were a lot of comments

among the public as to their appropriateness (Berk, 2005). So we can add one more place where bureks (in burekalism’s opinion) don’t belong: the house of Slovenian culture, Cankarjev dom.

### ON BUREKALISM

Through burekalism, Slovenians emphasise, constitute, and essentialise differentiation and produce complacency.<sup>14</sup> However, the objects of this differentiation and complacency are burekpeople – immigrants and their descendants. Burekalism is therefore a place where power encroaches into processes of typification and signification, it is a discourse, a style with a will to power, which speaks of Slovenians as superior and of burekpeople as inferior.

But burekalism is not merely a political subject matter or a field which is reflected passively by culture, language, or place; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the burek; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious Slovenian plot to keep immigrants, Southerners, and Balkan people in their place. It is rather the dissemination of superiority, dominance, geopolitical and politico-cultural awareness into popular culture, colloquial and other language, entertainment, the media, literature, art, “art” and more.

14 Without differentiation, at least from the perspective of (post)structuralism, there is no meaning; difference is essential to meaning. Burekalism, like all other discourses, therefore does nothing else but continually producing differences. The apparently stable identities which burekalism enshrines are therefore from the perspective of (post)structuralism above all relational, defined and constituted (simply) in relation to others. In order for an identity to exist there must always be a difference with respect to an Other, and as the vulgar radical constructivists (with whom I do not share the same thoughts) would say, it doesn’t matter at all what you fill it with.



## BUREKALIZEM – SLOVENSKI POGLED NA BUREK IN BUREKLJUDI

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## POVZETEK

*Burekalizem je način mišljenja, ki sloni na ontološki in epistemološki distinkciji med z burekom opredeljenim in z neburekom opredeljenim prebivalstvom ter prostorom, torej poenostavljeno in grobo rečeno med priseljenci in Slovenci. In nadalje, burekalizem je slog z neburekom opredeljenega prebivalstva pri gospodovanju nad z burekom opredeljenim prebivalstvom, restrukturiranju in izvajanju oblasti nad njim. Naj poudarim, da je pri razmišljanju o burekalizmu vseskozi v neprecenljivo pomoč Saidov orientalizem (1978).*

*Kakšne ideje torej širi burekalizem o burekljudeh, priseljencih? Nedvomno stereotipne podobe, ki vsiljujejo redukcijo zapletenih, kompleksnih in raznovrstnih fenomenov na poenostavljene, trdne in esencialistične karakteristike. V primeru burekalizma imamo torej opraviti s stereotipnim izjavljanjem – izjavljanjem, ki poudarja, konstruira, esencializira razlikovanje in ki je silovito mesto posega moči v procese označevanja. Preko stereotipiziranja – tega verjetno najbolj uporabnega orožja v izvajanju simbolnega nasilja – se torej vzdržuje socialni in simbolični red ter ohranjajo in utrujejo oblastna razmerja. Zato je verjeti, da so bili priseljenci in njihovi potomci burekalizirani samo zaradi potreb domišljije, po mojem mnenju nerazsodno, naivno, zgrešeno. Razmerje med Slovenci (neburek) in Balkanci (burek) je razmerje moči, dominacije, spreminjajoče se stopnje zapletene hegemonije.*

*Burekalizem torej vedno črpa strategijo iz prilagodljive superiornosti svojega položaja, ki postavlja z neburekom opredeljenega človeka (Slovencu) v cel niz možnih razmerij z burekom, ne da bi kadar koli izgubil svoj prednostni položaj. Pod dežnikom dominacije, hegemonije, superiornosti z neburekom opredeljenih ljudi nad z burekom opredeljenimi ljudmi je zrastel kompleksen imaginativni korpus, primeren za bolj ali manj zabavne in metaforične potrebe popularne kulture, medije, pogovorni jezik, publicistiko, literaturo in še kaj.*

**Ključne besede:** burekalizem, orientalizem, priseljenci (in njihovi potomci), Slovenija, mediji, popularna kultura

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