

ANNALES

Anali za istrske in mediteranske študije
Annali di Studi istriani e mediterranee
Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies
Series Historia et Sociologia, 33, 2023, 4





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Graphic design:**

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Tisk/Stampa/Print:

Založništvo PADRE d.o.o.

Založnika/Editori/Published by:

Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko - Koper / *Società storica del Litorale - Capodistria*® / Inštitut IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije družbe, kulture in okolja / *Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment* / *Istituto IRRIS di ricerca, sviluppo e strategie della società, cultura e ambiente*®

**Sedež uredništva/Sede della redazione/
Address of Editorial Board:**

SI-6000 Koper/Capodistria, Garibaldijska/Via Garibaldi 18
e-mail: annaleszdj@gmail.com, **internet:** https://zdj.si

Redakcija te številke je bila zaključena 30. 12. 2023.

**Sofinancirajo/Supporto finanziario/
Financially supported by:**

Javna agencija za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije (ARIS)

Annales - Series Historia et Sociologia izhaja štirikrat letno.

Maloprodajna cena tega zvezka je 11 EUR.

Naklada/Tiratura/Circulation: 300 izvodov/copie/copies

Revija *Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia* je vključena v naslednje podatkovne baze / *La rivista Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia è inserita nei seguenti data base* / *Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in:* Clarivate Analytics (USA): Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) in/and Current Contents / Arts & Humanities; IBZ, Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur (GER); Sociological Abstracts (USA); Referativnyi Zhurnal Viniti (RUS); European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ERIH PLUS); Elsevier B. V.: SCOPUS (NL); Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

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THE SOCIALLY COHESIVE FUNCTION OF THE STORY OF THREE BROTHERS/THREE FRIENDS IN NATKO NODILO'S RE/CONSTRUCTION OF THE "OLD FAITH" OF SERBS AND CROATS

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ABSTRACT

In his study Stara vjera Srba i Hrvata [Old Faith of Serbs and Croats] (originally titled Religija Srbâ i Hrvatâ, na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnog [Religion of Serbs and Croats, Based on Songs, Stories and Folk Speech] (1885–1890), considering the Yugoslav ideosphere of his time, Natko Nodilo explored the synonymous matrix of the Serbo-Croatian "old faith", although, as a historian, he advocated a model involving a separate and later migration of Croats, but did not agree with the ideologem of isolated Croatism. This paper examines how Nodilo reconstructs the "old faith" (mythology, religion) of the Serbs and Croats by using the myth of the three brothers/three friends in accordance with what Friedrich Max Müller defined as "mythology of nature", which involves the triadic Sun – the nocturnal trilogy of the daytime Sun (setting, nocturnal, and rising Sun). In the context of Indo-European comparative mythology, Nodilo originates the mythem about three brothers from the R̥gvedic image of the Sun.

Keywords: Natko Nodilo, the mythology of nature, myth of the three brothers/three friends

LA FUNZIONE DI COESIONE SOCIALE DEL RACCONTO DEI TRE FRATELLI/TRE AMICI NELLA RI/COSTRUZIONE DELLA «VECCHIA FEDE» DEI SERBI E CROATI DA PARTE DI NATKO NODILO

SINTESI

Nel suo studio Stara vjera Srba i Hrvata [La vecchia fede dei serbi e croati], originariamente intitolato Religija Srbâ i Hrvatâ, na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnog, ovvero La religione dei serbi e croati, prevalentemente in base ai canti, racconti e lingua popolare, (1885–1890), prendendo in considerazione la «ideosfera» jugoslava del periodo, Natko Nodilo investigava la matrice sinonimica della «vecchia fede» serbo-croata, sebbene, come storico, sostenesse un modello che presupponeva una migrazione separata e posteriore dei croati, ma d'altra parte non concordava con l'ideologema del croatismo isolato. Questo saggio esamina come Nodilo ha ricostruito «la vecchia fede» (mitologia, religione) dei serbi e dei croati utilizzando il mito dei tre fratelli/tre amici in accordo con quello che Friedrich Max Müller definisce come «mitologia della natura», che prevede il sole triadico – la trilogia notturna del sole diurno (tramontante, notturno e sorgente). Nel contesto della mitologia comparata indoeuropea, Nodilo deriva il mitema dei tre fratelli dall'immagine rgvedica del sole.

Parole chiave: Natko Nodilo, mitologia della natura, mito dei tre fratelli/tre amici

In his study¹ *Stara vjera Srba i Hrvata* [Old Faith of Serbs and Croats] (originally titled *Religija Srbâ i Hrvatâ, na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnog* [Religion of Serbs and Croats, Based on Songs, Stories and Folk Speech] (1885–1890)) a Croatian historian, Natko Nodilo, author of the first re/construction of the South Slavic mythology as well as the author of the first general history of the Middle Ages in the South Slavic area, bases his re/construction of South Slavic mythology (“old faith”, religion)² on folklore/oral literature, combined with the chronicles of Christian missionaries, with Helmold’s *Chronica Slavorum* (c. 1170) serving as a focal point. Nodilo claims that the first religious heritage of people consists of epic poems, more specifically pure epic poems, and mythical stories/fairy tales in which he recognizes a mythical/pagan matrix (Nodilo, 1981, 43).³ Considering the Yugoslav ideosphere of Nodilo’s time, he explored the synonymous matrix of the Serbo-Croatian “old faith”, although, as a historian, he advocated a model involving a separate and later migration of Croats, but did not agree with the ideologem of isolated Croatism (cf. Marjanić, 2018; 2022).

The following study will show how Nodilo re-constructs the “old faith” (mythology, religion) of the Serbs and Croats by using the myth of the three brothers/three friends in accordance with what Friedrich Max Müller defined as “mythology of nature”, which involves the triadic Sun – the nocturnal trilogy of the daytime Sun (setting, nocturnal, and rising Sun) (Müller, 1997). Within this interpretative niche of the “mythology of nature” Nodilo as well as attains a cohesive social-political function of folklore in the frame of the Yugoslav ideosphere of his time, which in that time meant one (for him and the only) realistic *optimal projection* (to use Aleksandar Flaker’s term) (Flaker, 1976, 205) of the Dalmatian area.

THE SOCIALLY COHESIVE ROLE OF THE MYTH OF THE THREE BROTHERS (TRIADIC SUN)

Folklorist William Bascom established that folklore is an important mechanism for maintaining

cultural stability. It is used to instill customs and ethical standards into young people, and to reward adults by praising them when they adhere to norms, to punish them through mockery or reprimand when they deviate from them, to provide rationalizations when they question social institutions and conventions, to encourage them to be content with things as they are, and to offer compensatory escape from “the hardships, inequalities, injustices” of everyday life (cf. Bascom, 1954, 349). This is the fundamental paradox of folklore – it plays a crucial role in propagating and upholding cultural institutions, compelling individuals to adhere to them, while simultaneously providing a socially acceptable outlet for the coercion imposed by these same institutions. However, Bascom first raises the question of whether there are any folklore examples that can instruct individuals to destroy or at least disregard the institutions and conventions of their society (Bascom, 1954, 333–349).

By choosing Svantevid as the supreme Slavic deity worshiped in Arkona on Rügen, and Živa as the supreme Slavic goddess worshiped by Polabians, Nodilo unites two “different” *pantheons* of Baltic Slavs within a duotheistic framework – the pantheon of Rügens and the Polabian pantheon. Depending on the primary source (*Kievan Chronicle*, Helmold’s *Chronica Slavorum*) used in the reconstruction of the *South Slavic* pantheon, Nodilo, as mentioned, uses Helmold’s *Chronica Slavorum* as his starting point, realizing a *prosthesis* of the archonic Svantevid as the South Slavic supreme deity, and the Polabian goddess Siwa as a South Slavic goddess (Živa/Vida), and uses the record of Crnobog to establish a kind of moderate dualism in the Slavic religious system. By defining Svantevid as the supreme Slavic deity (*deus deorum*), Nodilo also induced his own *hybrid* mythological theory – *Vid (Svantevid) / sight* mythologism.⁴

Nodilo’s definition of Vid/Svantevid as the supreme Slavic deity, and thus the supreme deity of the South Slavs, can be inscribed in ideology/political folklore, given the Battle of Kosovo (June 15, 1389 according to the Julian calendar, i.e. June 28), as well as Kosovo field serving as the topos of the

1 This contribution is a part of the project *Cultural Animal Studies: Interdisciplinary Starting-Points and Traditional Practice – ANIMAL (IP-2019-04-5621)* financed by the *Croatian Science Foundation*. Translated by Juraj Šutej.

2 The title syntagm “old faith” manifests itself as a compromise solution between *mythology* (as a kind of mode of fiction) and religion.

3 In the 10th book, volume X, *Ispravci i dopune – Rad JAZU CI [Corrections and Additions – Work of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts] CI*, 1890, pages 68–126, Nodilo changes the original title of the study from *Religija Srbâ i Hrvatâ, na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnog* [Religion of Serbs and Croats, Based on Songs, Stories and Folk Speech] to *Stara vjera Srbâ i Hrvatâ, na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnog*, published between 1885 and 1890 in ten books “Rad JAZU” [The journal *Rad* of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts] (1885–1890).

4 Polona Tratnik highlights that mythical discourse is constructed to meet the needs of society. “It is real in the sense of its embeddedness in society and its threefold temporal embeddedness: the connection with the past, the tradition from which it draws and the contents to which it relates, the present in which it functions constitutively, and the future, where it has actual effects on the life of the community” (Tratnik, 2022, 1218).

Serbian ethno-national myth (Čolović, 1997, 15), and in Nodilo's time as the topos of the imaginary *Yugomyth*, the fall of the Serbian empire. The Orthodox Church does not mention *Vid*, *Vidoje*, *Vitus*, on this date "nor is there any service dedicated to that saint, nor does the saint have his troparion". The Serbian Orthodox Church celebrates the prophet Amos and St. Prince Lazar on this day (Grubačića & Tomić, 1988, 146).⁵

THE THREE HYPOSTASES OF THE SUN (TRIADIC SUN)

In the context of Indo-European comparative mythology Nodilo interprets the three brothers/three friends myth through several stories: "Aždaja i carevin" (*The Aždaja and the Emperor's Son*, Karadžić, 1870, story no. 8),⁶ "Kome bog pomaže, niko mu nauditi ne može" (*He Whom God Helps Cannot Be Harmed*, Karadžić, 1870, story no. 11), "Liepa i preliepa djevojka" (*The Pretty and the Beautiful Girl*, Tordinac, 1883, story no. 4), "Tri prstena" (*Three Rings*, Karadžić, 1870, appendix story no. 9), and "Crveni Vetar" (*The Red Wind*; *Crveni Vetar*, 1868, 447–450; Nodilo, 1981, 170–174). The masculine constellation of three brothers (the two older brothers are portrayed as *cowards*, *schemers*, and *weaklings*, and, of course, endowed with the aforementioned ethical attributes, they *despise* and *loathe* the youngest brother who is imbued with positive ethical attributes), is complemented, by David Bogdanović, with a feminine constellation of three sisters following the same ethical pattern (Bogdanović, 1914, 29).

Here, in this part of the article, we are going to present Nodilo's interpretation on the three hypostases of the Sun (triple Sun) which/who shaped

the myth of the *three brothers in a single figure*, two of whom are unfortunate, while the youngest, who tends to his elderly parents (*dežo* and *baba*), is marked by his good luck (Nodilo, 1981, 169, 174). In the context of Indo-European comparative mythology, Nodilo originates the mythem about three brothers from the *Rgvedic* image of the Sun.

In the *Rgveda*, the Sun is portrayed as *Bhaga* – *the generous giver*, *Sûryas*, "the fairest of all lights" (Nodilo, 1981, 168; RV X, 170, 3), *Savitar*, the "gold-handed" *vivifier*. However, it is still *subject* to divine beings; as "the eye of Varuna and Mitra, who lift it into the heavens" (Nodilo, 1981, 168).⁷ The Sun must pass (journey of the Sun) through *three dark chambers* in *three* heavens, just as the *Ashvins* (divine twins) (Nodilo, 1981, 169). In its various hypostases, the Sun acquires *triadic* names *Ekata* (First), *Dvita* (Second), and *Trita* (Third) as it traverses through nyctomorphic realms. For instance, the myth of the three *s/Suns* is also present in South Slavic wedding songs, using the metaphor that *three suns shine behind the city* (cf. Karadžić, 1849, 80).⁸

The three nocturnal brothers were named *Ribhus* in the *Rgveda*.⁹ They achieve their immortality in the *chamber* of the god *Savitar*, and offerings to them are presented in the evening. Arthur Anthony Macdonell (1974, 131) states that the *Ribhus* form a triad and they are only once described as the *elder*, *younger*, and *youngest* in the *Rgveda*, while their *luminous* appearance is akin to that of the Sun. The word *Ribhus* is derived from the root *rabh*, meaning to (*covetously*) *seize*, *grab*, or *take hold*, with a figurative connotation of *skillful*, *agile*, and *dexterous*. Some mythologists believe they are the *spirits* of the three times – for twelve *embolic* days at the time of winter solstice (Macdonell, 1974, 133).

5 Nevertheless, in his *Historija srednjega vijeka za narod hrvatski i srpski. Knjiga III. Varvarstvo otima mah nad Bizantijom, do smrti cara Heraklija (566–641)* [History of the Middle Ages for the Croatian and Serbian people. Book III. Barbarism Ravages Byzantium, Until the Death of Emperor Heraclius (566–641)] (Nodilo, 1905), Nodilo notes that pagan Croats and Serbs worshiped the bright warlike *Vid* and the thunderous *Perun*.

6 The title of this paper includes the first sentence of the fairy tale. In Nodilo's reconstruction there is a differentiation between *aždaja* and *dragon* (*zmaj*).

7 In *Rksamhita*, the Sun, *Surya*, is often celebrated with the epithet *Savitr* (*Bodrica*), which means the Initiator, Vivifier, Impeller, Rouser; however, this attribute also appears as an independent name for the god, the Lord (*asura*) (cf. Ježić, 1987, 35).

8 Nodilo notes myths from the worlds of the *Bosnian* tale "Mijo's Marriage" (*Bosanske narodne pripovijetke* [Bosnian Folk Tales] No. 25) about the miracle worker, whitener who came to a *dark land* and used pig fat to whiten *black people*. Using the example of this tale, he also refers to the myth of descent/transgression into the underworld and the myth of the three dark chambers from the *Rgveda* (cf. Nodilo, 1981, 96). The myth of the three Suns, as well as Nodilo's interpretation of the zoosymbolism of the wolf in the context of the mythology of nature (F. M. Müller) as a nyctomorphic dimension of nature, can be examined in the context of contemporary interpretations of the phenomenon of the false Sun, parhelion, or sundogs in the Earth's atmosphere, which is an optical phenomenon where two bright spots appear at 22° on either side of the Sun, at the same height, above the horizon.

9 In connection with the Vedic hymn about *Trita* in the well (RV I, 105), *Tatyana Yakovlevna Elizarenkova* and *Vladimir N. Toporov* suggest that a form of this syuzhet is found in other texts (*Elizarenkova & Toporov*, 1982, 117–118), which concerns three brothers, born from the ashes of the sacrifice which *Agni* threw into the water (fire-water), and are called *Ekata*, *Dvita* and *Trita* (first, second and third). Together, they are called by the family name *Āptyās* (Aquatic). The story involves an insidious plan carried out by the two older brothers, as they throw the youngest (*Trita*) in a well, who is later saved with someone's help. They connect this syuzhet with Russian fairy tales type Aa Th 301, about three brothers, with the youngest, named *Ivan the Third*, *Trećak* (*Trita*) or *Ivan Vidovič* (*Āptya*), is thrown/left by his brothers in a pit, well, hole, in the other world when they went to search for the disappeared Empire.

Nodilo notes that the Indo-European myth of the three brothers has *undergone changes* the least, wherein a girl, Zora (Dawn), appears alongside the three brothers, marrying the youngest (incestuous divine hierogamy), as illustrated in stories like *The Aždaja and the Emperor's Son* (Karadžić, 1870, story no. 8). He discerns that Dawn, when associated with the three brothers of Slavic genealogy, can be *single, doubled, and tripled* (Nodilo, 1981, 176). He recognizes the myth of the triadic Sun in the stories of *three brothers, friends, the journey of the three Sun brothers*, with the youngest brother – considered crazy, which means young in the original sense (cf. Nodilo, 1981, 170) – marrying Dawn. The third Sun, when it *kisses Dawn in the morning, slays the night Aždaja* (Nodilo, 1981, 171), and Nodilo finds the matrix of this myth in the mythical narrative of Apollo's action when he kills Python (and Typhon (cf. Nodilo, 1981, 328)) and in the theonymic biography of Perseus, who frees Andromeda from an aquatic serpent (Nodilo, 1981, 171). He emphasizes that *nine young nocturnal Suns* (nine months in the year of god, which Nodilo interprets as solar dodecagogy and heptalogy in his study) (cf. Marjanić, 2022) act during the reign of the *Sun Gods*, while the *Wraths* dominate during the *three winter months* (Nodilo, 1981, 172, 191).

Nodilo also recognizes the three Sun figures in a story from the Kajkavian legend about Čeh, Leh, and Meh (Rus)¹⁰ as the progenitors of the Slavic people (Czech, Poland, Russia), concluding that the eponymous heroes can be found in the beginnings of all Indo-European mythologies (Tenšek, 2005, 91). In a public lecture titled “De origine successibusque Slavorum” (Lecture on the Origins and Success of the Slavs, held in Hvar in 1525 and published in Venice in 1532), Vinko Pribojević, the first Croatian historian, presents the legend/tale of Čeh, Leh, and Rus, which he takes from Piccolomini's *History of the Czechs* (Šanjek, 1999, 33).

Regarding Ljudevit Gaj's text on the historical narrative of the “Slavic forefathers” Čeh, Leh, and Meh, originating from Krapina, Šime Jurić notes that it has been proven that “this story is no folk memory transmitted orally from ancient times, but rather, it has literary origins”. It was created by medieval Polish and Czech chroniclers and historians, and it reached Croatia only in the 16th century (cf. Bošković-Stulli & Lastrić, 1963, 142). Nonetheless, Maja Bošković-Stulli adds that even though it is a learned tradition, “it does not mean that it could not have been orally

recounted and enriched with folkloric additions during Gaj's time” (Bošković-Stulli, 1997, 88).

Building upon Nodilo's observation of the trinary structure, I bring up Dumézil's (1968) tripartite ideology found among all Indo-Europeans. Hellen's three children – Dorus, Xuthus, and Aeolus – shaped the Hellenic tribes – Dorians, Iono-Achaean, and Aeolians. Mannus' three sons lead to the *Germanic* tribes of Ingvaeones, Herminones, and Istvaeones (Tacit, 1993, 3; cf. Strutynski, 1984, 50), and from Boer's three children came the Scandinavians (Nodilo, 1981, 176).¹¹ The legend of the origin of the Latins does not include a myth about three brothers, but they are still represented in the beginnings of Roman history. Nodilo recognizes the myth of the three brothers *born together (trigemini)* in the story of the three young Horatii, where two perished (similar to how two older brothers perish in the stories discussed), as cited in Livy's (Titus Livius) writings (*Ab Urbe Condita*). The victory over the three Curiatii made the youngest son famous, but he paid for it with his own head being covered (“prevješeno”), just as the head of the god Triglav is *covered* (Nodilo, 1981, 176, cf. Dynda, 2014). With this, Nodilo introduces Kokles – Horacije Koklo, Koklit (lat. Horatius Cocles – *Cocles*, meaning “one-eyed”; he lost an eye in the Battle of the Sublician Bridge) into Slavic-Latin comparative mythology, alongside his blindness, which he placed in the theonymic parallelism (divine sight) with Odin's and Svantevid's blindness (figurative representation of the old and blind from *our stories*).¹² Mircea Eliade also points out that the myth of the solar hero's battle against a three-headed monster is preserved in Horatius' battle against the three *Curiatii* [Nodilo writes *Kuriacija*] (Eliade, 1991, 165).

In his three-volume monograph *Mythe et épopée* (1968–1973), Georges Dumézil demonstrated how the Indo-European trichotomic system of mythical functions (magical and legal authority, warrior strength, and fertility) and the corresponding hierarchical or conflicting relationships among gods are reproduced at the heroic level, for instance, in the *Mahābhārata*: “In the *Mahābhārata*, the Pandavas are not actually the sons of infertile Pandu, but of gods (Dharma, Vayu, Indra, and the twins Ashvins)” (Meletinski, 1985, 280). In Dumézil's interpretation, the *Mahābhārata* presents “characters of a theological structure” (Dumézil, 1979, 117).

Interestingly, Nodilo doesn't mention the alternate Croatian origin myth of five brothers and two sisters, even though myths about seven divine

10 Another name for Meh in this legend is “Rus”.

11 *The General Encyclopedia* (Šentija, 1977, 147) mentions an etiological legend about Germans: “[...] they originate from the deity Tuisto, who had three grandchildren which give the origin of main three Germanic tribes: Ingvaeones, Istvaeones, and Herminones”. According to Tacitus's *Germania* (Tacit, 1993, AD 98), Tuisto (or Tuisco) is the legendary divine ancestor of the Germanic peoples.

12 Mircea Eliade notes that if there are similarities between the *Ṛgveda*, the legends recorded by Livy, Irish traditions, and the *Edda*, then there is no doubt about their Indo-European origin (Eliade, 1991, 165).



Figure 1: Polish painter Walery Eljasz-Radzikowski (1841–1905): *Lech, founder of Gniezno, finds a nest of white eagles. Tygodnik polityczny i literacki ilustrowany (Poznań; czasopismo; 1896–1924). Date: 1905. As for the zoo-symbol of the White Eagle, the White Eagle, once an emblem the of the absolute power of Kings, over the centuries, changed into a powerful patriotic symbol uniting the citizens of all social classes.*

siblings are widespread across Eastern Europe and Asia, much like the Hungarian legend of their arrival in Pannonia (cf. Belaj, 1998a; 1998b, 337). I'm particularly interested in how Nodilo would incorporate the second version of the text about the arrival of Croats in Dalmatia in his myth of three brothers (three nyctomorphic Suns). This second version was noted by Constantine Porphyrogenitus

in chapter 30 of his work *De Administrando Imperio* (Porphyrogenet, 1994), which bears traces of oral tradition and belongs to the literary genre known as *origo gentis* (narration of the origin of a people) (cf. Katičić, 1993, 256). Constantine Porphyrogenitus notes that "the Croats at that time were dwelling beyond Bagibareia, where the Belocroats are now. From them split off a family, namely of five brothers,

Kloukas and Lobelos and Kosentzis and Mouchlo and Chrobatos, and two sisters, Touga and Bouga, who came with their folk to Dalmatia and found this land under the rule of the Avars" (Porfirogenet, 1994, 79–80).¹³ Ivo Goldstein writes that the names of the brothers and sisters are certainly not of Slavic origin (Goldstein, 1995, 25). I reiterate that in his *Historija srednjega vijeka za narod hrvatski i srpski. Knjiga III. Varvarstvo otima mah nad Bizantijom, do smrti cara Heraklija (566–641)* [History of the Middle Ages for the Croatian and Serbian people. Book III. Barbarism Ravages Byzantium, Until the Death of Emperor Heraclius (566–641)], Nodilo introduces the possibility of interpreting *Tuga* and *Buga* as two Dawns (in the interpretative context of the mythology of nature), one unfortunate and subjected to the malevolent dark power of dusk and year-end, while the other is joyful in the renewal of daily and yearly light.

Nodilo's mythic interpretations are not interested in the *social functions* of deities; or, more accurately, he translates social functions into *cosmic* ones (in contrast to Dumézil's methodology). For instance, based on the triadic divinity in Uppsala, Dumézil finds a trifunctional religious ideology: Odin as the supreme ruler (function of magical and legal supreme authority), Thor as the victor (function of gods and warrior strength), and Freyr as the protector of fertility (function of fertility deity and economic progress) (Dumézil, 1987, 160).

TROJAN AND TRIGLAV AS A REPRESENTATION OF THE NYCTOMORPHIC SUN TRILOGY IN NODILO'S RE/CONSTRUCTION

After the interpretation of the triple Sun in the *Rgveda*, in the context of Indo-European comparative mythology, Nodilo applied the mentioned material to the "old faith" of the Serbs and Croats, using the example of the Trojan and Triglav (Three-headed one). Nodilo sees Trojan (Trajan) and Triglav as the representation of the nyctomorphic Sun, where Triglav, who was a deity among the Western Slavs, would (according to Nodilo's re/constructions) represent Trajan (Trojan) – a *fictional* character from oral *tales*. Roman emperors (Trajan, Diocletian = Dukljan) (cf. Figure 2) enter South Slavic epic as mythical creatures "in

the role of demonic forces and representatives of evil who dwell in the ruins of old buildings and hide from sunlight or steal the sun" (Džaka, 1976, 13–14).

Nodilo interprets Trojan and Triglav as a representation of a triadic nyctomorphic Sun in the context of the South Slavic "old faith", which passes through three dark chambers, because the nocturnal Sun (nocturnal Sun trilogy – setting, nocturnal, and rising Sun (cf. Nodilo, 1981, 234)) as well as the nocturnal Dawn are triadic in appearance: "It is easy to reason that the name Trojan might have been brought to our region by Emperor Trajan, who, through his Roman grandeur and well-known conquest of Dacia, overshadowed and frightened our forefathers; but it also seems possible that Trojan is our very own name for the triadic nocturnal Sun" (Nodilo, 1981, 159).

Nodilo interprets the myth of the triadic Sun in the context of its nyctomorphic hypostasis. After that, Dawn and Sun, with the help of an Baš-Čelik (The Head of Steel¹⁴, Oganj – Fire), replace the *initial* Vid (Karadžić, 1870, appendix story 3, *Gozden/ Gvozden čovjek*). Nodilo interprets the myth of the Baš-Čelik as a *fiery* (ognjen) hero imprisoned in a barrel or in the ninth (nyctomorphic) chamber, drawing parallels with Agni (Nodilo, 1981, 452), as he also finds the myth of the barrel in *Vedic* stories (Sanskrit *kavandha* – barrel, cloud, and demon in a cloud)¹⁵ which could indicate rain clouds (cf. Macdonell, 1974, 60)) and in Greece. Indra slays the demon Kavandha, and Greek mythology features Kaant, with Nodilo noting how *our barrel* hero imitates (mythic *imitatio*) Indian Kavandha and Greek Kaant.

Nodilo writes that the solar myth with a *nocturnal aspect* "envelops 'king Trojan' and 'Trojan's city', in the stories of our people" (Nodilo, 1981, 174–175). Thus he not only highlights its historical significance (King, Emperor *Trajan*), but also its mythical meaning (King *Trojan*, belief narrative about Trojan City/ Trojanov Grad), which was also pursued by, for instance, Marcel Kušar (1907, 157; cf. Bošković-Stulli, 1967, 112). Similarly to de Gubernatis' interpretation, Kušar finds a myth about the Sun Brothers in the mentioned tradition: the Emperor Trojan and the Greek Midas are seen as a nyctomorphic Sun, while the barber's servant and Midas' servant represent the morning Sun (Bošković-Stulli, 1967, 98; Kekez, 1987, 176–177).¹⁶ Maja Bošković-Stulli in her monograph

13 The Kajkavian legend, belief narrative about Czech, Leh and Meh speaks about Croatia as the ancestral homeland from which the Slavs spread to the north and east, while the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenet mentions that Croats came from the north, from White (Great) Croatia (Tenšek, 2005, 17, 27).

14 Baš-Čelik, from Turkish *baş* for "head" and *çelik* for "steel". The name of the tale was translated as *Bash Tchelik, or Real Steel*.

15 Kavandha (in Sanskrit कवन्ध) – [masculine] [neuter] barrel, cask (metaph. of a cloud or the belly); a headless trunk. [masculine] [Epithet] of the demon Danu (Wisdomlib, 2023).

16 "Emperor Trojan (and the Greek Midas) would be the nocturnal Sun, while the barber's squire (and Midas' servant) the morning Sun. The gold and flute from the tale indeed point us to the Sun, and perhaps even the name Trojan, which might have originated from 'troj,' signifying the triadic Sun being (the god Triglav of the Baltic Slavs)" (Kušar, 1907, 157). Interestingly, Nodilo does not mention the legends about King Norun.

Table 1: Nodilo's re/construction of the dyadic Sun in diurnal and nyctomorphic hypostasis can be presented more clearly in a table.

diurnal Sun	nyctomorphic Sun (Three nocturnal hypostases)
Slavic "old faith": Dabog/Dažbog/Svarožić	South-Slavic "old faith": Triglav, Trojan (Nodilo, 1981, 234)
Ṛgveda: The Sun is portrayed as Bhaga – the generous giver, Sūryas/Surya, "the fairest of all lights" (Nodilo, 1981, 168; RV X, 170, 3), ¹⁷ Savitar, the "gold-handed" vivifier.	Ṛgveda: Ribhus (the three brothers Ekata, Dvita, Trita)
Iranian mythology: Mithra (Nodilo, 1981, 220, 655 – Mithra as a personification of the morning Sun's youth)	-
Greek mythology: Apollo/Feb (Nodilo, 1981, 150), Heracles (Nodilo, 1981, 243), Bellerophon – Perseus (Nodilo, 1981, 171–172), Hippolytus (Nodilo, 1981, 197; the one with unharnessed horses; Nodilo, 1981, 200) ¹⁸	Greek mythology: Triton (Nodilo, 1981, 317), Orpheus (Nodilo, 1981, 195)

Narodna predaja o vladarevoj tajni (Oral Legend about the Ruler's Secret) shows how the oral story *In the Trojan Emperor Goat's Ears*, from the collection of Vuk Karadžić, has a similar sujet in the legend, belief narrative about Midas' ears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, then as a legend, belief narrative about Pasoglav (Doghead; mythic cynocephaly), about King Norun and about the ban of Bruban. Within this framework, M. Bošković-Stulli establishes the merging of the historical legend with the mythicized image of Emperor Trojan (Bošković-Stulli, 1967, 7, 112).

Nodilo's examination starts with several stories (cf. variants recorded by Maja Bošković-Stulli in the monograph *Narodna predaja o vladarevoj tajni* [Folk Tradition on the Ruler's Secret], 1967, where the author presents 291 variants of rulers hiding their reprehensible attributes; of which 147 stories/traditions come from Croatian and Serbian variants) – from the story cited by Karadžić in his *Dictionary* (Trojan), which refers to Trojan, who was not allowed to go out into the sun and from the Slavic-Phrygian story of a goat-like Trojan or donkey-like Midas, and his secret is revealed by a *strange* instrument, which he connects with the third brother who plays music. This corroborates the hypothesis that Trojan is associated with the third brother, who plays a musical instrument. The *gold*, which adorns the goat-like Trojan and the donkey-like Midas, Nodilo interprets as a light-fiery metaphor for the Sun (Nodilo, 1981, 175). For the Phrygian-Greek *tale*, he notes that the Sun and fertility god is symbolized by a donkey, and

in the Serbian tale, by a goat. The flute that reveals the secret is made from reed in the Phrygian-Greek story, and from elderberry in *ours*, both of which he attributes to fertility.¹⁹ Trojan with goat-like and Midas with donkey-like ears symbolize early and fertile solar deities. Nodilo also cites the story of Attila with a dog's head and goat ears, as well as the tradition of "Pasoglavac" (Doghead; mythic cynocephaly) related to Radetić's book *Pregled hrvatske tradicionalne književnosti* (*Overview of Croatian Traditional Literature* (Radetić, 1879, 68–70)). He also mentions that he encountered the story *The Emperor Diocletian Has Goat Ears* in Kaštela near Split, which he takes as evidence that the mentioned myth is widespread among Serbs and Croats (Nodilo, 1981, 175).

Robert Lehmann-Nitsche (1936) saw the story of donkey's ears as a contribution to the study of costumes:

The skin from a donkey's or horse's head was a very common head covering; Herodotus (VII, 70, 76) mentions it when describing the clothing and weapons of the Persian army, the Greek tragic playwright Heril (Heril cited by Flavius Josephus in a speech against Apion I, 173) speaks of caps made from horse skins, and we find donkey ears as ornaments on helmets even in the Middle Ages. (Schreiber, 1962, 91)

However, brothers Hermann and Georg Schreiber offer a different interpretation: "In our opinion, these ears or horns are the final echoes of the cult

17 Sūrya (Sun as a celestial body) and Sūryā (Sunčica) (cf. Ježić, 1987). In his "Additions and amendments", Nodilo introduces the theonym *Suria* – Sunčica as a correction (Nodilo, 1981, 651).

18 Nodilo does not compare him to Helios, who is named as such in certain translations of the *Chronicles of John Malalas*.

19 "Our people attribute a miraculous power to the elderberry. They believe that it can reveal secrets and protect success against hostile forces" (Sofrić Niševljanin, 1912, 103). Pavle Sofrić Niševljanin also mentions the *story* of the Phrygian King Midas, where "instead of elderberry, a reed grows, and its rustling reveals the secret". Moreover, he assumes the possibility that the latter story might be "the origin of our saying: 'The earth swore to paradise that all secrets would be known'" (Sofrić Niševljanin, 1912, 104).

of gods in animal form; demons with animal heads (specifically horse heads!) are often found in sculptures from the ancient Orient, which is particularly significant in relation to King Midas" (Schreiber, 1962, 91–92).

Ovid mentions that King Midas was initiated into the mysteries of Dionysus, and his ears seem to allude to his connection with nature's spirits.

This is not our discovery; it was recorded over 1700 years ago by Flavius Philostratus in the sixth book (chapter 27) of his biography of the miracle-worker Apollonius of Tyana. This similarity is also the reason behind Midas's choice in the contest between Pan and Apollo: Perhaps Midas chose the Anatolian instrument, the flute, not out of some national motives, but because it was integral to the Dionysian mysteries. (Schreiber, 1962, 92)

In comparison to Svantevid, who was portrayed as the supreme deity (*summus deus*) among the Baltic Slavs in Arkona, Triglav was the supreme deity among the Slavs in Pomerania (Pomorje) (Western Slavs), where three-headed statues of him existed in cities like Szczecin, Wolin, and Brandenburg (Branibor) (Kulišić, 1979, 190),²⁰ and the symbolism of the *tricephalic* appearance is interpreted with the governance of the triadic (triune) world (heavenly, earthly, and underworldly).²¹ However, Łowmiański notes that the assumption about Triglav's cult in Wolin is a "simple misunderstanding" (Łowmiański, 1996, 130). Nodilo believes that Triglav was worshipped in the Pomeranian region of the Northwestern Slavs immediately after Svantevid (Nodilo, 1981, 175), from which it is evident that Nodilo blended the Pomeranian Slavs with the Slavs in Arkona. He interprets Triglav's *tricephality* (Three-headed one) in connection with the myth of three chambers in the *R̥gveda* through which the triadic Sun wanders during the night, attempting to include Trojan as a remnant of the Pomeranian Triglav (Nodilo, 1981, 175–176), in whose description Nodilo notes three heads or three faces, thereby establishing a parallel between polycephaly and polyfaciality.²² By "covered eyes/heads" (his eyes were "covered" (cf. Nodilo, 1981, 175)), Nodilo likely refers to the golden tiara that covered Triglav's silver face(s), which "could" support his interpretation that this

entails a representation of the triadic nyctomorphic Sun. Unlike the polycephalic Svantevid as a representation of the heavenly realm, Triglav remains connected to the nyctomorphic topos as he acts as a *triadic nyctomorphic Sun*. Thus, he is still associated with the underworld, which is not a Christianized demonic world, but implies the creative forces of vegetation. Čajkanović emphasizes that, initially, Trojan functioned as a theriomorphic deity with visible signs of theriomorphic attributes *on his head*, indicating that the head, "limbs, and certain organs are often multiplied *three times, triplicated*, in religion and mythology". He concludes that triple-headedness is found in deities of the underworld, "those deities that correspond to the old Serbian Dispater," and he finds that Trojan corresponds to the "old Serbian god of the dead" (Čajkanović, 1941, 58–60). Čajkanović equates the Pomeranian Triglav, who was a nyctomorphic equestrian figure (on a black horse), with Svantevid, who similarly appeared as a nyctomorphic equestrian figure, citing Ebbo's (Archbishop of Rheims) *Vita Ottonis* which describes Triglav with the phrase *summus paganorum deus* (Čajkanović, 1941, 61).

TOWARDS THE CONCLUSION ON THE SYNONYM MATRIX OF SERBIAN-CROATIAN "OLD FAITH" IN NODILO'S RE/CONSTRUCTION

Nodilo's mythic interpretations in the framework of the *mythology of nature* are not interested in the *social functions* of deities; or, more accurately, he translates social functions into *cosmic* ones (in contrast to Dumézil's methodology). For instance, based on the triadic divinity in Uppsala, Dumézil finds a trifunctional religious ideology: Odin as the supreme ruler (function of magical and legal supreme authority), Thor as the victor (function of gods and warrior strength), and Freyr as the protector of fertility (function of fertility deity and economic progress) (Dumézil, 1987, 160). However, Nodilo writes the mythology of nature, its application to South Slavic folklore material, into the cohesive role of the "old faith" of Serbs and Croats. Concerning the *Yugoslav ideosphere* of the time which he belonged to, he also explores the synonym matrix of *Serbian-Croatian "old faith"*, although as historian he advocated the model of independent and later moving in of Croats but refusing to accept the

20 Kulišić notes that Triglav's face and eyes were covered with a golden tiara, and that this particular detail contradicts mythological solar theories. Similarly, he mentions that Triglav's heads in Szczecin were silver, and according to iconographic-coloristic symbolism, the color silver did not carry a solar meaning. Nodilo did not delve into detailed descriptions of Triglav's worship, as he did with the detailed description of Svantevid's statue and the worship practiced in Arkona (Kulišić, 1979, 190–192).

21 Regarding polycephaly and polyfaciality (cf. Marjanić, 2022, chapters 2 and 7). Monachus Priefligensis (Meyer, 1931, 41) describes Triglav's black horse in detail, as well as the related manticism (Nikolić, 1959, 277).

22 Polycephalic gods were unknown to the Slavs in Polabia; this likely represents religious borrowing "through trade routes with the East, even though they were controlled by the Arabs, who were monotheists" (Łowmiański, 1996, 143).



Figure 2: Tabula Traiana/Trajan's Tabula (Wikimedia Commons). On the Serbian side of Danube river and not far away from the sculpture of the ancient Dacian king Decebalus there is Tabula Traiana, a Roman (Latin) inscription celebrating the opening of the Roman road leading here in 100 CE. (Carlà-Uhink, 2019, 94). Emperor Trajan entered the oral traditions of the peoples of the Balkans in the belief narrative *In the Trojan Emperor Goat's Ears (U cara Trojana kozje uši)*. As well as it was said that Emperor Trajan (Trojan) had a lot of gold and that he hid it in a place surrounded by seven rivers: Drežanka, Radobolja, Lištica, Neretva, Rakitnica, Doljanka and Ljuta. That place could be Goranci (Karačić, 2013). Many people were looking for that gold, some went crazy because of it and sold all their possessions to look for that gold, which has not been found to this day. Nodilo believed, in the context of mythology of nature, that "it also seems possible that Trojan is our very own name for the triadic nocturnal Sun" (Nodilo, 1981, 159).

ideologeme of isolated Croatism. In this context, Nodilo also took the Kajkavian legend about Čeh, Leh and Meh, which has been preserved in many versions.

Pointing out that both conscious and unconscious mythmaking is also the subject of folkloristic research, Ivan Lozica cites an interesting fact that the (nineteenth-century) Academy (JAZU,

Zagreb) offered a prize to a scientist who would systematically describe the pre-Christian religion of *our* ancestors: "Nodilo tried, but failed. Maybe that money would could pay a more thorough critic of all the misconceptions that accumulated (and are still accumulating) in the mythological field in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Lozica, 1997, 33).

DRUŽBENO KOHEZIVNA FUNKCIJA ZGODBE O TREH BRATIH/TREH PRIJATELJIH V NATKU NODILU PRI REKONSTRUKCIJI »STAROVERSTVA« SRBOV IN HRVATOV

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POVZETEK

V svoji študiji Stara vera Srbov in Hrvatov (*izvirno naslovljena Religija Srbâ in Hrvatâ*, glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnog) iz obdobja 1885–1890, hrvaški zgodovinar Natko Nodilo, avtor prve rekonstrukcije južnoslovanske mitologije in prve splošne zgodovine srednjega veka na južnoslovanskem območju, na podlagi ljudskega ustnega izročila osnuje svojo rekonstrukcijo južnoslovanske mitologije (»staroverstva«, religije), ki ga združi s kronikami krščanskih misijonarjev. Osrednja točka je Helmoldova Kronika Slovanov (okoli 1170). Ob upoštevanju jugoslovanske ideosfere Nodilovega časa je raziskoval sinonimno matriko srbsko-hrvaškega »staroverstva«. Kot zgodovinar je zagovarjal model, ki zajema ločeno in kasnejšo migracijo Hrvatov, vendar se ni strinjal z ideologemom izoliranega hrvaštva. Članek preučuje, kako Nodilo ponovno gradi »staroverstvo« (mitologijo, religijo) Srbov in Hrvatov, preko mita o treh bratih/treh prijateljih, kar je v skladu s tem, kar je Friedrich Max Müller opredelil kot »mitologija narave«. Ta vključuje triadično sonce – nočno trilogijo dnevnega sonca (zahajajoče, nočno in vzhajajoče sonce). Po interpretaciji trojnega sonca v Rgvedi, v kontekstu indoevropske primerjalne mitologije, je Nodilo omenjeno gradivo uporabil za »staroverstvo« Srbov in Hrvatov, na primeru Trojana (Trajanu) in Triglava (Trogllovega). Nodilo vidi v Trojanu in Triglavu upodobitev niktomornega sonca. Triglav, ki je bil božanstvo med zahodnimi Slovani, naj bi po Nodilovi rekonstrukciji predstavljal Trajana – izmišljen lik iz ustnih pripovedi.

Ključne besede: Natko Nodilo, mitologija narave, mit o treh bratih/treh prijateljih

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