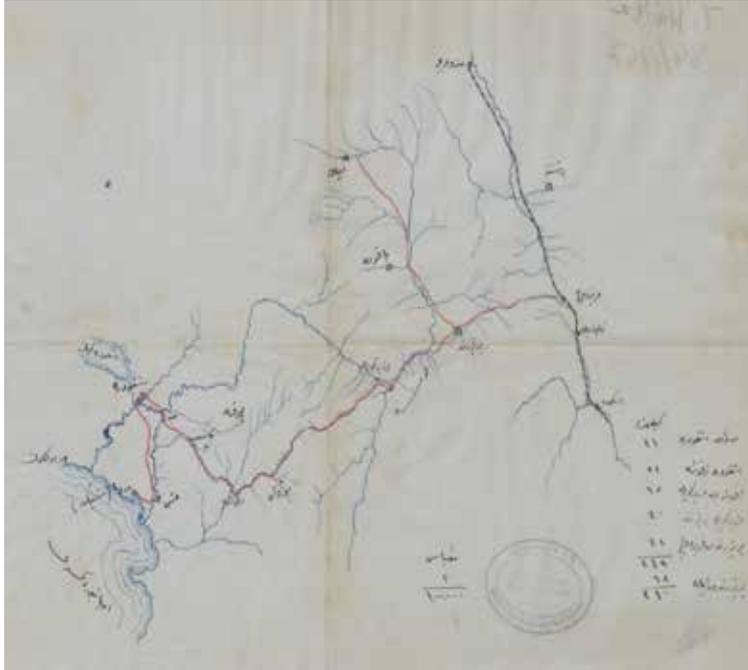


Harita. 1: Üsküp'ten Başlayarak Kaçanik'ten Geçen ve Adriyatik Denizi'ne Ulaşan Yol Güzergâhı Üzerindeki Yerleşim Yerleri Arasındaki Mesafeleri Gösterir Harita⁴⁴



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ELEMENTS OF OTTOMAN LEGACY IN THE ALKA OF SINJ (CROATIA)

SINJ'IN (HIRVATISTAN) "ALKA" SINDA OSMANLI MİRASI
UNSURLARI

ANĐELKO VLAŠIĆ
JANJA KOVAČ

Introduction: A Knightly Tournament Called Alka

The Alka is a competition held in the Croatian town of Sinj once a year, on Sunday, in the first third of the month of August. It is played by competitors called alkars, who are exclusively male competitors. There are at least eleven alkars and seventeen at most. The word *alka* (link, or ring), which is of Turkish origin (Turkish: *halka*, meaning a ring or door-knocker), signifies both the name of the tournament and the target used in the tournament, because the alkars use a small iron spear as they shoot at a target in the form of a ring. The target consists of two concentric circles connected by three evenly distributed transverse links, or fasteners. The alkars ride horses at full gallop carrying a spear up to three meters long and try to hit the ring, which is suspended on a rope above the racetrack. The outcome of the competition depends on the precision of the alkars: the winner is the one who, in three consecutive races, by aiming at the Alka ring collects the most points, called *punat* (Croatian; plural: *punati*). A hit in the smaller, inner circle of the target brings three points, a hit in the space above the central circle brings two points, and a hit in one

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of the bottom two boxes is worth one point. All the competitors gallop twice towards the target and try to hit it. The third chance to run is reserved for the alkars who have won the most points in the first two rounds. If after the third race two or more alkars have the same number of points, they continue to compete until one of them gathers more points than the other one. The winner of the Alka is richly rewarded and celebrated until the next Alka.¹

The Alka tournament begins with a ceremonial procession of alkars and their squires. The costumes and weapons that they carry differ according to their position in the tournament. Their uniforms have rich colours and ornaments, and they carry different sorts of richly decorated weapons. This gives a ceremonious note to their procession and to the competition. The procession is led by a man called *arambaša* (Turkish: *harami başı* = commander of the *haramis*, a special military group; leader of the *hayduks*, or rebels). The *arambaša* leads a group of alkar squires who walk in the cortege on foot, armed with guns and pistols called *kubura* (Turkish: *kubur* = protective box, sheath, or scabbard; transposed meaning: small gun) which they carry in their waistbands along with swords called *yataghans* (Croatian: *jatagan*; Turkish: *yatağan*), of Turkish origin, 60-65cm long, with a wavy bent steel blade. They are dressed in ceremonial antique costume of their region.²

After the squires walk men called *buzdovandžije* (Croatian singular: *buzdovandžija*, from Turkish: *bozdoğancı*). They are called like that because they carry maces (Croatian: *buzdovan*;

1 Šime Jurić, *Sinjska alka. Informativni vodič po Cetinskoj krajini*, Odbor za proslavu 250. godišnjice Sinjske alke, Sinj 1965, p.32-38; Ana-Marija Vukušić, *U sridu: sjećanje, pamćenje i život Alke*, Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb 2013, p.12-16; Abdulah Škaljić, *Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom jeziku*, "Svjetlost" izdavačko preduzeće, Sarajevo 1966, p.157.

2 Šime Jurić, "Sinjska alka prema sredovječnim igrama", *Iseljenički kalendar*, 1960, p.190; Sinjska Alka 1715-2012, "Alka dress and weapon", http://www.alka.hr/scroll_page.asp?groupID=2&lang=en, 29th May 2014.

Turkish: *bozdoğan*) with a carved hilt and an iron head divided into flanges. On the front part of squires' waistcoats are *iliks* (Croatian: *ilik*, meaning button; from Turkish: *ilik*, meaning buttonhole) with big silver rings.³ The *buzdovandžije* are followed by a squire who wears a Turkish trophy shield, and another two squires who guide the horse without a rider, called *edek* (Turkish: *yedek* = rope, leash; transposed meaning: spare horse). *Edek* is a richly equipped and decorated horse that, according to the legend, belonged to the Ottoman commander of the battle of Sinj (which will be discussed later in the article). The weapons used in Alka tournament originate from the 18th and 19th century, except for the aforementioned Ottoman shield. The shield, coated with red silk and with stylized brass ornaments, is of Persian origin and originates from the end of the 17th century. According to the legend, it was also seized in 1715 during the battle of Sinj.⁴

Next in the procession is the troop of alkars, in front of whom walks the flag bearer with his lieutenants. The flag bearer is called in Croatian *barjaktar* (Turkish: *bayrakdâr* = flag bearer). The troop of alkars is led by the Duke of Alka, the master of the competition, who is followed by his deputy called *adutant* (from Latin: *adjutant* = assistant staff officer). The uniform of the Alka Duke, among other clothes, constitutes of a dolman, which is a long Turkish outer robe (Croatian: *dolama*; Turkish: *dolama* = janissary garment with long sleeves), waistcoat, trousers, and *kalpak* worn on the head (from Turkish *kalpak*, meaning ceremonial military cap made of fur and silk).⁵

After the flag bearer and the Duke comes the troop of alkars in two rows, on horses and holding spears. All of the riders wear

3 Sinjska Alka 1715-2012, "Alka dress and weapon". Jurić, Sinjska alka, p. 87. Škaljić, pp.187, 344.

4 Šime Jurić, *Sinjska alka*, p.87; Abdulah Škaljić, *ibid.*, p.120. Ana-Marija Vukušić, *ibid.*, p.12-16; Sinjska Alka 1715-2012, "Alka dress and weapon".

5 Šime Jurić, *Sinjska alka*, p.87; Abdulah Škaljić, *ibid.*, p.233.

alkar boots made of black leather, with spurs (Croatian: *mamuza*, plural: *mamuze*; from Turkish: *mahmuz*) worn on the heels of the boots. The horses used in the Alka tournament also have special equipment, for instance, their saddle is covered with embroidered *abaja*, which is a Croatian word originating from Turkish *aba* or *abai* meaning domestic duffel, or horse-covering cloth. At the rear of the procession is the *alaj-čauš* (Turkish: *alay* = crowd, and *çavuş* = a leader of a group of soldiers), commander of the troop of alkars. He rides at the end of the Alka procession. The *alaj-čauš* and his alkar troop are dressed in uniforms originating from the early 18th century.⁶

There are other clothing items surrounding the Alka and having a Turkish-origin name. The shoes worn by Cetina region peasants (Croatian: *opanak*, plural: *opanci*, from Proto-Slavic word for climbing) are made of tanned leather, and are usually worn together with knit woollen socks and a sort of oversocks (Croatian: *terluk*, plural: *terluci*, from Turkish *terlik*, meaning slippers) are put on before the peasant shoes. Traditional female costumes, another part of the Alka ceremony, constitute, among other, of an item called *ječerma* in Croatian, originating from the Turkish word *geçürme* (meaning a pull-on, but transposed to the meaning of a type of vest), which is a sleeveless jacket extending to the knee, made of woollen cloth, and worn over the shirt.⁷

When the aforementioned competition ends (i.e., after two runs of all participants and the third run made by the alkars who have accumulated the most points in the first two runs), the Alka Duke's adjutant reports who had gathered the most points. Then the adjutant leads the winning alkar before the Duke and the

6 Sinjska Alka 1715-2012, "Alka dress and weapon"; Abdulah Škaljić, *ibid.*, p.65, 68, 204; Šime Jurić, *Sinjska alka*, p.67, 188; Sinjska Alka 1715-2012, "Alka tournament", http://www.alka.hr/scroll_page.asp?groupID=8&lang=en-, 29th May 2014; Šime Jurić, "Sinjska alka prema sredovječnim igrama", p.188.

7 Abdullah Škaljić, pp. 408, 613. Sinjska Alka 1715-2012, "Alka dress and weapon".

Duke declares him the winner by tying a small Croatian flag on his spear. This ceremonial act is always accompanied by a celebratory cannonade on the ramparts of the old fortress of Sinj.⁸

The Alka as the central event is preceded by two smaller competitions called Bara and Čoja. They are held two days and one day before the Alka, respectively. In these two events participate the same competitors as the ones involved in the Alka, but Bara and Čoja have slightly different rules: the competitors do not wear ceremonial uniforms, and in the third race everyone runs, not just the alkars with the most points. The winners of Bara and Čoja receive, as a reward, a sizeable amount of money. Also, the winner of Bara receives two meters of valuable green cloth, and the winner of Čoja receives 311 cm of valuable red cloth. This is where the name of Čoja comes from – from the Turkish word *çoha* or *çuha*, meaning quality cloth. On the other hand, Bara is the name of the meadow which was given for usage to the winner of that competition, on the period of one year.⁹

1. The Battle of Sinj of 1715 and the Origins of the Tournament

The town of Sinj is the historical centre of the Cetina region, that is, of the area surrounding the upper and middle stream of the river Cetina. The Cetina region is situated in southern Croatia, in the hinterland of the Dalmatian coast and on the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina. From the middle of the 15th and up to the beginning of the 18th century, this area has also been the border area between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice. It has been, on several occasions, conquered by the Ottomans and Venice.

8 Šime Jurić, *Sinjska alka*, p.76.

9 Sinjska Alka 1715-2012, "Alka tournament"; Šime Škaljić, *ibid.*, p.179; Vukušić, *U sridu: sjećanje, pamćenje i život Alke*, p.30.

Sinj was an important town on the Venetian border and on the road towards the Dalmatian coast. That is why the Ottoman forces tried to conquer it during the Ottoman-Venetian war (1714-1718). In 1715, Ottoman high commander, Serasker Mehmed Pasha Ćelić, led the Ottoman army from Bosnia, consisting of approximately 60,000 soldiers. The Ottoman forces surrounded Sinj on 6th August 1715 and started bombarding with cannons the fortress of Sinj, situated on the hill close to the town. The fortress was defended by 700 Venetian and Croatian soldiers. After significantly damaging the fortress, the Ottoman army, on 14th August, directly assaulted the besieged defenders, who firmly resisted. During the fight which lasted the whole night and the next day, the 15th August, the small crew of the Sinj fortress repelled all Ottoman attacks. Suddenly, the Ottoman soldiers started to retreat. They crossed the river of Cetina and retreated all the way to Bosnia. The defeat of the Ottoman army, although it was significantly more numerous than the defending crew of the fortress, remained unexplained until today. It is possible that the Ottoman forces were unprepared for a long lasting war, or that they had a lack of supplies, water and ammunitions. Some historians claim that an epidemic of dysentery was the reason for their defeat. It is also possible that there was a mutiny of a part of the Ottoman army, or that the Ottoman commander badly organised the attack on the fort. Some believe that the Christian saint, Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, helped the defenders of Sinj, who allegedly saw her image in the fortress.¹⁰

In any case, the successful defence of the Sinj fortress was among all expectations. Delighted with the outcome of the battle, the inhabitants of Sinj decided to organize a commemorative event that would preserve the memory of the heroic victory. It is

10 Šime Jurić, *Sinjska alka*, p.56-58; Šime Jurić, *Dokumenti i književna građa o Sinjskoj alki*, Logos, Split 1988, p.34-38; Vukušić, *U sridu: sjećanje, pamćenje i život Alke*, p.32-34.

assumed that at that time it was concluded that, from the next year, on the day of the liberation of Sinj, the Alka would be held. However, due to the severe consequences of the Ottoman-Venetian war and its continuation until 1717, the Alka probably started to be organised in 1717 or even later.¹¹

So, where did the founders of the Alka find the form for their commemorative event? Interestingly, they did not choose to organise a reconstruction of the battle itself. Instead, they decided to adopt the form of similar mediaeval games and tournaments. Most interesting for this question are competitions called *quintanas*, in which the participants were showing their abilities in the same activity, and were not fighting directly one against the other, or in groups. The original purpose of the *quintanas* was the training of soldiers and nobles, but in the 15th and 16th centuries those kinds of games became popular and other social classes could have participated in them. The target was often named after some enemy, like *Moro* (Moor), *Saracen* (Saracen) or *Turčin* (Turk). In one version of the game that reaches the peak of its popularity in Tuscany in the 17th century, called *corer l'annello*, participants had to hit the target shaped like a ring on a long spear. This kind of game started to be played on the Adriatic coast and the hinterland already in the 15th century, and the *corer l'annello* is probably the game from which the Alka took its form.¹²

The first game similar to the *corer l'annello* on the Dalmatian coast was recorded in the city of Dubrovnik in the 15th century. The game called *trčati na kolač/palij* was being held on Saint Vlaho's day (St Blaise) on the 3rd February or during the carnival period. In the game, financed by the city of Dubrovnik, at first only young noble men could participate. However, that soon changed

11 Šime Jurić, *Sinjska alka*, p.57; Ivan Marković, *Sinj i njegovo slavlje*, Franjevački samostan, Sinj 1988, p.23;

12 Ana-Marija Vukušić, "Etnološka analiza opstojnosti Sinjske alke", unpublished MA thesis, University of Zagreb, 2004, p.26-27.

and in the 16th century everyone could participate. The game was suspended after a massive earthquake Dubrovnik in 1667. Similar games with some alterations were recorded in other coastal cities like Zadar, Imotski, Makarska, Split, Šibenik, and Skradin. Similar game, called *prstenac*, was recorded in the continental Croatia, in Zagreb, at the end of the 17th and at the beginning of the 18th century. All of the mentioned games do not exist today, with the exception of the Alka of Sinj.¹³

2. Ottoman Turkish Terminology of the Alka

It is difficult to ignore the importance of the influence that the Ottoman legacy had on contemporary identities of the Balkan region. The Ottoman legacy in the Balkans is perceptible on every level of social life, especially in its cultural sphere. The high culture of the Ottoman Empire was the product of the educated Ottoman, Arabic, and Persian-speaking Muslim groups. They were in small numbers in the Balkan region and they left behind only the presence of Ottoman architectural monuments. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire left behind more traces on the level of everyday life. That is why today we can find Ottoman elements in the language, clothing, cuisine, customs, etc. of the Balkan peoples. Throughout the centuries of presence of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, it was the instigator of broad contacts, mutual influences and cultural exchange in its centres, as well as in its border regions.¹⁴

The Ottoman Turkish language was the official language of the Ottoman Empire and, consequently, it had an enormous influence on languages of non-Muslim population under the Ottoman rule in the Balkans and in its proximity. So was the Croatian language

13 Anna-Marija Vukušić, "Etnološka analiza opstojnosti Sinjske alke", pp.28-29.

14 Maria Todorova, "The Ottoman legacy in the Balkans", *Imperial Legacy. The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, L. Carl Brown (ed.), Columbia University Press, New York 1996, pp.57-60.

of the town of Sinj and the surrounding Cetina region influenced significantly by the Ottoman Turkish vocabulary. Ottoman Turkish loanwords were mainly used for items and ideas of material culture, especially those related to urban life, clothing, warfare, trade, traffic, crafts, cuisine, etc.¹⁵

The Alka demonstrates the wealth of Turkisms, which are, from the linguistic point of view, Turkish derived words used in a language not related to Turkish (in this case, Croatian language). The name of the tournament, as well as the titles of some of the Alka officers, the names of the pieces of clothing of the competitors, of the equipment and of the decoration of people and horses used in the tournament – all of these things have names that are of Turkish origin. These Turkisms are the consequence of the Ottoman rule in the region surrounding the town of Sinj – from the first quarter of the 16th century until 1715 and the mentioned battle of Sinj.¹⁶

The Alka terminology consists of many other Ottoman Turkish words used as the titles of the Alka competitors, names of their clothing, equipment, weaponry and decorations, etc. Those Turkisms are used during the competition and generally throughout the Cetina region and in the town of Sinj. Other significant Turkisms surrounding the Alka are, alphabetically, in Croatian: *barjak* (Turkish: *bayrak* = flag, or banner), *čelenka* (Turkish: *çelenk* = plume, panache, decoration worn on the *kalpak*), *ćorda* (Turkish: *görda* = big knife, or sabre), *dizgin* (Turkish: *dizgin* = leather leash as a part of the bridle), *gajtan* (Turkish: *gaytan* = cotton or

15 Dino Mujadžević, "Surviving elements of Ottoman legacy in the Balkans in non-Muslim communities and cultures", *Osmanlı Mirası ve Günümüz Balkan Müslüman Toplulukları. Konferans Tebliğleri (Saraybosna, 16-18 Ekim 2009)*, Halit Eren (ed.), Balkanlar Medeniyet Merkezi, Istanbul 2011, pp.107-109.

16 *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York 2000, p. 1890; Anna-Marija Vukušić, *U sridu: sječanje, pamćenje i život Alke*, p.209.

silk cord, decorative tape), *handžar* (Turkish: *hancer* = long knife, usually worn at the waistband), *kopča* (Turkish: *kopça* = clamp, or metal hook), *kula* (Turkish: *kule* = fortified building; or fort), *peškir* (Turkish *peşkir* = napkin; cotton fabric scarf, usually wrapped around the cap), *prangija* (Turkish: *frenği* = European canon; in the Cetina region: any type of cannon), *pusat* (Turkish: *pusat* = a part of equestrian equipment), *srma* (Turkish: *sırma* = silver; transposed meaning: silver thread), *talambas* (Turkish: *tulum* = drum; transposed meaning: drummer), *toka* (Turkish: *toka* = metal button and tile decoration worn as decoration and protection on the *ječerma*), *uzengija* (Turkish: *üzengi* = stirrup), etc.¹⁷

3. The Place of the Alka in the Tradition of Its Region

Competitors in the Alka are determined based on several factors: a) only members of the Alka Knights Society, the inhabitants of Sinj and the Cetina region, if they were born there and if their parents were born there, can participate; b) they have to be excellently trained riders; c) they have to be skilled in handling the spear; d) they have to be handsome and have a heroic posture, that is, the posture that meets the expectations of the people of the Cetina region.¹⁸

The provisions of the oldest Statute of the Alka, written in 1833, coincide with the provisions of similar chivalric tournaments that were held in Europe in the first half of the 19th century. Unlike other tournaments, the organisers of the Alka let wealthier residents of Sinj and of surrounding villages to participate in the tournament, along alkar knights. It is this local characteristic that greatly helped the construction of the positive image of the Alka among the local population. That is the reason why today resi-

17 Šime Jurić, *Sinjska alka*, p. 87. Škaljić, pp.87, 120, 154, 256, 340, 417, 544, 612, et al.

18 Anna-Marija Vukušić, *U sridu: sjećanje, pamćenje i život Alke*, p.18.

dents of Sinj consider Alka an indigenous competition.¹⁹

Over the past centuries, the Alka was played at different times during the calendar year. A couple of times it was even played twice a year: in 1798, on the last day of the carnival and on 9th May. In 1818, it was held on 15th May and 6th July. It was held on different dates: in 1834, on 9th February; in 1838, on 19th April; and in 1855, on 4th October. Since 1849, it was played regularly on 18th August, i.e., on the birthday of the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph. Since then, the Alka is being held in the first third of August. Another Austrian Emperor, Franz I, visited Sinj in 1818, while travelling through Dalmatia. On this occasion, the inhabitants of Sinj prepared the Alka in his honour and the winner was awarded by the Emperor with a ring worth 800 forints. From then onwards, the winner had an assured prize of 100 forints. A special Alka was held during the stay of the Emperor Franz Joseph I in Sinj, in 1875, and another in 1919, in honour of King Petar I Karadorđević of Yugoslavia. The 250th Alka, held in 1965, was attended by the Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito. From 1990 onwards, the Alka was attended by all presidents of Croatia: Franjo Tuđman, Stjepan Mesić, and Ivo Josipović.²⁰

It is interesting to point out that, in recent history, the Alka encountered a conciliatory reaction from the official Turkish representatives in Croatia, with regard to the seemingly “anti-Ottoman/Turkish” characteristic of the origin of the Alka. His Excellency Burak Özügergin was the first Turkish ambassador to visit the Alka, in 2012. Initial contacts between the Alka Knights Society and the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Croatia had started already during the ambassadorship of His Excellency Umur Apaydın, Özügergin’s predecessor, who received the representatives of the Alka Knights Society in his residence in Zagreb.

19 Ibid, p.26.

20 *Sinjska Alka 1715-2012, History of Alka*, http://www.alka.hr/scroll_page.asp?groupID=6&lang=en, 29th May 2014.

On this occasion, they agreed on cooperation of the two countries for the purpose of comprehending the historical events of the battle of Sinj of 1715 from the perspective of the historical records which are located in the Ottoman archives and libraries. Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Istanbul University provided assistance in this process. Apaydın's successor Özügergin visited Sinj on 5th August 2012. Turkey's first official representative attending the Alka since its inception was welcomed with ovations during his presentation on the Alka stands.²¹ On that occasion, he said that Croatia and Turkey share many moments of their shared past that has largely positively determined the history of both countries:

Today we can celebrate things that have happened in the past and find solace in huge positive changes that happen when nations shift together from war to peace. Today, we can cherish our inherited patrimony and enhance cultural aspects which make our nations more powerful and connect them at the same time, instead of emphasizing our differences through those aspects. In other words, we need to put history in the service of friendship among nations, and not to be prisoners of history.²²

4. The Alka from an Ethnological Point of View

Although the Alka of Sinj probably took its form from the *corer l'annello*, some ethnologists and historians tried to prove the Croatian origin of the Alka by implementing the idea of the *corer l'annello* into Croatian history, location and customs. In the first description of the game by a Franciscan monk called Šimun Milinović, he presents the Alka as an event established by *ancient*

21 Silvana Srdoč, "Hrvatska je savršena za sve", <http://www.tpportal.hr/vijesti/svijet/207501/Hrvatska-je-savsena-za-sve.html>, 26th May 2014.

22 Šenol Selimović, "Turski veleposlanik: Turci i Hrvati danas su na istoj strain", <http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Hrvatska/tabid/66/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/182910/Default.aspx>, 26th May 2014.

custom. On the other hand, ethnologist Desanka Nikolić tried to find the basis for the belief that the Alka is originally Croatian by linking it to bridal customs. Her theory was based on the similar form of roles of the participants of the Alka and of bridal customs, like the *alaj-čauš*. A person who plays that role in the Alka and in the wedding has to ensure that everything is functioning properly, by the rules and customs.²³

Croatian ethnologist Dunja Rihtman Auguštin in her paper *Ethnology between ethnic and national identification*, published in 1994, argued that modern South Slavic ethnologies were born simultaneously with national movements, which required symbols. Those symbols are to be found among common people, who have managed to conserve genuine national values through poems, tales, folk art, customs and rituals. Peter Burke called that the *discovery of the people*.²⁴ A representative of such positivism-based theory in Croatian ethnology is Milovan Gavazzi, who was the main figure in the process of the establishment of ethnology in Croatian science and society. His work on collecting and analysing folklore in Yugoslavia, based on the cultural-historical method, resulted in the division of the whole Yugoslav area into *cultural areas* (in Croatian: *kulturni areali*). This method concentrates on two concepts: cultural-geographical and cultural-genetic research. According to Gavazzi, there are three cultural areas spreading across Croatia: Pannonian, Dinaric and Adriatic cultural area (in Croatian: *panonski, dinarski* and *jadranski kulturni areal*). Cultural areas are not established as areas with firm borders (geographical or cultural) but as a *core* of representative features surrounded with *transitional areas* in which features of two (or more) areas collide. Gavazzi pointed out that those cultural areas do not have to collide with existing political, ad-

23 Anna-Marija Vukušić, "Etnološka analiza opstojnosti Sinjske alke", pp.9-11.

24 Dunja Rihtman Auguštin, "Ethnology Between Ethnic and National Identification", *Studia ethnologica Croatica*, Vol. 6, 1994, p.155.

ministrative, religious, linguistic or some other relevant criterion. For example, the Dinaric area, in which the city of Sinj and its Alka are situated, and upon whose features one often refers in the process of its framing in Croatian customs, includes two nations (Croatian and Serbian), three religions (Catholicism, Islam and Orthodoxy), and four present countries (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Albania).²⁵

First ethnographic papers on the Alka were written under strong influence of the cultural-historical method introduced by Gavazzi. Most of them were focused on describing Alka in its specific parts. In 1987, Šime Jurić published a photo-monograph with texts on the history of the Alka, Sinj and the Cetina region, with extensive description of rules and customs of organising and properly performing the Alka. That edition also comprises texts written by ethnologists: Alaupović-Gjeldum wrote about folk costumes, Gamulin about armour and Vidović-Begonja about horses and equestrian equipment.²⁶ Those three topics can be considered as typical ethnographic topics. Ana-Marija Vukušić carried out ethnographic research on the Alka for her MA thesis entitled *Ethnological analysis of the survival of the Alka of Sinj* (in Croatian: *Etnološka analiza opstojnosti Sinjske Alke*) and published a book called *In the middle: remembrance, memory and life of Alka* (In Croatian: *U sridu: sjećanja, pamćenje i život Alke*). Vukušić's works present a modern view of the Alka and focus on why and how the Alka "survived" to the present day and became one of the main elements of identification for the people of Sinj, of the Cetina region and, subsequently, of the entire Croatia, when it was, in 2011, enlisted on the UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

25 Dunja Rihtman Auguštin, "Hrvatska narodna kultura: i na zapadu i na istoku", *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, Vol. 29, 1996, p.268.

26 Anna-Marija Vukušić, *U sridu: sjećanje, pamćenje i život Alke*, p.52.

5. Commoditization of Heritage and Branding of the Alka

Ceribašić points out that on many examples, in Croatia and elsewhere in the world, there can be seen that the most important thing is to make a brand from traditional culture for tourist consumption. By doing that, countries are trying to take a respectable place in the *international cultural supermarket*.²⁷ That is also indicated in the UNESCO and Croatian forms for registering of intangible heritage, in which there is a question on how that enlisting would help, on a global scale, the popularisation of intangible heritage.²⁸

How does something typical for one community become a universal heritage of mankind? The answer to that question offered Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett by pointing put three roles of world heritage in discerning global cultural common goods and the global public sphere. As the most important one, she points out the economic answer, which predicts that world heritage can be the "engine" of economic development, because "it gives value to cultural goods which usually aren't economically sustainable on a local or global level, so they are under the threat of destruction". The same author finds that world heritage is just another result of globalisation.²⁹

27 Naila Ceribašić, "Novi val promicanja nacionalne baštine: UNESCO-ova Konvencija o očuvanju nematerijalne kulturne baštine i njezina implementacija", *Proizvodnja baštine: kritičke studije o nematerijalnoj kulturi*, Marijana Hameršak, Iva Pleše, Ana-Marija Vukušić (eds.), Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb 2013, p.307.

28 Tvrtko Zebec, "Etnolog u svijetu baštine: hrvatska nematerijalna kultura u dvadeset i prvom stoljeću", *Proizvodnja baštine: kritičke studije o nematerijalnoj kulturi*, Marijana Hameršak, Iva Pleše, Ana-Marija Vukušić (eds.), Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb 2013, p.324.

29 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Svjetska baština i kulturna ekonomija", *Proizvodnja baštine: kritičke studije o nematerijalnoj kulturi*, Marijana Hameršak, Iva Pleše, Ana-Marija Vukušić (eds.), Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb 2013, pp.67-68.

Considering all that, the Alka can be a brand and, it is intended to be one. In 1965, the Alka was for the first time broadcasted via national television, which made the whole event more visible to a wider audience, and from then onwards it attracted more and more attention. With such media attention, the Alka is becoming a tourist target, a main tourist event that Sinj can offer to national and international public. Vukušić finds that this was one of the main goals of the organising committee since the 1960s and 1970s:

Regarding the information on preparation for the incoming Alka and the reports from the last Alka, it can be noticed that, in 1960s and 1970s, in that magazine [Alkar] was especially emphasised the need for a stronger tourist presentation of the Alka; that is, to think about the ways to make the Alka more popular for tourists.³⁰

The idea about the commoditization of the Alka has, therefore, been present for a long time. Around the same time, in 1972, UNESCO voted on the World Heritage List, on which are enlisted cultural and natural sites, and the list of World Heritage in Danger, with cultural and natural sites that are in immediate danger and need to be protected from deterioration. Simultaneously, UNESCO experts started a discussion about the intangible heritage which was excluded from the existing list(s). On the 20th April, 2006, the Convention on Protection of Intangible Heritage was voted in. The resulting list is a result of almost 30-years work on the definition of intangible heritage and the creation of guidelines for applications.

Ethnologists and anthropologists have taken an important role in the process of creating the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refers to that project by pointing out:

30 Anna-Marija Vukušić, *U sridu: sjećanje, pamćenje i život Alke*, p.50.

The aim of the newest model is to support the living, maybe also the endangered tradition, by supporting conditions necessary for cultural reproduction. That means that the value is assigned to the “carriers”, that is, to the “transmitters” of tradition, as well as their habitus and habitat.³¹

In addition, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that the intangible heritage enlisted or not, “is created through meta-cultural procedures which apply museology values and methods (collection, documentation, protection, presentation, evaluation and interpretation) on living persons, their knowledge, practices, artefacts, social worlds and living areas”.³² Experts are the ones who are creating that heritage by using notions, standards and rules by which they put cultural phenomena and their practitioners in the sphere of heritage, making them meta-cultural artefacts in that process. By doing so, they are changing the relation towards those goods by making a new relation, a meta-cultural relation, towards something that was earlier only a *habitus*³³. Although the intangible heritage thusly presented can be seen as a top-down process, some scholars argue that the most important thing about this kind of heritage is that it can create a collective around a residual culture, like crafts, storytelling, rituals, plays, and festivities. By doing that, its aim is not to describe the world, but to change it.³⁴

One can see commoditization as one of those new changes that go hand in hand with the development of cultural tourism. This is not the case – because commoditization is always present around tangible or intangible heritage (for example, charging tick-

31 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *ibid.*, p.70.

32 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *ibid.*, p.67.

33 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *ibid.*, p.67.

34 Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, “Pravo na kulturu: nematerijalna baština d.o.o., folklor©, tradicijsko znanje™”, *Proizvodnja baštine: kritičke studije o nematerijalnoj kulturi*, Marijana Hameršak, Iva Pleše, Ana-Marija Vukušić (eds.), Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb 2013, pp.37, 53.

ets for entering a particular castle). There is a great debate over advantages and disadvantages of commoditization of culture in general.

Davydd Greenwood used the example of the Alarde festival to demonstrate how commoditization affected heritage. The mentioned festival is being held in Hondarribia, in Basque Country, in Spain. It is the main annual event in Hondarribia and it celebrates the successful defence against the invading French army. The whole city and its community participate in the preparations for and the performance of the festival. Greenwood founded his analysis on his 18-month-long fieldwork and another couple of summers in Hondarribia. The problem with the festival occurred when the Spanish fascist regime led by Francisco Franco finished the renovation of the old citadel and included it into a chain of similar structures which were aimed to attract tourists in this part of the country. Now, the festival gain another aspect: it was performed by the local community for the community which is participating in it for free, and for tourists who are paying to see it. The conclusion of his research of the mentioned situation was as follows:

*I do not doubt that they [the local government] ultimately will have to pay them [members of the local community, performers], just as the gypsies are paid to dance and sing and the symphony orchestra is paid to make music. The ritual has become a performance for money. The meaning is gone.*³⁵

After that experience, Greenwood participated in a project in which the main methodology was action research, a type of research that puts together professional researchers and local stakeholders. The role of professional researcher here is merely one of a process facilitator, a coach on research methods and a

35 Davydd J. Greenwood, "Culture by the Pound. An Anthropological Perspective on Tourism as Cultural Commoditization", *Tourists and Tourism. A Reader*, Sharon Bohn Gmelch (ed.), Waveland Press, Long Grove 2004, p.167.

team member, as Greenwood understands it. That experience made Greenwood rethink his conclusion about the Alarde festival. Fourteen years later, he published an addendum to his original paper. He realised that he had constructed a homogeneous image of the Alarde festival and Hondarribia community, what resulted in superficiality of his paper.³⁶

With commoditization as an unavoidable aspect of culture, one has to be aware of possible changes that this process can produce in the community from which a custom originates. The connection between the Alka and the community can be assured by regulations in its Statute, in which it is clearly stated that only the males from the Cetina region can participate in the game. The question to which future generations will have to find a suitable answer is: what will happen if there will not be enough participants complying with the mentioned rule due to exodus of the population, higher death than birth rates, and so on?

Let us conclude this paper with another citation by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett:

*World heritage is first and foremost a list. Everything on the list, whatever its previous context, is now placed in a relationship with other masterpieces. The list is the context for everything on it.*³⁷

Conclusion

The Alka is a chivalric tournament being held annually in the town of Sinj, in Croatia. It is a commemorative event celebrating the successful defence of the Sinj fortress against the invading Ottoman forces, in 1715. For almost 300 years, the tournament is being performed by well-established rules and customs prescribed by the Alka Knights Society Statute. The Alka terminology

36 Davydd J. Greenwood, *ibid.*, pp.157-169.

37 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *ibid.*, p.77.

comprises numerous Turkisms as names of the competitors, weaponry, clothes, equestrian equipment, etc. Those Turkisms reflect the historic event, which is in the core of the tournament itself, and the fact that Sinj and its Cetina region have been on the border of two different religions, Catholicism and Islam.

The second part of this interdisciplinary paper examines the Alka from an ethnological point of view. Numerous ethnologists researched the Alka; some of them in a positivist fashion situated the Alka in the tradition of its region (cultural area), and the modern ones comprehend it as an intangible heritage which is not solid, but susceptible to changes. By using relevant literature, the authors examined the Alka as world heritage enlisted in the UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Based on all of the mentioned theories, the authors conclude that the Alka is a part the process that affects other intangible world heritage, i.e., the commoditization and branding. The symbiosis of Dinaric and Ottoman elements, formed on a common military past, created the picturesqueness of the Alka, which in turn certainly contributed to its enlisting on the UNESCO's list and its branding.

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VI. BÖLÜM / CHAPTER VI

TEMATİK

THEMATIC