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All Roads Lead to Guča: Modes of Representing Serbia and Serbs during the Guča Trumpet Festival*

Abstract: In this paper I research a famous Serbian music event, the Dragačevo Trumpet Festival, better known as the Guča festival, by analysing festival's photographs. I use visitors' photographs available on one of the websites dedicated to Guča, www.guca.rs and media data, in order to question how the festival's photographs visually represent the Serbs by discussing several motifs found in the images: festival itself, carnivalesque, national(-istic) elements, and Roma and Serb dualism. The main goal of the paper is to explain and show how Guča festival found its place in modern Serbia and contributed inventing modern European Serbia in spite of its rural, folk, barbarian and sometimes nationalist representation.

Key words: Guča trumpet festival, photographs, identity, the Serbs, the Roma, folk tradition and culture

All the world's a stage (Shakespeare 2005/cca.1600, 55)

Introduction

Guča is a small village in the region of Šumadija, in the Dragačevo area of western Serbia, and the location for an annual trumpet competition with fifty years of tradition. The official name of the festival is *the Dragačevo Trumpet Festival*, "the biggest of its kind in the world", while it is better known after the host village, Guča (Prodger 2005).¹ In this respect, the Guča festival, visited by

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¹ The official name is "the Trumpet festival in Guča" (Serb. Sabor trubača u Guči). However, in Serbian, likewise in English, the name varies. Sometimes it is called "(Dragačevo's) brass band festival (in Guča)" or "(Guča) trumpet festival" (see www.saborguca.com/en; www.guca.rs/eng). In the paper I mostly use terms Guča or the Guča festival as synonyms for the Trumpet festival.

more than half of a million of spectators,² is an interesting but complex socio-anthropological and ethno-musicological phenomenon. The Dragačevo Trumpet festival is an international trumpet and brass band festival which started as a local competition in the village of Guča, western Serbia, in 1961. From 1962, the participants from other parts of Serbia came to Guča, while in 1963 for the first time the Roma players participated (Timotijević 2005). From that time on, Roma remained among the best trumpeters at the competitions. However, during these fifty years, the festival always demonstrated and was conceptualised as the carrier of the Serbian folk tradition and culture.

In my research I focus on comprehending the Guča festival, namely how it is presented through photographs available on one Guča website - www.guca.rs.³ The founder and the owner of this website is Mr. Dejan Ćirić who, with his tourist company, hosts and transports foreign tourists (participants and visitors) to the Guča festival.⁴ More precisely, I investigate the visual creation of Serbia through visual symbolisation of the festival. I should point out that I have not visited the festival itself. Though fieldwork should be compulsory in case of researching a festival, in my research I focus less on Guča itself and more on festival's image production by analysing visitors' photographs available at the [guca.rs](http://www.guca.rs). In other words, the conclusions I drew, do not necessarily have to concur with the organisers'/visitors' ideas or my (future) impressions of the festival, but should be understood within the framework of photo analysis. The goal of the paper is to show how photographs can serve in anthropological analysis of popular culture phenomena, and to supplement the existing theoretical framework of photo analysis in social science studies. The further goal is to reveal the discrepancies that exist at the Guča festival after 2000 – namely, the festival owes its popularity to Roma players while it is presented as a pure Serbian folk culture element. In this vein, there are several distinguishable motifs of Guča in analysed photos: festival activities, carnivalesque, national and nationalistic symbols, Roma, and traditional Serbia culture. In spite of the fact that Roma are the best musicians at the festival, the festival remains to be a symbol of Serbian tradition. Therefore, the pictures at the [guca.rs](http://www.guca.rs) website also show that Roma are integrated into Serbian cultural and national milieu in order for Guča to be the Guča festival. Other significant elements, such as, carnivalesque and national and nationalistic symbols of Guča festival in media and official discourse serve, on the

²<http://www.visitserbia.org/i2.php?modid=597&p=readdesc&infoid=780&tabid=23&tabindex=21&portalid=2>; According to the local newspapers' data, in 2009 there were 600 000 guests including 30 000 foreigners (Радичевић 201, 24), while it is estimated that in 2010, in Guča were 800 000 visitors (Kuligovski 2011, 71).

³ It is important to note that the website does not have the option for Serbian language. Available languages are English, German, Italian and French.

⁴ <http://www.guca.rs/eng/strana.php?str=about>

one hand, to attract guests and, on the other hand, to be exploited as a part of wider traditional Serbian culture. What images about Guča say to the viewers?

A photograph is an image which captures and freezes a moment in time and space (Wells 2003a, 1) and it "mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially" (Barth 2003, 20). The photographs reveal somebody's "ideas, memories, feelings, thoughts" (Desnoes 2003, 322). At the same time, through the press, family snapshots, billboards, and now with Facebook and photoblogs, photographs became unavoidable parts of our daily lives (Burgin 2003, 130). Collier and Collier (1986, 99) assert that photographs can be instruments for obtaining knowledge beyond direct analysis. In view of the fact that this research is not based on a direct analysis, I will question what these photographs say about Serbia, how they promote it, and the types of values that they expose. Since photography is highly selective (Collier 1967, 25), I show in what manner these photos choose to present Serbia and link it with official attitudes towards Guča. Anderson mentions that "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (1983, 15). As it is known, European history is abundant with folk festivals which served with a purpose to glorify a nation and create a notion of national identity. The brass-band festival in Guča with its folk-rural motifs can be seen as one of inheritors of such a practice. The dominant style of imagining nation in Serbia is marked by a union between rural, folk and nationalist tendencies and conversely, urban, modern and European tendencies, thus presenting its folkness as an attraction and connected with the inflow of the younger generation from the West.

In my paper I will show how abstract folk qualities are implemented in the contemporary cultural production of Serbia and argue that images, as visual representations of peasantry and folk traditions, are used to extend ideas about the national identity of Serbia. In order to be used as ethnographic documents in anthropological study, the photographs need to be socio-culturally contextualised (Scherer 1992, 34). Thus, at the beginning, I will outline the important issues about the festival. The main goal of the paper is to explain and show how Guča festival found its place in modern Serbia in spite of its rural, folk, barbarian and sometimes nationalist representations. Therefore, I claim that the festival deserves respect as a medium through which Serbian national identity is produced.

"Welcome to Guča" – The Trumpet Festival

The brass band tradition is not very old in Serbia and probably dates from the end of 19th or beginning 20th century (Kuligovski 2011, 72; Timotijević 2005, 16). Kuligovski concludes that the present brass bands probably originated from the Turkish military orchestras. The Roma spread the instruments and their music folklore throughout the region, while the Serbian musical tradition incorporated

and adapted the trumpet to its needs (Kuligovski 2011, 78-79). The historical data show that the first trumpet and brass-band festival and competition in Guča was held in 1961 and from then it occurred annually in late summer. Currently, the Guča trumpet festival organiser is a municipality of Lučani, the patron of the festival is the Government of the Republic of Serbia,⁵ and from 2004 the official sponsor is the Ministry of Culture (Timotijević 2005, 13).

According to Branko V. Radičević, distinguished Serbian poet and an initiator of the festival, the purpose of the festivals was to "celebrate rural and folk customs" (Timotijević 2005, 155). Nonetheless, depending on the actual ideology of the government in Serbia, the Festival in its cultural program emphasised different historical and cultural characteristics of Serbs/Serbia. During the period of the socialist Yugoslavia, the cult of president Tito, and the ideas of "brotherhood and unity" together with traditional heritage were celebrated (Kuligovski 2011, 73). In the 1980s the important motives of the festival were the Yugoslavian communistic past and partisan movement events, from the 1990s, events from the Serbian nationally defined past, and from 2000 the promotion of Orthodox Christianity (Лукић-Крстановић 2003, 232; Timotijević 2005). However, the exhibit of rural-folk heritage stayed constant throughout the decades. In addition, in 1963 for the first time, the Roma brass-bands from Eastern and Southern Serbia participated, and quickly became known as the most renowned players. Most of the trumpet players at the Festival are self-taught, formally musically illiterate, and are playing by ear.⁶ On the other hand, the Guča festival is more than just a brass-band competition. During the festival, numerous other events are organised, such as: art, ethnological and historical exhibitions, literary meetings, competitions of toast-proposers, national sport tournaments (shooting the apple through the ring, wrestling, jumping, throwing the stone from a shoulder), the most beautiful national costume competition, brass band and solo singers' concerts, collective weddings, and the improvised 19th century wedding from the Dragačevo region.⁷ While the festival's international popularity started to grow in the 1980s, it was interrupted with the outbreak of civil wars in the Balkans in the 1990s (Timotijević 2005, 68, 100). From the year 2000 and the democratic changes in Serbia, the festival started to open again to the international audience. In this period, "the trumpeters became a part of the musical taste of the younger generations... [across the world] and Guča slowly transformed into a world festival" (Timotijević 2005, 128). Guča, originally conceptualised as a

⁵ <http://www.saborguca.com/indexEN.html>

⁶ <http://www.guca.rs/eng/strana.php?str=history2>

⁷ <http://www.saborguca.com/indexEN.html>; <http://brendovisrbije.com/kultura/draga-evski-sabor-truba-a-3.html>. In 2010, during a 50th trumpet's players festival in Guča, the Museum of the Trumpet was opened (http://www.saborguca.com/sabor2010_programEN.html).

Serbian national folk and rural festival, opened up to the international participants and the guests, at the same time, affirming itself as a bearer of Serbian national identity. Even though the best brass-band players remain the Roma, Guča played an important role as a Serbian brand and as a part of Serbian national tradition during different regimes. While the Festival emphasised its role in a "return to tradition and the roots" (Todorović 2003), it is dubious, what tradition and whose roots, since the festival suffered from different governmental influences and, most importantly the best and main trumpeters are Roma.

"All Roads Lead to Guča"⁸

The Guča festival is one of the world's most famous brass-band festivals and definitely, beside the EXIT Noise Summer Festival, one of the most well known music festivals in Serbia. With regard to this, the Guča festival has an important role in the imagining of the Serbian nation by giving it a specific folk-rural identity, while on the other hand EXIT presents Serbia as modern and urban. An important role in the process of the identity construction of a nation has an official and acknowledged perception of the nation's past, or its accepted "unplugged version". Connerton explains that "our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past" and that the images of the past "serve to legitimate a present social order" (1989, 2-4). Therefore, the past can serve as a tool for moulding modern national identity. Contrary to the notion that we are born with national identity, they are "formed and transformed within and in relation to national culture *representation*" (Hall 1992, 291). National cultures, according to Hall, "construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can *identify*" through stories, images and memories about nation (1992, 293). In Serbia, likewise in other Central and Eastern European countries, from the time of establishing the modern state and political life from the end of the 19th century till the 21st century political parties' rhetoric, rural life and peasant values played a significant political symbolic role in nation glorification (Naumović 2009, 87; Наумовић 1995, 39, 43). This is not so unusual, since the peasants were the majority in Serbia till the 2nd half of the 20th century (Наумовић 1995, 42). Moreover, Serbian national tradition engenders "the most important cultural values and historical accomplishments which are at the core of Serbian national identity, self-respect and self-understanding" (Naumović 2009, 27). The most frequent symbols of peasant tradition included peasant culture (folk costume, village organisation, folk music, folk beliefs); the historical role of peasants in the 19th and the 20th century wars; beliefs in a specific folk mentality (peasants' wisdom, sensibility, fantasia, respect of the authority and ancestors, love of freedom, truth,

⁸ <http://www.saborguca.com/indexEN.html>

justice, heroism, hospitality, and tolerance); and folk creativity (Naumović 1996, 131). As Timotijević points out, the part of Guča festival display are the symbols of a village, and class and national symbols of the peasants (2005). In this respect, Jansen writes that Guča in 1997 was not popular among urban anti-nationalists in Serbia, in spite of the fact that it offered good fun for every taste (2001, 61). Therefore, by referring to a crystallised rural folk past, the festival creates specific folk Serbian identity as a specific Serbian trait on its journey to the European Union. With regard to this Guča, with its five decades of tradition, survived and outlasted the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's communist government with its president Tito, and the totalitarian regime of Slobodan Milošević, which inherited it. After the democratic changes and the collapse of the Milošević's regime in 2000, new types of festival, oriented toward Europe, democracy, youth culture and urbanism were popularised (Лукић-Крстановић 2003). One of the most famous is the EXIT Noise Summer Festival. According to the festival's official website, The EXIT originated in 2000 "as an act of rebellion against the regime of Slobodan Milošević... against imposed nationalism, xenophobia, censorship and repression"⁹ and it was pro-Europe oriented (Simić 2006, 120-121). This music festival is the largest in South-eastern Europe and originally was created as an opposition to turbo-folk music with its urban-youth audience and electronic, ethno, techno, and drum 'n' bass music variety (Лукић-Крстановић 2003, 233; Vidić Ramussen 2007, 75). At the same time, the new government developed an interest in Guča and government officials started to visit the festival (Simić 2006, 104). Writing about "the society which carries the spectacle", Debord claims that, in the terms of domination of underdeveloped regions, spectacles (within the society of spectacle) with its celebrities and spectacular representations have power supremacy over the economic hegemony (1983, 57-60). In this respect, the spectacle in Guča embraces villagers and urbanites, nationalists and anti-nationalists, Serbs and foreigners, men and women, and continues to function in various political climates. In other words, while it is true that "all roads lead to Guča", it is perhaps more accurate to say that all roads lead *from* Guča.

"Guča-Madness Made in Serbia"¹⁰ : The Carnival Atmosphere

Broadly speaking, the Guča festival is a public event. Handelman states that public events have formalised and replicable structure characterised with a "behavior that distinguishes these from the living of mundane life" (1990,

⁹ http://eng.exitfest.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=197

¹⁰ The main heading of a webpage <http://www.guca.rs/eng/strana.php?str=booking>.

11, 13). As a public event, Guča has characteristics of a spectacle with specific carnival features. Debord claims that the spectacle is part of society, which serves as an "*instrument of unification*" and as a "social relation among people, mediated by images" (1983, 3-4).¹¹ According to Lukić Krstanović, the spectacle is a public, social, ritualised and aesthetic event (2010).

Analogous to the carnivals' unrestrained behaviour, Guča represents an "oasis" for "primitive and everyday unavailable exoticism" where both the villagers and the urbanites have "fun with publicly forbidden and socially unaccepted exaggeration in eating and drinking" (Timotijević 2005, 259-269). Ristivojević (2009, 199) explains that many theories assume that carnival is a final public merry celebration or a parade before the Lent. Related to this, one of the most influential analyser of carnival was Mihail Bakhtin. Bakhtin, points out that the carnival celebrates "temporary liberation from... the established order;... [and the] suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions (Bakhtin 1968, 10). He explains that the time of carnival behaviour or carnivalesque is characterised with "popular merriment" and "gay time" (Bakhtin 1968, 218-220). While Ristivojević correctly advises that it is impossible to equate Bakhtin's notions of Middle Age's carnivals with contemporary ones, some traits can be applied. The carnival atmosphere in Guča includes exaggeration in eating, drinking, fun, dancing, enjoying the trumpeters' music, euphoric mood, and exuberant and lewdness behaviour (see Timotijević 2005). Using the Bakhtin term, carnival life is characterised with ambivalence and subversion, or social transformation: "'carnival world'" is a world which distorts values. In a certain period of a year, the common people have the opportunity to be the rule makers and leaders while "official everyday world with certain rules and social hierarchies is undermined" (Ristivojević 2009; Bakhtin 1968, 7). In his interviews with the visitors of the 2010 festival, Kuligowski concluded that people are attracted more with party atmosphere, fun, free sex, enjoyment, abundant food and drinks and less with music (2011, 75). This observation about Guča is in accordance with one of its websites which praises Guča as "a place of catharsis of the heart and soul while the festival lasts".¹² As Guss (2000, 9) reminds

public displays provide forums in which communities can reflect upon their own realities ... the same form, therefore, may be used to articulate a number of different ideas and over time can easily oscillate between religious devotion, ethnic solidarity, political resistance, national identity, and even commercial spectacle.

Therefore, Guča is more than a music festival as it publicises itself as a unique place for hedonistic enjoyments. At the same time, with its 19th century nation-

¹¹ *Society of Spectacle* is divided by chapters and further on by paragraphs. Therefore, the number in brackets represents the number of paragraphs since the pages are not numerated.

¹² <http://www.guca.rs/eng/strana.php?str=history2>

building rudiments, Guča is more than a carnival and a spectacle. As Van de Port (1999, 20) notices, Serbhood has been defined in a double way, stressing 'European-ness in contrast with a 'backward' and 'primitive (i.e. oriental, tribal, byzantine, archaic, barbaric) (Van de Port 1999, 20). With its extremes, for a few days, the festival allows this discrepancy to be forgotten. By demonstrating its folkness, Guča reveals Serbia "as it really is": a traditional, pristine country of cheerful, talented and, above all, happy people who know how to enjoy life.

Photographs as a Source of Research

Photographs are one of currently dominant modes of communication (Edwards 1992, 3) and they "record... moment in ways that human memory and words do not", and due to that they test written sources (Binney and Chaplin 2003, 106). As Edwards (2003, 83) further explicate the role of photographs:

through their mutability, photographs are able to create stories, distort identities and appropriate cultures. As a result, photographs have been immeasurably powerful in creating, distorting and perpetuating ideas about culture

Although photographs are "visual display markings", produced and presented in order to be seen (Maynard 1997, 27), what their owners want to present is a debatable issue. In this respect, visual images are open to different interpretations. The photograph is a reflection of a viewer's cultural and historical experience, and suggests some meaning but the meaning also depends on who is looking (Edwards 1992, 8, 12; Pink 2001, 51). There are many websites dedicated to Guča or which include Guča festival. However, I have chosen the website where the visitors can also upload their photographs and in that way I scrutinise their perspective and the experiences about the festival. The photographs analysed are from the photo-albums available on www.guca.rs from the festivals that took place from 2002 to 2009.¹³ The photographs from the 2008-2009 festival have the www.guca.rs copyright and some of them are anonymous. In hindsight, the photographs in this paper are selected from more than 2280 viewed on this

¹³ I also looked at the photographs (2007-2009) at the website organised by the Centre for Culture, Sport and Tourism of the Municipality of Lučani "Dragačevo" in Guča, www.saborguca.com. They show folk dances and folk costumes, the Dragačevo wedding, trumpeters and trumpet competition, and traditional sports like wrestling and shooting. The photographs from this website are more oriented toward displaying the traditional folk Serbian side of the festival. There are no primitive and expressive behaviour images and therefore, their representation of the festival is more inclined to the folk fair and not to hedonistic behaviour representation.

website. They show the Guča trumpet festival with its mixed folk Serbian, Roma and Western tradition, exuberant behaviour and nationalist messages.

The photographs are "charged with psychological and highly emotional elements and symbols" (Collier 1967, 49). Moreover, digital photography with its possibilities for manipulations and recreations and as a loose link between people, places and events in the image, caused the loss of the idea of the real representation of social reality (Wells 2003b, 199). However, I will not deal with their decoding or understanding of the meanings proscribed by the persons who uploaded them on the website. I will use them as illustrations and points of comparison for the data given in previous sections (see Collier 1967, 25, 67). Not only are photographs always a selection of a given social reality (Collier 1967; Wells 2003b), but the photographs uploaded on a public website further distance them from the actual events. However, just because they are somebody's choice, they picture what is important for the people who visited the festival and also what they find to be the most important for Guča. What can be concluded from viewing these diverse and multiple photographs? It is hard to give an answer to this question since the connection between the photographers, the people photographed, and the persons who uploaded the photos is blurred. This answer is even harder to give since most of the photographs do not have a title or any explanation. There are two methods for photo selection at the guca.rs and thus, there are two major types of photographs: official photographs by the organisers and photographs by the website visitors.¹⁴ Both serve for Guča promotion, as public advertisements and as a tourist attraction. As Dejan Ćirić said, there were no precise conditions for evaluating and choosing this 2nd type of photos, and they were not subject of strict selection. Generally speaking, the only criteria used are the following: their content should not be offensive and should not jeopardise the festival and provoke nationalistic sentiments. According to Mr. Ćirić, he rarely has had to refuse visitors' pending photos. On the other hand, in 2007 he had to shut down the option for leaving comments beneath the pictures. As he explained it to me, people from the Balkan region frequently would start nationalistic argues with the use of hostile and foul language. In hindsight, the website owner does not have statistical (or approximate) records of uploaders since they accommodate people from "Australia to Canada". However, he believes that mostly Serbs, Germans and Spanish people (since they are outnumbered among the foreigner guests) upload their pictures from the festival. Furthermore, in most of the cases it is unfamiliar for the viewers who are the photo makers.¹⁵ The only thing which is known is their origin - the year and the event itself. In other words, this poses another methodological problem, since these photos represent mishmash and

¹⁴ Phone interview with Mr. Ćirić, 23rd March 2012.

¹⁵ Like in the case of Milutin Labudović's photos, in some photos and/or in some files are given details about the photographer.

include uploaders' different (maybe conflicting) attitudes, aspirations, visions, stereotypes etc. about Serbia and the Serbs. Likewise, these photographs are part of production of foreigners' and domestic representation of Serbia. On the other hand, I want to suggest that being allowed to be uploaded at the guca.rs website, in spite of the fact that their owners do not have to Serbs at all, they show what the visitors think Serbia and Guča are or should be in order to attract guests. Furthermore, being part of the website's promotion of the festival, they emanate certain images of Serbia and Guča. Later on in my paper, I will show what the most distinguishable messages are. Using the scholarly literature, I will relate the photos with media data about the festival in order to answer what are photos telling their viewers.

The Photo Story of Guča

Firstly, it is important to briefly delineate the current political situation of the Republic of Serbia. The transitional period¹⁶ started with Milošević's government. However, since it was more a copy of a previous socialist rule without a real plural political system, the real transition with all transitional turbulences came after 2000 (Naumović 2009). The main objective of the new democratic government has been the entrance to the EU.¹⁷ The pictures of the Guča festival make evident political discrepancies which came with this transitional confusion. The festival, with its different politically oriented visitors, its allowance of exuberant behaviour, is perhaps the method of adapting to the country's own inadaptability to its position. The Guča festival represented a unique response to transition and can be analysed likewise as a sort of a "nation building". In this case, it is possible to delineate several Guča festival photographic themes which more or less correspond to the previous sections and can be divided in several groups. By reference to guca.rs photos, I singled out the most frequent themes which appear in the photos. As Barth warns, "the photograph is not simply a product or a channel but also an object endowed with a structural autonomy" (1997, 15). Thus, as I said at the outset, reading photographic images obviously includes selection, and translation of experiences and motifs of the author/viewer/scholar. However, while this may be obvious in the case of visual media analysis, natural, likewise, social sciences are subject to selection, translation and are rooted in selection of

¹⁶ In short, transition is a period of transformation of the former socialist authoritarian one party countries into plural democratic and capitalist ones and their adoption of market economies (Малешевић 2005, 219; Verdery 1996).

¹⁷ Officially and formally, the process of EU accession started in 2001 (for more data, see official webpage of the European Integration Office, Government of the Republic of Serbia <http://www.seio.gov.rs/home.50.html>).

previous selections (of data, conclusions, experiments, projects etc.) (see, for example, Knorr-Cetina 1981). In Geertzian terms, scholars decide "is it a twitch or a wink" (Geertz 1973). Therefore, I invite readers to accept my interpretation only as one of the possible ones.

There are several motifs that occur in the photos: the festival (competition, practices, competitors etc.); carnival elements and joyful people; then Serbian national(-istic) elements (national flags, "three fingers symbol" (as symbol of Serbia, Serbhood and Orthodoxy) which serves as a marker of national and political identity (Жикић 2002, 68); parts of national or local costume (hats, cockades); and more personal photographs (friends having fun and off-festival photos). To this ends, I tried to count and find out the number of most important groups of photographs (for this paper): festival, nationalistic and carnivalesque photos and be able to give more precise information why and how I selected these types of photographs. However, I realised that this is a mission impossible since many of the motifs overlap in different photos. The photos chosen in this paper serve only to exemplify these three groups (plates 1-9). However, many other could easily replace them and are available at the guca.rs website.¹⁸

a) The festival itself and the trumpeters

These photographs (e.g. plates 1-4) are important for identity politics since they represent Guča and popularise Serbia with its traditional cuisine, music, folk costumes and folk tradition. In effect, this festival is a cultural performance of Serbia and less of its guests. As Kuligowski claims, the festival aims to express Serbian tradition and culture through music (2011, 76). Thus, Guča festival, as a Serbian brand,¹⁹ serves to show Serbia in a folk peasantry light, with a purpose to make it distinct from modern and technologically developed Europe. In this respect, Guča festival has similarities with World Fairs, which "functioned as promotional institutions for the new nation-states" and were used to build new nations' identity in the 19th century by exhibiting "technological inventions, and the most refined cultural and artistic artefacts" (Bolin 2006, 189-190, 200). At the same time it is different from them, since the world fairs had the purpose in showing off liberal progress as embodied in new technologies and inventions (Harvey 1996).

¹⁸ There are more than 2000 photographs (2003-2009) and due to copyright, I have chosen only among Mr. Labudović's ones.

¹⁹ The Trumpet festival in Guča is one of the tourist brands of Serbia (<http://brendovisrbije.com/kultura/draga-evski-sabor-truba-a-3.html>; <http://www.250.rs/guca-festival.html>). Moreover, in 2000 the Festival became part of the UN cultural heritage; in 2006 and 2007 was the best tourist event in Serbia, while in 2006 also won a superbrand of Serbia prize and Special international prize for the most emotional Serbian brand; in 2009 it received Vuk's prize reward, the most significant Serbian prize in the sphere of culture (Радичевић 2010, 17, 23), named after a Serbian language reformator, ethnographer and folklorist, Vuk Karadžić.

b) Carnavalesque

Since the www.guca.rs photographs are partly a selection of the wider audience and their perceptions of the festival, they are focused more on the carnivalesque and the spectacle aspect and less on the festival (e.g. plates 5-6). The festival, Pančić characterises the festival as a "carnivalisation and spectacularisation of coarseness" which from the late 1980s became an important symbol of Serbian national identity (2005). As Beeman (1993, 380) points out, the spectacle is "a public display of a society's key meaningful elements in the public's cultural and emotional life" which occurs at regular intervals. However, while this explains the audience's needs, wants and the perceptions of the festival, it is also congruent with the website's owners and promoters who allowed these photos. Therefore, the most of the photographs show not the festival itself but the festival's high-spirited atmosphere and its exceedingly joyous visitors.

c) Nationalist symbols

The festival has the 'anything goes' atmosphere. As Guss (2000, 12) acknowledges, festivals can serve "as powerful vehicles for the forging of new identities" by recreating and reconsidering the history, the boundaries of community and issues of race, ethnicity and sexuality (2000, 12). In this respect, different national(-istic) feelings are, likewise, not suppressed (e.g. plates 7-8). During the 1990s, Guča provided an opportunity for "an annual flow of Serbian nationalistic euphoria" where politicians, war profiteers and mafia would spend fortunes on music and food (Jansen 2001, 61). The nationalist symbols and the nationalist sentiments displayed did not fade away after the fall of Slobodan Milošević's regime in 2000. Newspapers describe street vendors selling T-shirts imprinted with the faces of fugitives explaining that they were in that time already charged with genocide by the Hague war crimes tribunal, Radovan Karadžić [arrested in 2008-M.K.] and Ratko Mladić [arrested in 2011-M.K.] (Prodger 2005).²⁰ Supposedly, in 2000 Ratko Mladić, Nebojša Pavković and Dragoljub Ojdanić visited the festival in 2000 (Todorović 2000; Оташевић 2010, 22) and in 2004 the President of the Organisational Board of 2004 Guča Festival invited the president of the Republic of Serbia, Boris Tadić, but also did not hesitate to invite two the Hague captivities Slobodan Milošević and Vojislav Šešelj and Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić (Šaponjić 2004). For the festival in 2010, only the president, the prime minister and the vice president of the Serbian government were invited (Оташевић 2010, 22). However, Guča remained a meeting point for democrats and right-wing leaders, the Hague inmates and their supporters.

²⁰ According to a one local, interviewed by the foreign press, Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić "are for them [the foreigners-M.K.] only criminals and for us the Serbs are heroes. They saved a lot of our civilians during the war" (Glas javnosti 2003).

* * *

While the photos from 2002 are more focused on exhibiting trumpet festival and traditional culture, from the 2003 carnival, mass enjoyment photos started to dominate. As Rötzer acknowledges, people do not want to observe but to become participants in the event, "to be right there in the middle of it, experiencing it" (1996, 19) and these photos allow for the people in them to be the focus of webpage viewers' attention. Thus, in general, the photos uploaded show that the emphasis is more on entertainment and fun and less on trumpet competition itself. All of these images depict 21st century Serbia and its struggle within the transition period and Euro-integration process to be internationally recognised as a democratic European country. As Lukić-Krstanović mentions, from the 1990s onward, ordinary life in Serbia was interwoven with the protests, strikes, murders, crimes, military interventions and mobilisations, emigrations, and nationalism (2006, 188-189). After 2000, Serbia needed to overcome its economic, political and institutional difficulties in order to integrate into Europe (Lazić 2003, 207). The expression of tradition in Guča functions to "imply safety to the social groups who see changes as a type of crisis or degradation, through the promise of restoration of the old values" (Naumović 2009, 24). Therefore, the modernisation of a state and these changes disturb general notions about its identity. In this respect, Guča festival's photos are a representation of transition with all its obstacles and the confusion caused by it among the people: war culprits and democrats²¹ gathered on one place, European values and Serbian folk tradition, all immersed in exalted exaggeration in eating, drinking, and ecstatic fun.

Missing Jigsaw Puzzle Parts: The Roma Participants

According to some scholars, the Roma came to the Balkans as military attachments to Ottoman armies in medieval times, perhaps in the twelfth century, but this should be taken with caution (Mitrović and Zajić 1998, 10, 19; Bašić 2005, 17; see Čvorović 2004). In spite of the fact that they, from the Middle Ages, remained in the area which occupied different Serbian states, they were not integrated in society and still remain a largely endogamous ethnic group (Čvorović 2004, 28). The Roma's current position in post communist Central and

²¹ For some people (especially for the inviters of Karadžić and Mladić) can be debatable whether "war criminals" are real war criminals and whether "democrats" are real democrats (and thus, for some people may be questionable are "war criminals" proclaimed as bad and "democrats" proclaimed as good). However, I accept official accounts of the international community on this topic.

Eastern European countries does not differ greatly from their overall position in Europe. The main characteristics of the Roma's position in Serbia include high levels of unemployment, substandard housing, lack of education and skills, a low level of economic activity (especially among women), deepening dependence on state benefits and services, social segregation, a high criminality rate, and on the other hand it is recorded an excessive ill-treatment of Roma in the judicial system (Čvorović 2004, 16-17; Mitrović and Zajić 1998, 28-36). High birth and death rates above the average and high infant mortality make the Roma among the youngest populations in Europe (Čvorović 2004, 17; Mitrović and Zajić 1998, 18). In Serbia, they live in economic undeveloped areas working in manual jobs, in manufacturing and the grey economy, and as musicians, street-cleaners, construction and storage workers (Mitrović and Zajić 1998, 20-36). According to Mitrović and Zajić, social and ethnic prejudices toward them are very strong (1998, 50-52). They are still seen as "incomers", and "others" who are spatially and professionally segregated (Mitrović and Zajić 1998, 50). As Čvorović explains, Roma were the "biggest losers" in post-communist Central and Eastern European countries. After the collapse of the communist (and totalitarian) regimes, the transition period was characterised by increased impoverishment and unemployment which hit all people, but especially maladapted Roma (Čvorović 2004, 16). Therefore, as Mitrović and Zajić explain, being Roma usually refers to being foreigner, a dangler and poor (1998, 51).

By observing the photos and by analysing the festival's data, it is noticeable that the wider context of relations between the Roma and the Serbs is missing.

In his research of the 2010 Guča festival, Kuligowski (2011, 70-81) offers possible discourses about Guča:

- 1) official governmental discourse which represents Guča as culturally, historically, and ethnically important for Serbian history, tradition, and religion.
- 2) unofficial Roma population discourse.

As the author reminds, Roma play several important roles at the festival: 1) as participants in the main competition and the official guests of the festival (see plate 4); 2) many orchestras are playing out of the competition itself (as a part of leisure-time activity); 3) many Roma women are dancing for money; 4) and as workers on the site (staff servicing the toilets and amusement park).

The festival, with its carnival aspects and the excessive behaviour, offers to the visitors to plunge for a short time into the world of forbidden fruits. However, the official attitude towards the festival undermines or (completely) diminishes the importance of Roma trumpet players by naming Guča a purely Serbian folk event. Even though trumpet music in Serbia came from cities, in the Serbian media, Guča is equated with folk and rural culture (Луквић-Крстановић 2006). The Festival organisers represent it as a place for preserving Serbian national tradition and culture (Simić 2006, 105). For instance, Mr. Jolović, the president of the Lučani municipality, speaking for the local

newspapers, says that the Guča festival with its Serbian traditional music is part of Serbian national being and culture (Чачански глас 2010a, 2). In like manner, Ms. Lajić-Mihajlović, ethnomusicologist, talking about the Festival, claims that the trumpet has the significant place in the Serbian musical tradition (Чачански глас, 2010b). All in all, the whole issue of the newspapers, *The Voice of the Town of Čačak*,²² while listing all the Festival's winners, among which the Roma dominate, does not specify this fact. Therefore, while the Guča festival promotes itself as a Serbian traditional festival and brand, it is fair to mention that it gained its popularity due to virtuoso Roma trumpeters who usually take the first prize. Therefore, while they are in the pictures (in Serbian folk costumes), what is missing is the recognition of their own identity, or, at least, less of an emphasis on a Serbian one.²³ However, if the festival's organisers start to promote "Gypsy" elements of the festival then it would lose its stable ground and its purpose in reinforcing Serbian national identity.

In effect, the Guča festival photos convey the "who we are" message to the Serbian website visitors and the "what we have to offer" message to the foreigners. On the whole, the on line pictures of energetic and joyous people in a rural surrounding for Serbs are a type of self-recognition and, at the same time, a form of self-display to the international audiences. It is possible to apply Herzfeld's terminology and to make the distinction between self-representation/self-display and self-knowledge/self-recognition (1987). These concepts represent the manipulation of images of self to the insiders and the outsiders in a different manner. In other words, these oppositions include "balancing of knowledge against the exigencies of collective self-representation to more powerful outsiders" (Herzfeld 1987, 123). Herzfeld explains that both are ideals and stereotypes but "what gives both experiential reality is their *use* in the day-to-day rhetoric of morality" (1987, 113). This type of self-display is according to Živković (2001), Van de Port (1998) and Todorova (2009) due to blatant stereotypical European representations of the Balkans and the region's destiny to act as "Europe's Other" (Van de Port 1999, 8). For Europe's travellers, scholars, writers and artists, the Balkans functioned as "a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian" (Todorova 2009, 3) and "a land of European savages" (Van de Port 1999, 8). At the same time, its inhabitants were described as the ones who "do not care to conform to the standards of behaviour devised as normative by and for the civilised world" (Todorova 2009, 3). On the other hand, among former Yugoslav republics' citizens, the Roma had a role in mutual negative stereotyping in "the Balkan

²² Čačak is the first bigger city near Guča.

²³ An additional survey about how Roma trumpet players see themselves is important to undertake in the next phase of research. I thank to Dr. Slobodan Naumović for this observation.

gradient of depreciation" as they are seen at the bottom of this scale (Živković 2001, 25). In this respect, Serbia usually bears the "Gypsy" identity stigma because they are "more likely to accept the stigma in a mode of 'rueful introspection' and 'self-recognition'" (Živković 2001, 44-45).

Neither close to the West like the Czechs, nor at the extreme end of easternness like Russians, neither affiliated with Central Europe like the Croats, nor positioned as 'the Balkans of the Balkans' like Macedonians, Serbs find it hard both to pass the negative valuations further down and to exploit the exotic potential of the extremes (Živković 2001, 55)

The Serbs used "self exoticization as a response to stereotyping" and often the strategy of "positive valuations of Balkan primitivity as something more vital and fundamentally 'real' than overcivilized, 'decadent', and 'tired' Europe" (Živković 2001, 49). However, Guča shows that this type of unrestrained behaviour is not only common to Serbs, but is related to Guča's local and international visitors. For the foreigners, these exalted emotions and behaviour allow for escape from civilisation and, simultaneously, make it possible for the Serbs to accept and revert their negative stigma without any disturbance to national identity.

All Roads Lead to Guča

In this paper I examined *the Dragačevo Trumpet Festival*, popularly known as Guča festival, named after the village where it is annually held from 1961 by analysing its cultural visual production. As I did not attend the festival, I used the photographs from the www.guca.rs website, 2002-2009 photo albums. I juxtaposed what is known about this festival through the scholarly and news reporters' writings and what these photos reveal in order to answer how photographs of one folk music festival visually represent the Serbs. Using the example of the Guča festival, I have shown how Serbian national identity has been politicised through the relationship towards "the Other" (Roma and foreigners), towards what that "Other" believes that Serbia and the Serbs are and toward the manner in which Serbia is represented. The Guča festival, the Serbian attraction, with its stress on folk and traditional aspects, represents a specific blend of national ideas about Serbia. Moreover, since the major and the best trumpet players were and remained the Roma, the festival offers a unique insight into the range of possibilities for manipulating Serbian identity and its self-representations. This study aimed, by examining the Guča festival photographs and national identity creation in Serbia, to contribute to the wider fields of visual anthropology and Serbian nationalism studies. However, a lot of important research areas remained outside the scope of this research. I believe that further examinations should include fieldwork and call into question can Roma be

perceived as part of Serbian culture. The promotion of world music as a "symbol... of 'authenticity' and 'exoticism'" (Silverman 2007, 335), and a focus on Guča tourists as photographers represent the next step in the investigation of Serbian national identity through Guča in order to avoid reductionism and generalisations. While Simić (2006) mentions the differences and similarities between the EXIT and Guča festival, I suggest that future research should include the comparison of this festival with other festivals in Serbia²⁴ in order to question patterns regarding the national promotion of Serbia there. This would permit a better interpretation of the Serbian methods (strategies) for its integration into the EU. Related to this, the future researches can show whether different types of festival express similar or divergent ideas about identity politics in Serbia.

It is essential to note that this festival provides the tools, through its carnival, music spectacle and "Gypsy" stigma traits, for inventing the Serbian nation in the unstable and undefined period of transition which came after the democratic changes in 2000. In this case, the folk culture serves as high culture for achieving "Europeanness". In this paper, by discussing the role of traditional folk Serbian culture and the carnival traits of the festival, I aimed to explain that the Guča festival represents Serbia as exotic in two paradoxical ways. While the folk and rural tradition gives Serbia pure and natural shine, the allowance of exuberant behaviour makes it wild and frenzied. With its extremes, the Guča festival, a Serbian national "stage", is meant to be loved or despised. Due to transitional period in Serbia and despite confronted elements in the festival, Guča found its place in Serbia and serves as a way for national identity production.

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²⁴ The festivals which are part of tourist offerings of Serbia include the International Carnival of Pančevo, the International Festival of Street Musicians held in Novi Sad, The World Tamburitza Festival held in the village of Deronje (http://www.serbia-touristguide.com/live/Events/Festivals/Pancevo_Carnival?languageId=1; <http://www.visitserbia.org/Events-71-13-1>; http://www.serbiatouristguide.com/live/Events/Festivals/Street_music_festival?languageId=1; for an anthropological discussion on this topic see Ковачевић 2007).

plate 1²⁵plate 2²⁶

plate 3

²⁵ In my paper I included a Belgrade professional photographer's photos (*Milutin Labudović*), from 2003, 2004 and 2008. Mr. Labudović and Mr. Dejan Ćirić, allowed me to use Mr. Labudović's photos in my paper.

²⁶ The face imprinted on the T shirt is Radovan Karadžić's, who is from 2008 on trial in the United Nations Detention Unit of Scheveningen.



plate 4



plate 5



plate 6

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- plate 1. 2003. "total" by Milutin Labudović. Available from: http://www.guca.rs/galerija/main.php?g2_itemId=324 [24 Mar 2012]
- plate 2. "guca 033", ibid: [itemId=1003](#)
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- plate 5. 2003. "funing", ibid: [itemId=300](#)
- plate 6. "guca 116", ibid: [itemId=1163](#)

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Svi putevi vode u Guču: načini reprezentacije Srbije i
Srba tokom festivala trubača u Guči

U radu će, kroz analizu fotografija dostupnih na internetu, biti reči o Saboru trubača u Dragačevu, poznatijem kao festival u Guči. Dragačevski sabor trubača je jedan od najpoznatijih muzičkih festivala u Srbiji i jedan od najpoznatijih

festivala trubačkih okrestara na svetu. Festival se održava jednom godišnje od 1961. godine, u selu Guča u Zapadnoj Srbiji. Od 1962. godine festival je otvoren za učesnike iz drugih delova Srbije, a 1963. su prvi put učestvovali romski orkestri. Od tada, romski muzičari su ostali među najboljim trubačima na takmičenjima. Ipak, tokom poslednjih 50 godina, festival je uvek konceptualizovan i predstavljan kao nosilac srpske narodne tradicije i kulture. U istraživanju ću se koristiti fotografijama posetilaca festivala koje su dostupne na jednom od sajtova posvećenih Guči, www.guca.rs, kako bih ispitala kako fotografije sa festivala vizuelno predstavljaju Srbe. Osnovni cilj rada je da ukaže na to kako je festival u Guči našao svoje mesto u modernoj Srbiji uprkos svojoj ruralnoj, narodnoj, varvarskoj i ponekad nacionalističkoj medijskoj reprezentaciji.

Ključne reči: festival trubača u Guči, fotografije, identitet, Srbi, Romi, narodna tradicija i kultura

Tous les chemins mènent à Guča:
Modes de représentation de la Serbie et des Serbes au cours du
Festival de trompettes de Guča

Dans cet article j'étudie l'événement musical célèbre en Serbie, le festival de trompettes de Dragačevo, appelé communément festival de Guča, et cela en analysant les photographies sur le festival existant en ligne. Le Festival de trompettes de Dragačevo est un des festivals de musique les plus connus en Serbie et un des festivals de groupes de cuivres les plus connus au monde. Depuis 1961, il se tient tous les ans dans le village de Guča dans la Serbie occidentale. Depuis 1962, les participants des autres régions de Serbie viennent à Guča, alors qu'en 1963 les musiciens Roms y ont participé pour la première fois. Depuis, les Roms demeurent parmi les meilleurs trompettistes dans les compétitions. Pourtant, au cours de ces cinquante ans, le festival s'est toujours affirmé et a été conceptualisé comme porteur de la tradition et de la culture folkloriques serbes. Dans mon étude, j'utilise les photographies faites par des visiteurs et disponibles sur l'un des sites web consacrés à Guča, www.guca.rs, pour m'interroger de quelle manière les photographies du festival représentent visuellement les Serbes. Le principal objectif du travail est d'expliquer et de montrer comment le festival de Guča a trouvé sa place dans la Serbie moderne en dépit de sa représentation rurale, folklorique, barbare et quelquefois nationaliste.

Mots clés: festival de trompettes de Guča, photographies, identité, les Serbes, les Roms, la tradition et la culture folk

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