UNIVERSITATIS COMENIANA BRATISLAVENSIS
FACULTAS PHILOSOPHICA

Tomus 43 ETHNOLOGIA SLOVACA ET SLAVICA 2022

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND SECULARISM IN SLOVENIA: THE CASE OF NATIVE FAITH

MANCA RAČIČ

Abstract: Pavel Medveščk-Klančar (1933 – 2020) first introduced the Native Faith, known as *Staroverstvo*, to the broader public in two of his most essential publications: "Flight into the Shadow of the Moon: Tales of Old Beliefs" ("Let v Lunino senco: Pripovedi o starih verovanjih", Medveščk & Podobnik, 2006) and "From the Invisible Cardinal Direction: Unveiled Secrets of Native Faith" ("Iz nevidne strani neba: Razkrite skrivnosti staroverstva", Medveščk, 2015). Today, many associations, communities, groups and individuals mould their content from the writings about Slovene pre-Christian, pagan traditions and beliefs. They thus constitute the most significant and well-known part of Modern Slovene Paganism, which is therefore a part of Slovenia's religious minorities. Today, the most visible among the groups/communities are Slovene Native Faith Association (*Društvo Slovenski staroverci*), the Slovene Native Faith Community of the Children of Triglav (*Slovenska rodnoverska skupnost "Otroci Triglava"*), Veles – Centre of Lifelong Learning, Personal Growth and Connection with Ancestors (*Veles – center vseživljenjskega učenja, osebne rasti in povezovanja s predniki*), and Matjar – Association for the Study of Posočje Naturalism (*Matjar – društvo za raziskovanje posoškega naravoverstva*). The recent closing of the Office for Religious Communities presents further challenges to religious minorities in maintaining their position as equal religious communities in Slovenia, where the Roman Catholic Church still dominates numerically and culturally. The article gives insight into the views and opinions of some members, followers, and believers of the Native Faith on secular values in modern Slovene society, as well as into their fears and hopes for the future. The methodological basis consists of participant observation and 7 semi-structured interviews with believers, followers, and researchers of the Native Faith.

Keywords: Native Faith *(Staroverstvo)*, Slovenia, Neopaganism, secularism, religious minority

Introduction

At the beginning of June 2021, it was announced to the Slovene public that the Office for Religious Communities (hereinafter the Office), which until then had operated under the Slovenian Ministry of Culture, had been closed (Jazbec, 2021). Even though the work would continue under the auspices of the Ministry in a different form, the news caused great concern for religious minorities across the country regarding their positions following the reorganization.[1]

The main topic of the present article will be an examination and review of the status of religious minorities in the Republic of Slovenia. This paper is a part of a broader research field of the author, which is funded by the Slovenian Research Agency. Within this context, I will focus on religious communities and individuals who inspire from the writings about Slovene pre-Christian, pagan traditions and beliefs. I will be particularly interested in how informally established groups, organizations, communities, and individuals who are not formal members of any of these groups, but consider themselves Native Faith (*Staroverstvo*) believers, posit themselves within the national legal system. Furthermore, I will observe how the legislation and the state influence their experience as members of an alternative, minority religious community. I will be particularly interested in their concerns and discontents. I will also highlight the context of the Roman Catholic Church (hereinafter the Church), specifically the view of the interlocutors on its position within the legal framework of the state, and the potential tensions that arise from the direct or indirect contact of followers, believers and researchers of the Native Faith[2] with the majority

[1] The closing of the Office was the culmination of a process that had been ongoing for several years. Even though the current right-wing government led by Janez Janša shows no interest in maintaining grounds for religious pluralism, this indifference was also present in the governments of his centre-left predecessors Dr. Miro Cerar and Marjan Šarec.

[2] The literal translation of the word *Staroverstvo* would be "old belief", therefore the followers would be called "old believers" (see for example Črnič, 2013, p. 183). However, this movement has nothing in common with the Russian branch of Old Believers, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and to avoid confusion, I decided to use Native Faith as an equivalent. It is very important to note that different followers/believers in the Native Faith use different concepts (for example, Naturalism (*Naravoverstvo*); Slavic Native Faith (*Rodnoverstvo, Staroverstvo*) in different social contexts, and therefore delving into the differences would not be fruitful. Scholars of religion regard the Slavic Native Faith or Rodnovery as a modern Pagan religion (Shnirelman, 2013, p. 62; Shizhenskii & Aitamurto, 2017, p. 115), as well as a new religious movement (Shnirelman, 2002, p. 197; Dostálová, 2013, p. 165). Kaarina Aitamurto has suggested that Rodnovery could be regarded as "an umbrella term that gathers together various forms of religiosity" (Aitamurto, 2016, p. 65). The religious scholar Alexey Gaidukov has described "Slavic Neopaganism" as a term pertaining to "all quasi-religious, political, ideological and philosophical systems which are based on the reconstruction and construction of pre-Christian Slavic traditions" (Gaidukov, 2013, p. 316). Adrian Ivakhiv has defined Rodnovery as a movement which "harkens back to the pre-Christian beliefs and practices of ancient Slavic peoples" (Ivakhiv, 2005, p. 209), while according to the historian and ethnologist Victor A. Shnirelman,

Catholic community. My research question mainly concerns the views of followers and believers as to whether, in the context of the closing of the Office for Religious Communities, Slovenia is a secular country. The methodological basis consists of participant observation and 9 semi-structured interviews with believers, followers, and researchers of the Native Faith. For various reasons, only seven of them are directly presented in the paper.

The article begins with a brief discussion of the history of religious pluralism in Slovenia, with an emphasis on the events during the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the effects of Western influences. It then discusses the connection between secular values and religious minorities, and incorporates the opinions and observations of Dr Gregor Lesjak, the former Director of the Office for Religious Communities at the Ministry of Culture. This is followed by a summary of the establishing of the Native Faith, incorporating the opinions of the believers, followers, and researchers of the Native Faith regarding the equality of religious communities in the Republic of Slovenia. The subtopics include the closing of the Office, views on the role of the Slovene state, and views on the role of the Church.

Religiosity and the legal framework of religious pluralism in Slovenia during the second half of the 20th century

To better understand the historical and political context in which the Native Faith movement has arisen, it is necessary to briefly look at the context in which these "new", sometimes also described as Neopagan[3] religious practices have developed and grown (see, for example, Črnič, 2012, p. 248). In this chapter I will focus on the political and historical events in the second half of the 20th century that greatly influenced contemporary discussions on religious pluralism and the position of religious minorities in mostly Christian Slovene society.[4]

Rodnovers present themselves as "followers of some genuine pre-Christian Slavic, Russian or Slavic-Aryan Paganism" (Shnirelman, 2000, p. 18).

[3] When using the term Neopagan, I refer to modern or contemporary Paganism, also called Neopaganism, which is not the "original" Paganism of ancient times, to which Pagans today have only indirect access due to the fragmentary nature of the surviving materials. According to Strmiska, it is a "religion created by modern people, taking inspiration from what is known of the older, original Paganism and then applying this inspiration in various ways, from seeking to reconstruct the old Pagan ways as accurately as possible according to the best available knowledge of the past, to reinterpreting or altering old traditions in accordance with contemporary ways of thinking, to adding or borrowing further religious elements as needed to suit current conditions of life" (Strmiska, 2017, p. 168).

[4] According to the 2002 census, 57.8% of the population is Catholic, 10.1% atheist, 2.4% Muslim, and 2.3% Serbian Orthodox (US Department of State, 2021c).

The history of the European continent has been significantly marked by Catholicism, and Slovenia is no exception in this regard. The Church exercised its privileged position until the end of World War II, when Yugoslavia officially became a socialist state. Under the new-old European principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* ("whose land, their religion"), Yugoslavia's socialist federal republic assumed a left-wing anti-clerical position, paving the way for social secularization (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 210). The response to the introduction of secularization in Yugoslavia was ambivalent (Kerševan, 1993). While the Communist Party abolished privileged rights for the Roman Catholic Church, it simultaneously introduced an ideological monopoly based on secular values; the religious-like specifics of the new regime were described as a "secular or civil religion" (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 211; cf. Smrke, 1990; Flere & Klanjšek, 2007, p. 10).

The main structural changes shaped by Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s were: (1) a decrease in adherents of the Catholic faith – possibly due to general social secularization or conversion due to the more significant presence of other belief systems; (2) the diversification of the denomination of Catholics as a consequence of the ideological changes in the Second Vatican Council and their adoption (for example, the separation of church and state); and (3) the appearance of a more lenient attitude towards religions and churches on the part of the Communist Party (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 211). The leniency shown during this period also coincides with the beginning of the counterculture in the West (Cannell, 2010, p. 88; cf. Heelas, 1996), in which people began to reject traditional church systems, mainly because of their association with authority. Individuals began to look for spiritual rather than religious practices that suited them individually and that covered the fields of their interests and needs (Heelas, 1996). This practice also found its way across the communist bloc.

The relaxing of restrictions on the movement of people and consequently ideas was influenced by the cooling of Yugoslavia's ties with the Soviet Union in 1948 (Črnič, 2012, p. 212). As Barbara Potrata writes, the opening of the Yugoslav borders in the 1960s also marked the beginning of a heightened search for the "authentic self", including in Eastern European countries. This seeking of self-affirmation only intensified in the 1970s, mainly in the form of youth revolts, and consequently in the search for alternative lifestyles they brought home from their travels. As Potrata notes, these young people were often the family members of respected and privileged members of the Communist Party (for example, children of ambassadors or simply those who had sufficient resources to explore the world). Furthermore, the seeking of and desire for alternative life practices can also be an indication of young people's dissatisfaction with the official ideology of the time (Potrata, 2004, p. 366; cf. Potrata 2001a; 2001b).

Towards the end of the 1980s, a safer space was formed for the performance of alternative religious practices. Fifteen alternative religious groups were already officially recognized, and at least twice as many were not. Even during socialist times, Slovenia was not very far removed from the events in the West. Also, migrations to Slovenia from other Yugoslav republics accelerated the influx of foreign religious communities into Slovenia and created an even more pluralistic attitude towards the so-called "Others". The death of President Josip Broz Tito in 1980 was followed by an even greater abandonment of all the regime's previous demands. Religious affiliation and practice increased, particularly among Slovenes (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 212).

Slovenia's independence in 1991 created an even safer space for expressing religiosity, especially alternative religiosity, leading to the evolution of a commitment to the preservation and development of religious pluralism. The fall of communism and rise of alternative religions is quite a common phenomenon in all former communist countries in Europe (see, for example, Senvaitytė, 2018; Bužeková, 2020). Following independence, the number of registered religious communities increased to 43 (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 212). Today, 55 religious communities and churches are registered in Slovenia, among which the most visible are the Roman Catholic Church, the Islamic Community of Slovenia, the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the Evangelical Church. However, many more are still unregistered for various reasons (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, 2022).[5] Religious communities are granted their rights under the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. The constitution guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and the right to express or share their beliefs. It provides for freedom of religion and individuals' right to express their beliefs. The constitution declares that all religious communities shall have equal rights and provides for the separation of church and state. The constitution affords equal human rights and fundamental freedoms to all individuals irrespective of their religion; it also prohibits incitement of religious discrimination and inflammation of religious hatred and intolerance. The constitution also recognizes the right of conscientious objection to military service for religious reasons (Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, 2021).

Even though Slovenia is constitutionally and legally grounded in the democratic values of religious pluralism and equality, religious minorities can have insights into worlds that exist behind the letter of the law. Their status as minorities can make it difficult to access certain resources and privileges, consequently reinforcing feelings of inferiority and neglect. Finally, this affects their

[5] Currently, the only two groups of followers of the Slovene Native Faith registered as a religious community at the Ministry of Culture are the Slovene Native Faith Community of the Children of Triglav and the Upasana community.

views on the existence of democracy, and the democratic values of the state that they are legally a part of.

Secularism and religious minorities

In their alternative view of the impact of religion on the political values of Muslims in Europe, Elisa Banfi, Matteo Gianni and Marco Giugni ask whether "belonging to a discriminated religious minority leads members of such minority to endorse a secular view of institutions". According to the authors, such stigmatization could motivate European Muslims to endorse the "religious neutrality of state authorities" (Banfi, Gianni, & Giugni, 2015, p. 2). The counter-argument for weaker support for secular values among Muslims is that their religious values are seen as being incompatible with secular values. The authors conclude and emphasize that religiosity needs to be "analysed as a multifaceted phenomenon in relation to other religious collective identities," and that "under certain circumstances, belonging to a persecuted religious minority may increase support for secular values, while at the same time religiosity has a negative impact on attitudes toward secularism" (Banfi, Gianni & Giugni, 2015, p. 13).

Pazit Ben-Nun Bloom and Gizem Arikan also describe religiosity as a multidimensional phenomenon; the variable dimensions of religiosity which influence personal and communal positions towards secularism are belief, behaviour and belonging (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013, p. 376). In their studies, they try to demonstrate that the position of religion with respect to democratic attitudes depends on which dimensions or mechanisms of religiosity one looks at (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013, p. 375).[6] Belief, behaviour and belonging have differential effects on attitudes towards democracy (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012), as well as the role of different mechanisms in their support for democracy (Ben-Nun, Bloom & Arikan, 2013). The results of their study suggest there is some regularity in the mechanisms responsible for the effect of religiosity on democratic support that extend into different religious traditions (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013).

Secular values have often been associated with democratic values, "as secularism is against intolerant ideas undermining egalitarian policies and rejects preference for, or persecution of, different groups of the population who have a different faith or different moral customs" (Banfi, Gianni, & Giugni, 2015, p. 5; see also Mahmood, 2012). They can be a stronghold for groups that have suffered religion-based repression and discrimination. Furthermore, new ques-

[6] Many other authors have tried to explain the effects of religion and religiosity on democratic values (see, for example, Filetti, 2013; Forbes & Zampelli, 2013; Nagel & Staeheli, 2011).

tions emerge as we try to understand the debate around religious equality or equity. Dr Gregor Lesjak is the former Director of the Office for Religious Communities at the Slovene Ministry of Culture. He explains that with the closing of the Office, tasks that were previously in its domain

> […] have been assumed by the leadership of the Ministry, [who were appointed] along political lines. [These appointments are] no longer professional. And then the attitude towards religious communities is regulated by [political] party preferences. This is reflected, for example, in the receptivity to the proposals and problems of the religious community.

In his view, all religious communities are equal in the eyes of the state. He supports this with an example of monthly social security payments that the state pays to all religious employees. In order to receive these payments, the community must prove that it has a minimum of 1,000 members:

> Significantly, if a religious community wishes to acquire this right for its clerics, it can demonstrate, as the law unfortunately calls it, a reasonable proportion of one cleric per 1,000 members. You have to prove to the state that you have 1,000 members, and then the state will contribute to your social security for one religious employee. Now, what can we say about this? Is this equal, or is it not equal? This is very equal. I will tell you why. Because equality under the law means something other than [what it means] in the minds of people who sometimes feel marginalized.

As Lesjak explains, there is no reason to blame the Catholic Church, since it is "essentially the largest owner of cultural heritage in Slovenia. [The Republic of] Slovenia finances cultural heritage, [and] helps private education, not just the private education of the Catholic Church." He continues that what needs to be regulated in our country is

> […] above all, a certain awareness of religious freedom. Religious freedom is a fundamental human right […]. Special rights and privileges are a matter for the majority in parliament and the Constitutional Court. […] We used to have a council for dialogue about it, but I can say that the religious communities themselves did not understand this. Their position was: yes, let us just go there, we will just talk.

Lesjak emphasizes that "Slovenia is so well developed in this field," and improvements could be made collectively with the formation of consciousness and dialogue. He states that the 2007 Religious Freedom Act "will need to be improved in several segments" and adds that even a perfectly written law must be adapted to practice (see also Črnič & Lesjak, 2016). In the field of religion, various interests, and the idea of regulating public life, are at odds:

> These interests need to be reconciled so that they [religious communities] do not overwhelm each other. In fact, in Slovenia we have

> an extremely libertarian system, so that after the intervention of the Constitutional Court (the law was only adopted in 2013), a religious community can be practically anyone (with at least 10 members). The process is not that complicated, you just need to communicate with the state body, and this means that you can get this special, as they say, legal organizational form. This is not possible at all in most countries because you have some degree registration, and some conditions, and some privileges.

Even though Slovenia has one of the most open systems for registration of religious communities in comparison with some other former Communist countries,[7] this does not necessarily mean that the religious field represents less of a struggle to minority members. Individuals and groups enter the religious field in order to obtain legitimacy among the broader society, where macro-social, national, political, religious, ideological, and scientific discourses meet and potentially conflict with micro-community discourses in the struggle for power and the construction of religious/local identities (Ebstyne-King, 2003; Kapaló, 2013, pp. 2-5). In Pierre Bourdieu's language and his concept of "field theory" (Jenkins, 2006 [1992], p. 52), the struggle between the local Catholic Church and religious minorities understandably motivates the desire of Catho-

[7] For example, Slovakia has extremely rigid legal conditions for registration, which offers some publicity and funds. Small groups and communities find it almost impossible to succeed, since they need to acquire 50,000 signatures of "true" believers (not 10 as in the case of Slovenia) that do not include just sympathisers. Christianity is seen in Slovakia as a synonym for the national religion and has many adherents, but also political power due to the Vatican accord. These agreements gave the Catholic church many rights – the right to proselytize within the school system, hospitals and prisons, and most importantly, the right to comment on new laws (see for example Zachar-Podolinská, Tížik, & Majo, 2019). In contrast, in the Czech Republic, whose population are often described as "some of the least religious people in Eastern Europe" (Froese, 2005, p. 269), the clear division between church and state is also reflected in the registration procedure. The state has two tiers when applying for a religious community: the first tier consists of presenting 300 signatures of adult members who have a permanent residence in the country. For second-tier registration, a group must have been registered with the Department of Churches for 10 years, have published annual financial reports throughout the time of its registration, and have membership equal to at least 0.1 percent of the population (approximately 10,000 people). Second-tier registration entitles religious groups to government subsidies as well as the tax benefits granted to first-tier groups (US Department of State, 2021a). In Poland, as in other democratic countries, all citizens are guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion, protected by the 1997 Polish Constitution. However, to act as a legal entity, the community must be registered. According to the 2019 report on religious freedom, 15 religious communities were registered in Poland, while an additional 166 registered religious groups and five aggregate religious organizations do not have a statutorily defined relationship with the state (Simpson, 2013, p. 115). To register, the law requires a group to submit a notarized application with the personal information of at least 100 citizen members, along with other important information such as information on its doctrine and practices; identifying information about its leaders; a description of the role of the clergy, etc. (US Department of State, 2021b). For information on the Russian Federation see the writings of Aitamurto (2016), and on the Baltic Region those of Strmiska (2017).

lics to maintain the image of the national Church and to limit the importance of alternative religions. In this so-called "social arena within which struggles, or manoeuvres take place over specific sources or stakes and access to them," (Jenkins, 2006 [1992], p. 52) communities and agents oppose, defy, and negotiate for power with macro-social, scientific, religious, national, or political structures and institutions (Bourdieu, 1993; De Certeau, 1988 [1984]; Wacquant, 1989, p. 39). This also applies to the Native Faith and its struggles for social status and adequate resources.

Views on the position of the Native Faith as a religious minority

Pavel Medvešček described *Staroverstvo* as a way of life, understanding, and an attitude towards the natural environment (see for example Vrabec, 2020).[8] From the 1950s onwards, he allegedly held extensive conversations with surviving members of the community that practiced the "old beliefs" (see for example Medvešček, 2015), sometimes described as "a group of unmarried single uncles" (Ravnik, 2017), in the Posočje region, the Cerkno Hills region and partly also in the Karst region. Medvešček came across them for the first time during his fieldwork at the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia. He was granted exclusive access by the last remaining members of the belief community to the oral narratives, belief practices, healing objects, rituals, and terminology of the believers. However, he promised to keep their stories and knowledge a secret until 2007, when the moon's edge would turn towards the Earth, therefore for the next 42 years.

In 2015, Medvešček published "From the Invisible Cardinal Direction"; written in the form of ethnographic testimonies and dialogues as uninterpreted "material", it was additionally presented to the broader Slovene public by its mainly laic followers and researchers (see for example Čok, 2012; Kenda, 2018;

[8] Although most followers of the Native Faith "believe" in the existence of this religious practice, the belief does not necessarily involve the performance of various rites or other forms of worship. Followers often describe the belief as a "way of living". This vocabulary emphasizes the ecological perspective – nature conservation or a nature conservation component, where followers draw inspiration for their creations from nature and humans' inappropriate attitudes towards it. Also, in my discussions with Native Faith believers and followers, they usually emphasize that this is not a religion, such as Christianity or Islam. This strikes a resemblance to the observations of Fanella Cannell, that "people are rejecting the term religion itself while attempting (sometimes in contradictory ways) to create forms of practice that many anthropologists would still classify as religion. An unusual degree of overlap exists between terms social science uses in the analysis of contemporary forms of religious and secular experience and the terms that informants may use in daily life" (Cannell, 2010, p. 88). As this is a storyline of all religious anthropologists, it will perhaps be addressed more extensively in the future.

Hren, 2018; Guardjančič, 2018) and received considerable media attention (see for example Bucik-Ozebek, 2017; Močnik, 2019; Vrabec, 2020). Almost immediately after its publication, the book raised questions about Medveščekʼs "invention" of the religious tradition (Hobsbawm, 2006 [1983]), as well as of the "imagined community" (Anderson, 1998 [1983]) which the author proclaimed as having been the bearer of this tradition (see, for example, Kozorog, 2020). Because of this, Medveščekʼs writings have also attracted considerable attention in museological, ethnological, anthropological, archaeological and humanistic circles (Skrt, 2014; 2018; Pleterski, 2015; Ravnik, 2017; Hrobat-Virloget, 2017; 2019; Toplak, 2018; 2019; Kozorog, 2020).

Even though Native Faith became known to the broader Slovene public with the writings of Pavel Medveščekˌ it was present before. The memory of the pre-Christian period is quite well reflected in modern Slovene culture. Pre-Christian mythical elements are not only hidden in Slovene literature but are to some extent still alive in the folk tradition. In addition to English Neopaganism (for example, Pan Pogan, Wicca), a fascination with the Celtic tradition, and with ancient African traditions, we can see a dynamic revival of Slavic pre-Christian beliefs at the beginning of the 21st Century. A group called the Heathens (*Ajdi*) was formed around 2005. At the same time, the Svetovid Parish of the Old Belief (*Staroverska župa Svetovid*) was formed, which operated with the Heathens under the common name Slovene Native Faith Believers, (*Slovenski staroverci*) (also later the Slovene Native Faith Association, *Društvo Slovenski staroverci*) (Črnič, 2012, pp. 240–249). In the 1980s began the formation of the Upasana community (*Svetovno nazorska kozmološka skupnost Upasana*). In 2008, Upasanaʼs founding members submitted to the Office for Religious Communities the proposals for amendments to the Religious Freedom Act and prepared a complex process of "dealcoholicatholisation" (Dealkoholikatolizacija). In 2013, Upasana registered as a religious community (Svetovno nazorska kozmološka skupnost Upasana, 2021). Today, the most visible among the groups/communities are Slovene Native Faith Association, the Slovene Native Faith Community of the Children of Triglav (*Slovenska rodnoverska skupnost "Otroci Triglava"*), Veles – Centre of Lifelong Learning, Personal Growth and Connection with Ancestors (*Veles – center vseživljenjskega učenja, osebne rasti in povezovanja s predniki*), and Matjar – Association for the Study of Posočje Naturalism (*Matjar – društvo za raziskovanje posoškega naravoverstva*). Along with Medveščekʼs writings, many other individuals have significantly influenced modern views on Native Faith (for example Čok, 2012; Sever, 2013; Omerzel, 2016).

Although these communities, groups, associations and individuals are now recognized among the Slovene public and are gaining in publicity, it is often pointed out by the believers of the Native Faith that for the most part people come to the meetings only because of some general interest, and they rarely actively participate for longer periods of time. Despite the fact that these groups

are gaining in importance, the feeling of marginalization was mentioned quite often while talking to my interlocutors from various Native Faith groups, associations and communities, or individuals who participate in the creation of these interpretations and receptions outside of the above-mentioned groups. Jurij[9] is a member of the Matjar association. For Jurij, membership in the association represents above all the possibility of systematic research of the remnants of the Native Faith and sharing discoveries with other like-minded members. While expressing his dissatisfaction with the discourse on equal rights of all religious communities in Slovenia, he also expresses dissatisfaction with the political situation in Slovenia, which is perpetuating or allowing the perpetuation of the greater importance of some religious communities above others:

> To some extent, of course, although I cannot ignore the observation that the current government clearly prefers certain religious groups, if I may say so, or religious practices. And that maybe some privileges were given to them, that's all. But yes, I would still say that it is secular, because religion is not included in education. But on the other hand, hey, the Ministry of Culture with its minister Simoniti[10] […] Talking about the restoration of frescoes […] To date, they have financed 50 % of the project which you applied for themselves. When someone was applying, someone like Ana [another member of the Matjar association], for example, there was a minimal chance that you [would be] accepted because the Church has many such facilities that are in poor condition, [and] you did not [receive funding] because the Church had a monopoly. So, they got most of the money. You had to be lucky to get inside. That has now changed, because from now on the Ministry of Culture finances 100 % of the fresco restoration and it is no secret that when you look at who got the money, the vast majority goes to the Church. It is obvious that the rules have now been changed so that the funds go to the Church. Also, when the Episcopal Conference arbitrarily allowed the churches to open, you remember how it was that spring. That was a good indicator of who was wearing the trousers in the house. Although these trousers are sometimes in the form of priestly scarves. We are certainly secular because the Church does not have as much influence. They are certainly the most accessible and influential interest group in the spiritual realms, that's for sure. But [this is] understandable. After all this time, I think this is probably [true] everywhere where the population is mainly Catholic.

[9] The names of some respondents and some information regarding their life and work have been changed in order to provide full anonymity. However, I chose not to anonymize Dr Gregor Lisjak, due to his former position as the Director of the Office for Religious Communities at the Ministry of Culture.

[10] The conservative politician Dr. Vasko Simoniti has been the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia since March 2020.

These oppositions and negotiations also came to light when talking to Janez, a former self-proclaimed "new ager" and a prominent member of the Slovene Native Faith Association. Janez and the other members of his society practice the Native Faith and even call themselves Native Faith Believers (*Staroverci*), sometimes mixing it with spiritual knowledge obtained elsewhere. Furthermore, he actively participated in the Slovene independence movement during the 1990s, when, according to his narrations and writings, religious minorities played a role just as important as that of the Church. Therefore, he strongly condemns the current situation of religious minorities:

> But we said we will talk about the state! What happens? The government, the colonial government of the Republic of Slovenia! Janša's government is no more and no less colonial than the ones of Šarec or Cerar. All three are identically submissive from the Vatican's point of view. Identically. They all go to pay homage to the colonial Church.

Janez directly points to the closing of the Office, which has attracted considerable attention in the wider laic and academic circles:

> And now they have closed the Office. Cerar did nothing innovative. On the contrary, he mutilated it. Šarec just continued this mutilation, but they completed it. Let one student do a dissertation on what happened to the Office. What did the famous left and left-wing intellectuals do when the Republic of Slovenia's government abolished and for 10 years now have been abolishing religious freedom.

However, Janez was not the only one in my research sample that emphasized the problematics surrounding it. Tine is a member of Native Faith religious community called the Children of Triglav, and even if he was not aware of the changes at the Ministry of Culture before our meeting, he believes the message is clear – the closing of the Office could mean the end of democracy:

> This is not democratic if we go for democracy. Hey, I am not going to say if there is only going to be one member of some religious thing [...] But when it comes down to it being a community that has a fairly large number of members, it can be a couple of thousand or whatever, and that is not right then. That means we go back to when only one religion will have the linen and scissors in its hands, which it already has quite a bit of, and then they can also suggest to their supporters, telling them "this will have to be abolished". As in Russia, because Putin, formerly a communist, now goes to church because he knows he will benefit from it. And if this is going to happen to us, we have gone back to the Middle Ages or worse.

Like Tine, Iva was also not aware of the closing of the Office, but after receiving a brief summary stressed the importance of professional staff at the ministries who understand how certain bureaucratic changes can resonate in society:

> I don't think it's fair, the professionals could handle these things. […] To me, this seems purely misguided. And it is precisely for this reason that we should keep [the professionals], not only for religious communities, for every field, it is precisely this that makes sense to have them. And not bribed ones, but also differently thinking people that will allow broad-mindedness. So that there isn't some drivel at the end of it all and [it isn't] all about the money.

Even though Sašo is not an official member of any of the previously mentioned Native Faith groups or communities, he considers himself a believer. The closing of the Office does not bring major changes to the Slovene religious milieu, because to nature, it doesn't matter "whether the office is there or not. Two men and a fig tree *(laughs)*. Nature doesn't care. The more it seems to me, for a man to whom nature means a lot, the more it makes sense to me to create an office for the protection of nature, not for the protection of religions." Jana, who is a fellow believer and is not an official member of any of the groups, also agrees with his opinion. She even points out that caution is needed when deciding to register a religious community, as they could be persecuted by the state in the future: "I think they will go against it, slowly. Against religious communities that act with too much autonomy." When I ask whether this applies to all non-Christian communities, Jana replies: "Yeah, or that they're not in someone's interest. It's about the people in these groups, […] we're more important mentally or spiritually than physically. And they, for example, are aware of this, they also want to disable us, probably with all this that is happening now."

Janez also expresses a feeling of pressure from the side of the dominant religious institutions, especially from the leading Roman Catholic Church. In his narration, he also highlights a general lack of interest in religious pluralism, not just on the part of the current right-wing government:

> If anyone tells me now that this government has closed the Office, I will tell you: where were you seven years ago, when the Office's closing began, when the staff began to shrink. The Vatican was just pushing. The nuncios see what is happening in Slovenia. The churches are empty, there are 53 registered religious communities, […] now there are some Upasana, some Native Faith believers, and what else. There was always pressure, and they were always limiting us. There were no progressive moves.

Janez continues with his dissatisfaction and highlights the lack of understanding of the need for religious pluralism in a democracy. He mainly refers to the inappropriate conduct and a lack of understanding on the part of the current President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor:

> What did the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, do in the week when the government closed the Office? What did he do? […] The President of the Republic put a dot on this colonial, this gift of the Slovene colony to the Vatican. That week, when Simoniti

> [Minister of Culture] shuttered the Office, Pahor went to visit the archbishop. Not the archbishop [visiting] him in the presidential palace. The president [visited] him at the archdiocese. They talked about consolidating relations between the colonial Church and the state, about open questions, which of course means […] The next day you read in the news which property we returned to the Vatican. About how we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of [Slovenia's] independence. Borut Pahor did not protest the "depluralisation" of the sacred space with the archbishop. […] That says it all. [He] did not call all religious communities and say "let's talk about the 30th anniversary of independence".

For Sašo, the Slovene state already sends a clear message regarding the equality of all religious groups by perpetuating Church holidays as public holidays: "Yes, if we write in the constitution that all religious communities are equal, then if we celebrate the Assumption of Mary, we could also celebrate the holidays of other religions, or we could learn about other religions in schools. If we say they are equal, of course." Jurij also notes the effect of education on religious pluralism and the importance of secularism in a democratic state. When asked whether Slovenian society is secular, he replies: "To some extent, of course, although I cannot ignore the observation that the current government very clearly prefers certain religious groups, if I may say so, or religious practices, and that maybe some privileges were given to them. […] But yes, but I would still say that it is secular because religion is not included in education, for example."

Tine does not agree with this point of view. According to him, the Slovene state is far from secular, and the problem is that

> […] religions are also tied politically to certain parties, to the social system, capitalism, feudalism, [they go] hand in hand. We have members of political parties who are horrible Christians who steal and abuse. On the other hand, they are connected to the church, the main one in our country is, of course, the Roman Catholic Church. We cannot talk about a kind of secularism here, such as in France. Because in France, for example, churches are the property of the state, of the nation, because they were made by the nation, not the Church. They gave the money to build them. In Slovenia, we are still far from that. They get involved practically everywhere, even in economic matters. And if we look, we're not doing […] some business. We remain strictly on some spiritual level, on a level of some thinking that is also a little philosophical. There is zero in our bank account. […] But in general, not even a penny, it is no longer a religion. This is materialism, right.

Even though Jurij believes that the state is formally secular, he asserts that some things are nevertheless

> […] not so secular. Even then, when the Episcopal Conference arbitrarily allowed the churches to open, as you remember what it was like then in the spring. That was a good indicator of who was wearing the trousers in the house. Although these trousers are sometimes in the form of priestly scarves. We are certainly secular, however, because the Church does not have as much influence. They are certainly the most influential interest group in the spiritual realms, that's for sure. But this is understandable. After all this time, as I think this is probably true everywhere where the population is mostly Catholic.

The connection between the state and the Church also represents an important aspect in understanding the social situation for Jana. She believes that religious freedom *per se* does not exist in Slovenia, and this is due to the tradition that is deeply rooted in the practices of the Church. Also, Jana states that going to Church does not necessarily mean a person is a believer, he/she could just create his/her own image of God. She uses Catholic baptism as an example: "because in this way you show that you are spiritual. Anyway, if you're not now, I don't know; that you don't believe in that trinity, in the angels, in Mary and these things. Well, you have your own approach to God." According to her, the politics and the state are fully connected. Even more, the politics are merely an extension of religion (or in the Slovenian context, the Roman Catholic Church):

> They are executors, yes. Executors of great rulers. Supposedly we vote for them, they are supposedly democratically elected, but our [political] system itself is such that you do not know who drinks and who pays. We vote for someone, but then there are completely different people in positions. I know what the system is like.

Even though she holds a similar opinion, Iva does not emphasize the connection between political parties and the state with the Church or with the current right-wing ruling party. She sees registered religious minority groups as a way of fighting for minimum rights, as the establishment of such free-thinking religious communities is generally not in line with politics (across all political orientations):

> In general, it seems to me that politics is such that they like the last word on how things will be. And if you are now in a religious community and given that the Roman Catholic Church can afford many things, then so can others, because they are based on the same legislation […]. It turns out like you're looking for a loophole in the system. That way, you can work more easily with the community. […] It seems to me that they don't like it too much because it doesn't go through the national budget. You don't have as many of these contributions, you can do what you want, and that's just because you're registered as a religious community. That seems wrong to me. It seems to me that we should live in a country where these things should be

> regulated, without these needs for legal-formal unifications. Simply because that's the situation, then … It's easier if you join a religious community. At the same time, this 'religious' aspect is also lost a little bit, because it is not only based on beliefs, but on the fight for your basic rights. It can be such a broad debate.

As discussed above, Christian religion has lost its central position as a fundamental collective symbol of Western culture for numerous reasons (Hanegraaff, 2000, p. 302). Faith became more the domain of spirituality, with Christianity becoming just one of the many options in this ever-growing market of religion (Hanegraaff, 2000, pp. 302–303). Today, religions compete for their followers, and they can only do so by offering a wide range of spiritual services. Sašo observes that such structural changes are also in present Slovenian society, where the Church "no longer has the power it once had," and various religious alternatives or minorities are now "considered competition, definitely." Jurij adds that this could a consequence of people's desire for change, and notes that with "some knowledge, but also with the change of lifestyle, of course, people are looking for other alternatives". Even though this might be also true for Iva, she thinks that the Church still holds the monopoly,

> as there are still many religious people in politics. Sometimes it's hard to avoid it. [...] Either way, this factor, everyone believes in something, after you are in a certain public position, you are essentially asserting your belief. You can argue with others, but you still decide based on your beliefs. You can't do this purely objectively, do such [public] work.

Jana agrees with Sašo and Iva, but in this regard emphasizes the disparities between the rural and urban areas. Her previous experience of living in the city, and now in the countryside, shows the difference in the reception of such alternative religious views: "Here where we live, I don't feel pressure, no. Not at all. And people too. People are here, a few other views than in the city. Because they live with nature. And it is very free all together. Many of these superstitions are also being introduced into the Church. Still."

At present, there seems to be no great tension between the Native Faith communities and the Church. During the conversations, one of my interlocutors also confided in me that the retired Archbishop of Ljubljana, Cardinal Franc Rode, attended an exhibition on Native Faith held at the Museum of Gorica opened in 2014. It seems that the Church currently does not yet recognize them as competition, as this is in a way ensured by the numbers of followers entered in the register. For this reason, some of my interlocutors pointed out that it is also important to make the population aware of the possibilities of de-registration, as the Church justifies its monopoly in Slovene society based on its number of followers. Some of them have already decided to go through the process; Iva, Janez and Tine, for example, are already members of another

religious community. Jurij did not answer the question, while Jana is still registered as a member of the Church but is planning to leave it soon.

Conclusion

For some, secularism reflects the influences of Western theological modernization (Casanova, 1994), while for others, it primarily reflects the separation between private and public (Kaufmann, Goujon, & Skirbekk, 2011, p. 3). A general Western trend, the so-called "post-Christian" movement, introduced individualized spiritualities among young and educated individuals who simultaneously reject spiritual authority and conventional religious categories while promoting rationalist atheism and an immanent form of belief (Kaufmann, Goujon, & Skirbekk, 2011, p. 3; Houtman & Aupers, 2007; Taylor, 2007, pp. 507-516). Nevertheless, the presumptions of some of the most outstanding scholars of our times that secularism is an inevitable condition of modern society are being shown to be false. Society was once again misunderstood, with religion (in its reshaped form) coming back to the forefront of societal discussions in its full potential and showing no signs of decline.

The secular debate represents a field of struggle for legitimacy in society. Again, it is a place where macro-social, national, political, religious, ideological, and scientific discourses meet and potentially conflict with micro-community discourses in the struggle for power and the construction of religious/local identities (Ebstyne-King, 2003; Kapaló, 2013, pp. 2-5). As necessary, these discourses are reflected in the Slovene public sphere. The stories of the adherents, followers, and researchers of Native Faith are just a drop in the ocean of religious pluralism in Slovenia, which is often overlooked.

As I learned from the research, religious minorities are becoming stronger in Slovenia. However, their members believe that they still must fight for equal rights with some type of legal status. In the article, I have presented the opinions and views of individuals of only one religious branch, specifically believers or researchers of the Native Faith, sometimes also described as naturalism. The diversity of the interpretations of the Native Faith is reflected in the interlocutors' views on the closing of the Office for Religious Communities and the role of the state and the Church in strengthening secular values. Almost all the interlocutors believe that the closing of the Office for Religious Communities points to the fact that Slovenia is a secular state only in the legal/formal sense, while political changes indicate otherwise. Only Sašo expressed indifference to such debates. According to him, the Office does not play a major role in the religious debate. At the same time, almost all the interlocutors express dissatisfaction with the political situation in Slovenia. Most of them point out that the ruling right-wing party prioritizes and privileges the Roman Catholic Church,

since prominent members of the party are also devoted Catholics. In this context, only Iva points out that this is (to some extent) understandable and natural, as our personal religious beliefs also resonate in public life. She also stresses the importance of awareness among everyone about the background we come from. A partially negative attitude towards Church institutions can be perceived among all interlocutors, of course with varying degrees of intensity. The interlocutors also say that (so far) they have not had any major disputes with representatives of the Church. Nevertheless, some point out that this does not rule out the possibility that problems may still occur. Jana, for example, believes that politics is just an extension of Christian domination in the world, and one should be very careful about expressing religious affiliations, especially via the national religious register.

Supposing that religious rights are automatically applied to certain significant religious communities (and even among them there is usually just one place to reign), talking to members of other groups illustrates something else. We explored how religious minorities such as the Native Faith see the importance of discussing secularism, religious pluralism, equality, and equity in contemporary Slovene society. With their actions they can mitigate religions' general effect on forming them by a) de/registering as a religious community, b) addressing politicians, statesmen and stateswomen with open protest letters or other forms of expressing disagreement, c) raising public awareness of developments in the field of religious secularism and pluralism, as well as just being a constant reminder that our society is pluralistic, religiously diverse and thus rich in its history as well as in the present. The opinions of the interlocutors as to whether Slovenia is a secular state are coherent: even if Slovenia is a secular state by law, and addresses all religious communities as equals, it is equity we should be striving for. Despite many criticisms, however, the individuals do not show much interest in raising awareness of the different approaches of religious communities toward receiving state aid. Dr Lesjak also pointed out the general indifference on the part of religious communities. The only interlocutor who stressed his political activism and the importance of it was Janez.

This article has much room for improvement – its most significant shortcoming is the small number of interlocutors and the lack of an emic perspective, which is a consequence of the current COVID-19 health regulations. Despite all the shortcomings, the primary goal was to present Slovenia as a religiously heterogeneous space, show the importance of secularist debate, and highlight the issues that could be embedded into studies of secularist endeavours.

References

Aitamurto, K. (2016). *Paganism, Traditionalism, Nationalism: Narratives of Russian Rodnoverie*. London and New York: Routledge.

Anderson, B. ([1983] 1998). *Zamišljene skupnosti: O izvoru in širjenju nacionalizma*. Ljubljana: Studia humanitatis.

Banfi, E., Gianni, M., & Giuni, M. (2015). Religious minorities and secularism: an alternative view of the impact of religion on the political values of Muslims in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *42*(2), 292-308.

Ben-Nun Bloom P., & Arikan, G. (2012). A Two Edged Sword: The Differential Effect of Religious Belief and Religious Social Context on Attitudes towards Democracy. *Political Behavior*, *34*(2), 249-276.

Ben-Nun Bloom, P., & Arikan, G. (2013). Religion and Support for Democracy: A Cross-National Test of the Mediating Mechanisms. *British Journal of Political Science*, *43*(2), 375-397.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bucik-Ozebek, N. (2017). Stara vera – vera v ilegali: Hodili k maši, doma pa zlo preganjali z uroki stare vere, www.dnevnik.si. Retrieved November 5, 2020, from https://www.dnevnik.si/1042781883

Bužeková, T. (2020). The "dangerous others": Spiritual energy and contagion. *Český lid, 107*, 123-147.

Cannell, F. (2010). The Anthropology of Secularism. *Annual Review of Anthropology 39*(85-100), 85-100.

Casanova, J. (1994). *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. (2021). Retrieved March 30, 2021, from http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=USTA1

Čok, B. (2012). *V siju mesečine: Ustno izročilo Lokve, Prelož in bližnje okolice*. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU.

Črnič, A. (2012). *Na vodnarjevem valu: Nova religijska in duhovna gibanja*. Ljubljana: Založba FDV.

Črnič, A. (2013). Neopaganism in Slovenia. In K. Aitamurto, & S. Simpson (Eds.), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 182-194). Durham: Acumen.

Črnič, A., Komel, M., Smrke, M., Šabec, K., & Vovk, T. (2013). Religious Pluralisation in Slovenia. *Teorija in praksa, 50*(1), 205-232.

Črnič, A., & Lesjak G. (2016). Slovenske ustvarjene verske skupnosti in njihov kontekst. *Teorija in praksa, 53*(2), 562-563.

De Certeau, M. (1988 [1984]). *The Practice of Everyday Life [Arts de faire]*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Dostálová, A.-M. (2013). Czech Neopagan Movements and Leaders. In K. Aitamurto, & S. Simpson (Eds.), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 164-181). Durham: Acumen.

Ebstyne-King, P. (2003). Religion and Identity: The Role of Ideological, Social, and Spiritual Contexts. *Applied Developmental Science, 7*(3), 197–204.

Filetti, A. (2013). Religion in South-Caucasus: Encouraging or Inhibiting Pro-Democratic Atttitudes? *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe, 6*(1), 33-46.

Flere, S. & Klanjšek, R. (2007). Ali je votlost značilnost vernosti na Slovenskem? *Družboslovne razprave, 23*(56), 7-20.

Forbes, K. F., & Zampelli, E. M. (2013). The Impact of Religion, Political Ideology, and Social Capital on Religious and Secular Giving: Evidence from the 2006 Social Capital Community Survey. *Applied Economics, 45*(17), 2481-2490.

Froese, P. (2005). Secular Czechs and Devout Slovaks: Explaining Religious Differences. *Review of Religious Research, 46*(3), 269-283.

Gaidukov, A. (2013). The Russian-Language Internet and Rodnoverie. In K. Aitamurto, & S. Simpson (Eds.), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 315-332). Durham: Acumen.

Guardjančič, J. (2018). So naravoverci vplivali na vreme? In N. Petrič, & M. Hren (Eds.), *Pozno pokristjanjevanje slovenskega ozemlja* (pp. 181-194). Ljubljana: Društvo Slovenski staroverci.

Hanegraaff, W. J. (2000). New Age Religion and Secularization. *Religions in the Disenchanted World, 47*(3), 288-312.

Heelas, P. (1996). *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hobsbawm, E. (2006 [1983]). Introduction: Inventing Traditions. In E. Hobsbawm, & T. Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (pp. 1-14). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Houtman, D. & Aupers, S. (2007). The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 46*(3), 305-320.

Hren, M. (2018). Začetek konca kolonialne plenilske civilizacije in začetek začetka pristnega pri-rodo-varstva. In N. Petrič, & M. Hren (Eds.), *Pozno pokristjanjevanje slovenskega ozemlja* (pp. 81–108). Ljubljana: Društvo Slovenski staroverci.

Hrobat-Virloget, K. (2017). O molku v etnografiji: Od skrivnosti do travme in neskladnih spominov. *Traditiones, 46*(1–2), 83-100.

Hrobat-Virloget, K. (2019). O aktivni in pasivni vlogi stroke ter javnosti pri ustvarjanju nesnovne dediščine: Primer mitskega parka in starovercev.' In S. Poljak Istenič (Ed.), *Nesnovna dediščina med prakso in registri: 15. vzporednice med slovensko in hrvaško etnologijo* (pp. 26-45). Ljubljana: Slovensko etnološko društvo; Zagreb: Hrvaško etnološko društvo.

Ivakhiv, A. (2005). The Revival of Ukrainian Native Faith. In M. F. Strmiska (Ed.), *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives* (pp. 209-239). Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio.

Jazbec, A. (2021). Vlada je ukinila urad za verske skupnosti, www.slovenec.org. Retrieved June 24, 2021, from https://www.slovenec.org/2021/06/04/vlada-je-ukinila-urad-za-verske-skupnosti/

Jenkins, R. (2006 [1992]). *Key Sociologists: Pierre Bourdieu*. London and New York: Routledge.

Kapaló, J. A. (2013). Folk Religion in Discourse and Practice. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics, 7*(1), 3-18.

Kaufmann, E., Goujon, A., & Skirbekk, V. (2011). The End of Secularization in Europe?: A sociodemographic Perspective. *Sociology of Religion, 73*(1), 69-91.

Kenda, M. (2018). Veliko misliti staroverstvo, malo ga obravnavati in raziskovati, staroverci.si. Retrieved November 2, 2020, from http://staroverci.si/veliko-misliti-in-malo-raziskovati/

Kerševan, M. (1993). Ambivalence of Religious Revitalization in Post-Socialist Societies. *Social Compass, 40*(1), 123-133.

Kozorog, M. (2020). Etnološka recepcija staroverstva. *Etnolog, 30*(1), 111-123.

Mahmood, S. (2012). Religious Freedom, the Minority Question, and Geopolitics in the Middle East. *Comparatice Studies in Society and History, 54*(2), 418-446.

Medveščk, P. (2015). *Iz nevidne strani neba: Razkrite skrivnosti staroverstva*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC SAZU.

Medveščk, P., & Podobnik, R. (2006). *Let v Lunino senco*. Taura: Nova Gorica.

Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia. (2022). Retrieved February 20, 2022, from https://www.gov.si/teme/verske-skupnosti/

Močnik, B. (2019). Staroverstvo ni (zgolj) vera, temveč sobivanje in naravovarstvo, www.delo.si. Retrieved November 5, 2020, from https://www.delo.si/kultura/razno/staroverstvo-ni-zgolj-vera-temvec-sobivanje-in-naravovarstvo/

Nagel, C. R., & Staeheli, L. A. (2011). Muslim Political Activism or Political Activism by Muslims? Secular and Religious Identities amongst Muslim Arab Activists in the United States and United Kingdom. *Identities, 18*(5), 437-458.

Omerzel, M. (2016). *Slovansko in staroslovensko zvočno predivo. Vedun band*. Compact disc with preface in Slovene and English. Ljubljana: Sventovid.

Pleterski, A. (2015). Staroverstvo in pričevanja starovercev. In P. Medveščk, *Iz nevidne strani neba: Razkrite skrivnosti staroverstva*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC.

Potrata, B. (2001a). Verske ideje, verske prakse: Slovenski novodobniki in njihove prakse. *Teorija in praksa, 38*(6), 1144-1156.

Potrata, B. (2001b). Duhovnost nove dobe. *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, 29*(202–203), 163-179.

Potrata, B. (2004). New Age, socialism and other millenarianisms: Affirming and struggling with (post)socialism. *Religion, State and Society, 32*(4), 365-379.

Ravnik, M. (2017). Strici, nosilci izročila stare vere – kulturni junaki ali obrobneži? Ob knjigi Pavla Medveščka Iz nevidne strani neba, Ljubljana 2015. *Glasnik SED, 57*(3–4), 115-124.

Senvaitytė, D. (2018). The Hunt for Lost Identity: Native Faith Paganism in Contemporary Lithuania. *The Pomegranate, 20*(2), 234-260.

Sever, L. (2013). *Tičnice iz naravoverja: Zanesljivi kažipoti v slovensko prazgodovino*. Male Lipljene: self-published.

Shnirelman, V. A. (2000). Perun, Svarog and Others: Russian Neo-Paganism in Search of Itself. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology, 21*(3), 18-36.

Shnirelman, V. A. (2002). 'Christians! Go home': A Revival of Neo-Paganism between the Baltic Sea and Transcaucasia (An Overview). *Journal of Contemporary Religion, 17*(2), 197-211.

Shnirelman, V. A. (2013). Russian Neopaganism: From Ethnic Religion to Racial Violence. In K. Aitamurto, & S. Simpson (Eds.), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 62-76). Durham: Acumen.

Simpson, S. (2013). Polish Rodzimowierstwo: Strategies for (Re)constructing a Movement. In K. Aitamurto, & S. Simpson (Eds.), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 112-127). Durham: Acumen.

Skrt, D. (2014). S široko odprtim srcem do nesnovnega bogastva predmetov starega sveta. In P. Medveščček, & D. Skrt, *Staroverstvo in staroverci: Katalog etnološke zbirke Pavla Medveščka* (pp. 5-9). Nova Gorica: Goriški muzej Kromberk.

Skrt, D. (2018). Ko etnološka zbirka postane izziv novih znanosti: razstava Staroverstvo in staroverci. In D. Kumar; M. Kofol; B. Marušič; Z. Božič; &Andrej Maffi, *Zahodna Banjška planota skozi čas: O geografiji in botaniki, arheologiji, stavbarstvu cerkva, zgodovini, ljudeh, etnološki dediščini ter jeziku zahodne Banjške planote [krajevne skupnosti Kal nad Kanalom, Levpa, Avče]*. Koper: Založba Annales ZRS.

Smrke, M. (1990). Civilna religija v realsocializmu – konceptualizacija. *Nova revija, 104*, 1680-1695.

Shizhenskii, R., & Aitamurto, K. (2017). Multiple Nationalisms and Patriotisms Among Russian Rodnovers. In K. Rountree (ed.), *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Modern Paganism* (pp. 109-132). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Strmiska, M. F. (2017). Paganism and Politics: A View from Central-Eastern Europe. *Pomegranate, 19*(2), 166-172.

Svetovno nazorska kozmološka skupnost Upasana. (2021). Dejstva o ustanovitvi, www.upasana.si. Retrieved September 9, 2021, from http://www.upasana.si/dejstva.html

Taylor, C. (2007). *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Toplak, C. (2018). Politično-zgodovinski kontekst 'križarskega pohoda' na Kobarid leta 1331. In N. Petrič, & M. Hren (Eds.), *Pozno pokristjanjevanje slovenskega ozemlja* (pp. 47-62). Ljubljana: Društvo Slovenski staroverci.

Toplak, C. (2019). Avtonomizem in egalitarizem po slovensko: Med (pred)moderno in (post)kolonialnostjo. *Teorija in praksa, 56*(1), 269-87.

US Department of State (2021a). 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Czech Republic, state.gov. Retrieved June 29, 2021, from https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/czech-republic/

US Department of State (2021b). 2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: Poland, state.gov. Retrieved June 29, 2021, from

https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/poland/

US Department of State (2021c). 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Slovenia, state.gov. Retrieved June 29, 2021, from https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/slovenia/

Vrabec, A. (2020). Umrl je Pavel Medvešček, preiskovalec staroverstva na Slovenskem, www.delo.si. Retrieved November 5, 2020, from https://www.delo.si/kultura/knjiga/umrl-je-pavel-medvescek-preiskovalec-staroverstva-na-slovenskem/

Wacquant, L. D. (1989). Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu. *Sociological Theory, 7*, 26-63.

Zachar-Podolinská, T., Tížik, M., & Majo, J. (2019). Religiosity in Slovakia: Structure, Dynamics, and Spatial Diversification. *Central European Journal of Contemporary Religion, 1*, 1-33.

Young, L. (2007). *The Human Heart. An Overview.* In J. Peto (Ed.), *The Heart* (pp. 1-30). New Haven, London: Yale University Press.