

Izvorni naučni rad

UDK 398:27-475.5(497.5)

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DEMONIC BEINGS IRUDICA AND POGANICA IN OLD FOLKS' BELIEFS, INCANTATIONS, AND PRAYERS

According to the oral tradition, St. John the Baptist and King Herod Antipas were on good terms. However, when Herod decided to marry the wife of his brother Philip, John the Baptist strongly reproved of it. During King Herod Antipas's birthday celebrations, Herodias's daughter seductively danced before the king, so Herod decided to give her everything she desired, even up to half of his kingdom. When the daughter asked her mother what she should request, she was told to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herod granted her the wish. According to the gospels, it likely occurred on 29 August 29 AD.

In Croatian oral tradition, Herodias and her daughter turned into demonic creatures. Croats refer to Herodias as *Poganica*, her daughter *Irudica* and Herod *Irud*.

According to Croatian tradition, Irudica brings a heavy thunderstorm, while St. Elijah persecutes her and throws thunderbolts her way in order to destroy her. However, Irudica's mother Poganica hides her daughter in the clouds.

Incantations against inclement weather are of archetypical provenance in Croatia. During the course of time, Croats transformed former incantations into Christian prayers. Numerous prayers are recited against bad weather by the elderly even today. Croats also recount stories about Poganica, Irudica and Irud. In these prayers and stories, the main protagonists are Poganica, Irudica, St. John the Baptist and St. Elijah. In some prayers, people invoke Virgin Mary, St. Peter, St. Nicholas (the Bishop), St. Andrew (the First-Called). The prayers are still occasionally accompanied by pre-Christian rituals.

In the paper, some forty examples written in the past twenty years are interpreted in biblical, ethnological, and anthropological context.

Key words: *Poganica, Irudica, St. John the Baptist, St. Elijah the Prophet, prayers*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the folkloristics of the Croats, Irudica is a demonic being who, in popular belief, brings heavy thunderstorm. In the old days, the Croats used to practice magic against Irudica. Archetypical incantations have been Christianized and are, even in our times, recited during thundering or lightning in order to protect people and their property from Irudica. Some of these incantations may be considered as prayers. In demonological traditions and incantations, Poganica is Irudica's mother.

Antun Ilija Carić published a paper in 1897 entitled „Rudica. Poganica's daughter. Folk belief on the Islands of Hvar and Brač“. In his monograph „Poljica, folk life and customs“ (1906), Frano Ivanišević states that the people of Poljica believe that St. Elijah sends thunderbolts after Irudica (she-devil) in order to kill her. The same belief was recorded in Herzegovina by Jerko Suton in 1968 in his diploma thesis „Religious life and customs of Western Herzegovina“. In her paper „Incantations and using charms as a part of ethno-creation in Brotnjo“ from 1986, Danka Ivić brings an incantation against Irudica.

Nevertheless, in the folkloristic study of the Croats, the demonic beings Poganica and Irudica are very inadequately researched. For that reason, this paper provides and interdisciplinary interprets about a series of examples that are a result of a years-long field research by the author and his students. Most examples were gathered originally in the field in the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1997 and 2018.

2. METHODS

Apart from the field research work, this paper uses the methods of analysis, description, comparison and synthesis. The analyses of the belief about Irudica and of the incantation against her require a multidisciplinary approach. Herod and Herodias are mentioned in the gospels according to Mark, Luke and Matthew, and as such are analyzed in the biblical context. The research is based on the analysis of author's field recordings and on the few published sources in monographs, papers in the scientific periodicals, and in various collections of papers. The material collected is interpreted by structu-

ral analysis, especially by anthropological and ethnological arguments. The method of comparative analysis is used for the comparison of the collected material. The synthesis is used to present the main characteristics of the beliefs about Irudica and the incantation against her.

3. RESULTS

Antun Ilija Carić published a paper in 1897 entitled „Rudica. Poganica's daughter. Folk belief on the Islands of Hvar and Brač“, in which he writes that the people on Hvar and Brač firmly believe that the disastrous Rudica was the daughter of a Christian king who had a pagan wife, and that is why she was called Poganica. It was during the reign of that king that St. John the Baptist lived. Pagans could neither see nor tolerate St. John, so they caught him and threw him into the king's dungeon. The king tried to talk them out of that but, fearing to lose their favor, he conceded.

While St. John was in the dungeon, Rudica got engaged. Her father swore to her by his regal word that on her wedding day he would grant her whatever she wished for, even up to half of his kingdom. As the wedding day was drawing near, mother Poganica was trying to persuade Rudica to ask, before the wedding, the decapitated head of St. John the Baptist on a platter. Rudica agreed. On the wedding day, the father tried to dissuade Rudica, but to no avail. Hence, St. John the Baptist was beheaded, and his head was presented to Rudica on a plate.

The islanders believe that at the very moment when she touched John's head with her hand, God let a myriad of thunders strike her which carried her „into the world and that since then she has always been wandering to and fro, from place to place, from door to door asking for a shelter but no clever man wants to give one to her, because wherever she is, a lightning strikes. There are women who will swear to you on whatever you want that they saw her and that her body resembled a sieve because of so many lightning strikes.“ (Carić, 1897: 330–332)

The islanders also believe that no wheat should be ground during thunderstorm, because that is the opportune moment for Rudica to sneak into the house, and wherever she appears, thunders strike.

On Hvar and Brač, Rudica is chased away with these words:

Be off, be off, Rudica,
Your mother's Poganica,
Cursed by God,
Hobbled by St. John
The Cross is going about the sky,

Followed by the Virgin Mary;
She begs her Son:
„Do what is right, my Son.“
God gave the keys to St. Peter,
To open the High Heaven,
In Heaven it is joyful,
And in Hell it is mournful.
Be off, be off, Rudica. (Carić, 1897: 330–332)

This chasing of Rudica had to be incessantly repeated because it was believed that if she heard it, she would stay away thinking she had been discovered. Aware that she would not be well-received, she would quickly proceed to the next door trying to find shelter during fast lightning strikes.

Carić goes on to say: „It is said: ‘Hobbled by St. John’ because in addition to the punishment imposed on her by God, St. John had her hobbled by the devil, and now hobbled she roams about the world.

Last year, just on the Memorial of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, a heavy hailstorm devastated the vineyards on Brač. Some still believe that Rudica did not happen to be on the island at that time, otherwise God would let thunders strike her, because it usually hails during thundering and lightning. On the island of Brač we noticed that, each time it thunders, they burn some consecrated olive, maple, palm and similar leaves, but they say it is best to burn ‘rags’ since Rudica cannot stand their smell.“ (Carić, 1897: 330–332)

Islanders also believe that „Poganica“ is some kind of an evil spirit. However, she is invisible and when it thunders, she flies in the air enwrapped in a cloud, vainly trying to ward off the thunderbolts from striking Irudica.

Some believe that God would have mercy on Irudica if somebody could kill Poganica, because he would then hide her in a cloud. Some people believe that the cloud in which Poganica remains hidden is black and ends with a stone, which is actually her head. On the sides, the cloud is a little bulged and people believe these are Poganica’s arms. On the lower side, the cloud also protrudes a bit and people suppose these are her legs. It is believed that whoever wants to kill Poganica has to closely observe the cloud in which she hides, in the morning of the solemnity of St. John the Baptist, and to shoot at her from a gun, but instead of lead it must be loaded with holy wax pellets. This was how witches were usually shot. Some thought that Poganica could be easily killed by someone who is in mortal sin, because she, as a sinful soul, mostly prefers to appear to such people in the form of a cloud.

The popular belief was that Poganica was always close to Rudica so it is best to make a sign of the cross more frequently and recite:

Poganica, Poganica,
A great sinner,
She dwells in the air,
And has no fear of God.
Shame on you, Poganica,
Sinful mother of Irudica:
God wants you neither in hell nor in heaven,
For what you did to John the Baptist!
Be off, hide, you sinful woman.
Be off, run, sinister woman;
Do not show yourself to good children,
Nor to any boy or girl! (Carić, 1897: 330–332)

A belief was preserved on Brač that, during the thunderstorms, the witches, especially Rudica and Poganica, fight in the clouds.¹

In other areas in the Croatian folkloristics, Irudica is represented as a demonic being blamed for the death of St. John the Baptist, so St. Elijah persecutes her and strikes her with flashes of lightning punching holes across her body. She flees about the world in the form of a cat, since no thunderbolt has struck her so far (but only lightning), but when a thunderbolt strikes her it will kill her. Before that St. Elijah will fight against Antichrist, and Antichrist will kill him. St. Elijah will come to life again and kill the Antichrist, and it will be the end of everything and the Day of Judgment (Suton, 1968: 119–120). People of Poljica believed that St. Elijah shoots thunders after Irudica (she-devil) in order to kill her (Ivanišević, 1987: 555). In the Croatian folk belief, Irudica brings stormy weather. In Christianized incantations, Irudica is driven away by incantations: „Where St. Elijah drives away thunders, / where no child cries, / where cocks do not crow, / where stallions do not neigh, / where God's name is not invoked, (...) about high mountains, / about sea depths, / where bells do not ring“. (Dragić, 1997).

Irud (Irudan) is King Herod Antipas. According to Mark's Gospel, Herod was a king (Mk 6: 14–29), while according to Luke he was a tetrarch (Lk 9: 7–9). Herod succeeded his father Herod the Great in 4 BC and ruled Galilee and Perea, that is one fourth of his father's empire, until 39 AD.

According to the tradition, John the Baptist and Herod were friends. When Herod married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, St. John reprimanded him. Then Herod had St. John incarcerated. At the celebration of Herod's birthday, Irudica's daughter from her first marriage performed a dan-

¹ Recorded on Brač in 2009. (Dragić, 2017: 140).

ce. She enchanted Herod so much with her dance that he promised to grant her every wish. As she could not decide what to ask, she asked her mother for advice. She told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist. This folk narration is of a biblical provenance:

1. At that time, Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus (2), and said to his servants, „This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.“ (3) For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. (4) John had been saying to him, „It is not lawful for you to have her.“ (5) Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet. (6) But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod, (7) so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. (8) Having been prompted by her mother, she said, „Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.“ (9) Although he was appalled, the king commanded it to be done because of his promise, and because of his dinner guests. (10) He had John beheaded in the prison. (11) And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. (12) His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported it to Jesus (Mt 14: 1–12) (cf Mk 6: 14–29; Lk 9: 7–9).

A great number of incantations use charms against storms and other forms of inclement weather. The content of such incantations is Christianized. They were recited by housewives, householders, shepherds, passengers, farmers while holding a cross or a rosary faced towards the direction of the storm. Croatian incantations are composed with religious lyric images, for example, a cross going about the sky, followed by the Virgin Mary asking her son to give St. Peter the keys to open the Holy Heaven where angels dance, where little children play. The Virgin picked flowers and covered the field with them:

„The cross is going about the sky,
followed by the Virgin Mary,
begging her Son:
‘Give me, Son, the honor
you promised to God.
Give St. Peter the keys
to open the holy Heaven

where angels dance,
where small children play.'
The Virgin gathered
fennel flowers,
covered the field with them
Be off, be off, Irudica,
cursed by God,
hobbled by St. John.
God curses,
St. John hobbles.
(Where St. John catches you,
he will there crush your head.)²

In the above prayer, the Virgin Mary picks fennel flowers and covers the field with them. In the traditional culture, the fennel has an apotropaic function. Demonic beings are driven away with it.

In Podstrana near Split, people believed that when it thundered, evil powers gathered under the cloud, so they recited the following prayer:

„The cross is going about the sky,
followed by the Virgin Mary,
who begged her Son:
'Go, my dear boy, there to Heaven,
give St. Peter the keys,
that he may take out a silk girdle,
to throw it up under the cloud:
where people suffer in anguish,
where angels dance!'
Be off, Irud and Irudica,
your mother's Poganica,
cursed by God,
hobbled by St. John with nails,
God curses her,
St. John hobbles her with nails."³

² Slatine 2004, Marica Mauko (born in 1935). (Dragić, 2017: 142).

³ Podstrana near Split 2005, Blaženka Brajčić (née Perišić, born in 1922). (Dragić, 2017: 142).

While in most prayers it is said that Irudica is hobbled with the blood of St. John, in the above prayer God curses Irudica, and St. John hobbles her with nails. In Christianity, nails symbolize passion because it was with them that Jesus was nailed to the cross. Older crucifixes show four nails: one on each foot and hand of Jesus Christ. Frequently, only three nails are presented because both feet were nailed with only one nail (Badurina (ed.), 1990: 187).

Church bells were used for the first time in Campania towards the end of the sixth century. Their original purpose was to summon priests, and from the seventh century also the faithful to prayer. In the popular belief, bells symbolize magic power for chasing away demonic forces (Badurina (ed.), 1990: 331–332). In some incantations recounted by female tellers even today „St. Elijah drives thunders away as far as India, an unknown country, ‘where God is not prayed to, where brother marries sister, where the cock does not crow...’“ In the area of Široki Brijeg, Irudica is cursed, hobbled with the blood of St. John, and is chased away into the mountains: where there is no eucharist, / where no bell rings, / where Our Lady is not on her knees, / where Jesus suffers passion“.⁴

In the Podgorje village near Mostar, Irudica is chased away to where a cock does not crow, where a baby does not cry, where a bull does not bellow, where a dog does not bark:

Be off, be off, Irudica,
your mother's Poganica,
cursed by God,
crucified by St. John.
Be off, be off, Irudica,
to the mountain:
where a cock does not crow,
where a baby does not cry,
where a steer does not bellow,
where a bell is not heard,
where a dog does not bark,
where God's name is not invoked.
Be off, be off, Irudica,
your mother's Poganica,
cursed by God,
crucified by St. John.“⁵

At Podbablje near Imotski, this prayer has remained to this day:

⁴ Široki Brijeg 2006. Drina Marušić (née Mandić, born in 1953 in Široki Brijeg). (Dragić, 2017: 143).

⁵ Podgorje kod Mostara 2010. Ruža Šetka, born in 1928. (Dragić, 2017: 143).

„A cross is spanned across the sky,
followed by the Virgin Mary,
begging her son:
‘Give me, Son, a word
that God gave to you,
give St. Peter the keys
to open the shining Heaven gate,
that a fairy may not chant,
that she may not dance!’
Be off, be off, Irudica,
your mother’s Poganica,
by God cursed,
by St. John
the Baptist hobbled.“⁶

In the region of Trogir, Irudica is chased away with incantations because her mother is Poganica, cursed by God, crucified by Jesus:

„Be off, be off, Irudica,
your mother’s Poganica,
cursed by God
crucified by Jesus.
She was banished by God
and by St. John
into deep depths,
to high heights,
where cocks do not crow,
where God is not invoked
and where the holy name
of Jesus is not mentioned.“⁷

During thundering and lightning, in Herzegovina people would make a sign of the cross and recite:

⁶ Podbablje 2010. Dinka Čapin called Kosa, née Kujundžić, born in 1937. (Dragić, 2017: 145).

⁷ Drvenik Veliki 2008. Neda Rušinović, née Vulas; born in 1924. (Dragić, 2017: 145).

„Cross after cross in the sky,
followed by the Virgin Mary,
begging her Son.
to give the keys to Peter,
that fairies may not have a ball,
that angels may dance.
Save us, St. Elijah.“

At the end, people would once again make a sign of the cross (Ivić, 1986: 152).

In the above incantation (and in many others), Jesus gave the keys to St. Peter. In the Christian tradition, a key symbolizes St. Peter. According to Matthew (16: 19), Jesus said to Peter: „I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.“ That is why St. Peter is considered the heavenly gatekeeper (Badurina (ed.), 1990: 331–332).

When a storm, or some other bad weather, is drawing near the area of Žepče (Bosnia and Herzegovina), people sprinkle holy water (Dragić, 2007: 96–117) and recite:

„Crosses, crosses across the sky,
followed by the Virgin
and by the Sunday crowned.
Peter gives the keys
that angels may dance.
Be off, be off, Irudica,
your mother's Poganica,
your sister's a damned person;
hobbled by St. Elijah.
St. Elijah the Fiery
who drives thunders away.“⁸

There is a multitude of interferences in the oral and written literature. Some recorded oral-literary examples were incorporated in the written works, while others were inspired by oral literature thus creating the works of lasting artistic value. Some were based on the model of the oral literature, while others recorded original oral-literary examples. The example of the latter is a

⁸ Žepče 2004, Pava Jozinović (born in 1924). (Dragić, 2017: 146).

writer and academician Veselko Koroman who recorded the following recount of his mother:

„A shooting-star across the sky,
followed by the Virgin Mary,
who begged her Son
to make wormwood powder.
God gave her wormwood keys
to open the shining Heaven,
so that elves cannot dance,
and that angels may play.
Be off, be off, Irudica,
your mother's Poganica,
your sister's a viper,
cursed by God,
hobbled by St. Elijah.
St. Elijah the Fiery
who drives thunders away,
drives thunders to the cursed mountain,
where no bell rings,
where Our Lady is not on her knees,
where God's cocks do not crow,
where there is nothing but wood and stone.“⁹

In the area of Fojnica, Kiseljak and Kreševo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the eve of Palm Sunday children distribute and exchange yew branches (Dragić, 2006). On the Palm Sunday, these branches are blessed only to be burned later in front of the house during a storm.¹⁰

Yew is an endemic plant of a bushy form. It is long-lived and its tree is exceptionally sturdy. In 1999, a 2000-year-old yew tree was found in Gorski Kotar. Owing to its longevity and sturdiness, people attribute magic properties to the yew believing that it protects against demonic forces. For this reason, for example, the Orthodox sew a piece of yew wood into their clothes or wear it around the neck in the form of a cross. Necklaces, sticks and spoons used to be made from yew wood (Dragić, 2014: 269–313).

A female storyteller from Široki Brijeg reports that even now they recite the following prayer during thundering and lightning:

⁹ Gornji Radišići near Ljubuški 1996, Matija Koroman (née Kraljević, 1908–1997). (Dragić, 2017: 147).

¹⁰ Kiseljak 2007, told by fra Ivan Pervan (born in 1955 – † 2018). (Dragić, 2017: 148).

„Be off, be off, Irudica
your mother's Poganica,
cursed by God,
hobbled by St. John's blood.
St. Elijah the Fiery,
drives thunders away,
Even far away from me,
there into some dales,
where no bell rings,
where Our Lady is not on her knees,
where Jesus does not hold the Mass.“¹¹

In Sinj, Irudica whose mother is Poganica is chased away with incantations accompanied by the invocations of St. Elijah and St. Rose Mary:

„Be off, be off, Irudica,
your mother's Poganica.
St. Peter and Elijah,
who thunder away thunders!
St. Rose Mary,
who gave birth to God.
John baptized him!
Oh, John, baptize me, too,
as you did God and yourself!“¹²

In a Biokovo village, the incantation against Irudica has preserved some archetypical elements:

„Jesus and Mary
St. Peter and Andrew!
Be off, be off, Irudica,
cursed by God,
hobbled by St. John!
Phew! Be gone, you harlot,
away from my home and mulberry tree!“¹³

¹¹ Biogradi near Široki Brijeg 2009, Kata Bogda, née Planinić 1937. (Dragić, 2017: 148).

¹² Sinj 2009. Ana-Marija Arbanas (née Šabić, born in 1930). (Dragić, 2017: 149).

¹³ Biokovsko selo in 2009, Mara Lovrinčević born in 1936. (Dragić, 2017: 149).

During thunderstorms, people believed that St. Elijah rode the heavenly chariot, so they put consecrated Agnus Dei amulet to protect their homes from inclement weather.

In Grabova Draga near Širokog Brijeg, the prayer evokes a cross spanning across the sky, followed by the Virgin Mary begging her son Jesus to fight off thunders and lightning:

*Be off Irudica,
the daughter of Poganica,
cursed by God,
hobbled by St. John's blood.
A cross is spanning across the sky,
followed by the Virgin Mary
begging her son:
„Fight off these thunders and lightning, my Son,
into those desolate mountains,
where God's name is not invoked,
where children's cries are not heard,
where the cock does not crow,
where the cow does not bellow.*

Said prayer was repeated five times followed by the sign of the cross.¹⁴

In the Sinj area, during the thunderstorm people invoked angel Gabriel, Jesus, Mary, St. Peter, St. Nicholas and St. Elijah. They prayed for Irudica to be chased away for she was cursed by God:

*Hail to thee, angel Gabriel,
arrows shooting across the sky,
a galley navigating the endless sea,
protect us Jesus and Mary!
St. Peter and Nicholas the Fiery,*

¹⁴ Recounted by Dragica Bošnjak – Dada born in Grabova Draga, a village near Široki Brijeg, in 1934. She had lived there for 40 years before she moved to Dobrič with her family. This happened in the 1970s when most people moved from outback villages to cities or towns near the cities. Dada says she is sorry that only about 70 households remained out of the total of 120 households in her home village Grabova Draga. She heard, uttered and remembered the prayers. Dada did not go to school, she cannot write but she taught herself to read. She is not married, and she lives with her nephew and his family in Dobrič. The prayer is an integral part of her every day.

*who chase away thunders!
Be off, be off Irudica,
cursed by God,
by Elijah our lighting protector,
the savior of our souls!¹⁵*

In said prayer, St. Nicholas is referred to as the Fiery.

In the Ljubuški area, St. Elijah is invoked to chase away thunders *across ominous mountains, where our Lady does not kneel / where the sun does not shine / where the God's cock does not crow:*

*Be off, be off Irudica,
your mother is Poganica,
your sister is a viper,
cursed by God,
hobbled by St. John.
St. Elijah the Fiery
who chases away thunders
across the ominous mountains,
where our Lady does not kneel,
where the sun does not shine,
where the God's cock does not crow.¹⁶*

There is an old prayer in Runović near Imotski where St. Elijah is invoked to chase way thunders *across the high walls, / onto the widespread meadows, / where the cock does not crow, / where no children's cries are heard* because it is where Irudica resides:

*St. Elijah the Fiery,
the chaser of the thunders!
Chase the thunders away from us,
across the high walls,
onto the widespread meadows,
where the cock does not crow,
where no children's cries are heard!
It is where the bird Irudica resides,*

¹⁵ Recorded by Marija Emanuela Sunara in Gljevec near Sinj in 2016. Recounted by Anđa Zebić (née Maleš) born in 1942.

¹⁶ Polog near Ljubuški in 2018. The storyteller was born in 1942.

*daughter of a damned woman,
cursed by God,
hobbled by the blood of St. John!
Irud, stay away from us,
because Jesus Christ is on our side.
Amen.*¹⁷

The oral tradition preserved a prayer originating from the Trogir area which is used to pray against inclement weather. In the prayer, Irudica and her mother Poganica are chased away:

*Be off, be off, Irudica,
your mother is Poganica,
cursed by God,
hobbled by St. John!
Collected by the Virgin Mary,
from the dark flowers,
as soon as it blossomed in the field,
save us from the thunderstorm,
and ominous clouds,
our beloved Lord! (Pažanin, 1986: 195)*

On the island of Vis, people believed that the storm could be prevented by burning a pinch of salt on the logs in the fireplace and that the crackling of the salt would chase away the storm. They also believed that the storm would stop if they threw a burning log in the front yard together with the supporting ropes, or if they shot directly into the clouds from a gun loaded with sharpened heather tips (Alaupović-Gjeldum, 2003: 110). They would recite the following prayers:

*A cross, a cross spans across the sky,
followed by the mother Mary,
she spread her wings.
And shielded the entire field,
to protect it from the evil thunders,
ominous wind and clouds.*

¹⁷ Runović near Imotski in 2018. The storyteller was born in Runović in 1932.

*Oh, you cursed thunder,
you swore
to our Lord,
that you would not hurt the field,
where the wheat is harvested,
where the body of Jesus is celebrated
where the vines bear grapes,
where the blood of Jesus is celebrated.*

*Be off, be off, Irudica,
cursed by God,
hobbled by St. John,
you have nowhere to hide
but amongst the rocks
where the wind does not blow,
where the sun does not shine,
where God's name is not invoked.* (Alaupović-Gjeldum, 2003: 110 – 111)

In Christianity, wheat symbolizes bread, and bread symbolizes the body of Christ. Wine symbolizes Jesus's passion and blood.

In Kaštel Lukšić, people particularly celebrate St. John the Baptist¹⁸ for the celebration of whom they erected a small chapel at the Kozjak Hill, where they usually pilgrimage. The local elders traditionally make all the necessary preparations the night before the celebration and spend the night on Kozjak. On the day of St. John the Baptist, the mass is held at 9 a.m., preceded by a procession. Every year to this day they have recited the following chant:

*John the Baptist used to say it,
wanted to say it, had to say it,
otherwise he would burst.
It cost him his head,
his holy, sacred head,
brought on a platter,
because of the damned Irudica.
He was destroyed
by his own words
spoken and uttered*

¹⁸ For more information see: Dragić, M.; Dragić, H.: 2019: 275–329.

*from his sacred head.
He could keep quiet, but he didn't,
instead he shouted,
roared as a lion.
He prepared the way for the Christ
by mending and baptizing people.¹⁹*

The words of the storyteller who spent her childhood at her grandmother's house in Slatine are paradigmatic: „These are the prayers that my grandma taught me during heavy thunders and lightning. She would also sprinkle holy water across the entire house. It was a truly dramatic event. She would calm the thunders with her soft voice and hold my hand while we sprinkled holy water. She made me repeat after her“:

*A cross spans across the sky,
followed by the Virgin Mary,
pleading with the Lord:
„Dear God, please honor me
as promised,
and give St. Peter the keys,
to open the gates to Holy Heaven,
where the angels sing,
where the children play.
The Virgin picked
some fennel flowers,
and shielded the entire field
from the nasty lightning.
Be of, be off, Irudica,
your mother is Poganica,
hobbled by God,
cursed by St. John!²⁰*

The storyteller nostalgically said: „My grandma is long gone. Neither of us knew exactly why thunders and lightning struck. She hadn't gone to school, and I was just a child. Thunders and lightning have been around forever.

¹⁹ Recorded by Matea Carev in Kaštel Gomilica in 2017. Recounted by Stanislava Carev Stanislava Carev, born in 1935.

²⁰ Recorded by Ivana Lovrinčević in 2019. Recounted by Vanja Škrobica born in Slatine in 1953 where she spent her childhood years. She is a teacher who lives in Split.

*Now I know why thunders strike, I learnt it from science. But whenever there is a storm, I don't think about science but about my grandma.*²¹

In the Trilj area, the prayers are used to chase away Irudicas and their cursed mothers:

*A cross spans across the sky,
followed by the Virgin Mary,
crowned Virgin,
holy Virgin Mary.
St. Peter gives her the keys
to open the shiny gates to heaven.
Be off, be off, Irudicas,
your mothers are damned,
cursed by God,
hobbled by Elijah.*²²

Said prayer was recited by grandmothers right before the storm, when they would sprinkle holy water around the house and throw consecrated fir across the fields.

People have long believed that thunders and lightning came from „evil forces“. Anthropologically, it made sense because the houses were built with lower quality materials, they were less safe, and a thunder strike could have had a tragic outcome.

In order to chase away the storm, people would recite the following prayer:

*Be off, be off, Irudica,
your mother is cursed,
damned by God,
hobbled by the holy cross.*²³

²¹ Ibid.

²² Recorded by Katarina Matić in Košute near Trilj in 2019. Recounted by Marija Vukas, née Šipić born in 1941.

²³ Recorded by Lucija Bradarić in Nova Sela on 25 March 2018, as recounted by Jasna Bradarić née Čorić, born in 1966 who learnt the prayer from her grandmother. Modern Ethnography of Oral Literature and Church Folk Heritage in Nova Sela near Omiš (diploma thesis), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Split, 2020, p. 27 (available on <https://repozitorij.ffst.unist.hr/islandora/object/ffst:2445>).

There was also another prayer:

*Jesus and Mary,
St. Peter and Andrew,
Elijah the Fiery,
who chases away thunders.*²⁴

In Kaštel Stari, the following chant was recited during thunderstorm, hailstorm, rain or stormy weather by a group gathered at someone's houses:

*Be off, be off Irudica!
Your mother is Poganica,
cursed by God,
crucified by St. John.*²⁵

4. DISCUSION

Irud is a Croatized name for the Jewish king Herod Antipas who ruled from 4 BC to 39 AD. In the folkloristics of the Croats, Herod is called Irud. According to the oral tradition of the Croats, Herod Antipas was friends with John the Baptist.

John the Baptist (June 24 – August 29, 29) was an ascetic preacher of penance, the greatest and the last prophet of the Old Testament.

However, when Herod married the wife of his half-brother Philip, John the Baptist reprimanded him. Therefore, Herod incarcerated him. At the celebration of Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias performed an enchanting dance, so Herod promised to grant her every wish. After the dance, the daughter of Herodias asked her mother for advice what to ask from Herod, and she told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. She eventually asked that from Herod, and he granted her the wish. These two are to blame for the death of John the Baptist. The evidence of that is found in the gospels:

(14) And King Herod heard of it, for Jesus's name had become well-known; and people were saying, „John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.“

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Recorded by Ana Čavka in Kaštel Stari in 2015. Told by Marija Čavka (née Bašić) born in Lećevecica in 1957. Ana Čavka, Traditional Spiritual Cultural Heritage of the Dalmatian Hinterland (diploma thesis), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Split, 2020, p. 49 (available at urn:nbn:hr:172:479994).

(15) But others were saying, „He is Elijah.“ And others were saying, „He is a prophet, like one of the earlier prophets.“ (16) But when Herod heard of it, he kept saying, „John, whom I beheaded, has risen!“ (...) (19) Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; (20) for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. (21) The ominous day came when Herod organized a banquet for his birthday for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; (22) and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, „Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.“ (23) And he swore to her, „Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; *up to half of my kingdom*.“ (24) And she went out and said to her mother, „What shall I ask for?“ She replied, „The head of John the Baptist.“ (25) She immediately rushed to the king and said, „I want you to give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter at once.“ (26) And although the king was deeply saddened by it, because of his promise and his dinner guests he did not want to refuse the wish. (27) Immediately, the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back John's head. So, he went and had him beheaded in the prison, (28) and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. (29) When his disciples heard about this, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb (Mk 6: 14–29) (cf Mt 14: 1–12; Lk 9: 7–9; Lk 3: 19–20).

As a result of the recount above, the Croats refer to Herodias as Pogonica and to her daughter as Irudica considering them demonic beings. Stories are told about them even in our time, and, in some places, charms are still used against them, but people also pray to God to protect them against Irudica.

In the gospels, the name of Herodias's daughter is not mentioned. The Jewish historian Josephus Flavius indicated that her name was Salomé. At the celebration of the birthday of Herod Antipas, Salomé performed the Dance of the Seven Veils throwing away one veil after another as she went on dancing. At the end, Herod promised to give her whatever she asked for. Prompted by her mother Herodias, she asked for the head of St. John the Baptist on a platter. According to the gospels, King Herod was very sorry, but because of his promise he ordered his executioners to bring her the head of St. John the Baptist on a platter. According to the Bible, Herodias demanded this because St. John warned Herod not to marry the wife of his brother Philip. In his poem

„Midsummer Night's Dream“ published in 1842, Heinrich Heine writes that Herodias was in love with St. John, but that he rejected her. In his play „Salomé“ from 1891 Oscar Wilde wrote that Saloma was in love with St. John but he rejected her, so she took her revenge on him.

In the folkloristics of the Croats, Irudica is a demonic being that brings stormy weather. That is why people used to practice magic against her. In Croatian folkloristics, the incantations against Irudica and other demonic beings have been Christianized. Many of these incantations may be regarded as prayers. The motif of cocks crowing can be found in incantations and prayers. The popular belief is that with the first crowing of cocks all demonic beings vanish. In Christianity, a cock symbolizes vigilance and readiness. In Christian iconography, a cock stands by the side of St. Peter reminding him of his denial of Jesus as well as of his repentance, and, in this sense, it symbolizes Jesus's passion. A cock is also presented next to Peter while he is weeping. In this way, the cock warns the head of the Church, St. Peter, to wash his sin with tears (Badurina (ed.), (1990): 459).

People also chase Irudica away to where a dog does not bark. In Christianity, a dog also symbolizes vigilance and readiness (Dragić, 2010: 467–488).

In the Žepče area in Bosnia and Herzegovina, people also mention Irudica's sister in incantations – she is a damned person.²⁶

5. CONCLUSION

According to Mark's, Matthew's, and Luke's Gospel, at the celebration of the birthday of Herod Antipas, the daughter of Herodias danced enchantingly, and Herod promised to grant her every wish, even up to half of his kingdom. After the dance, the daughter of Herodias asked her mother for advice what she would ask from Herod, and she told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. This is what she did ask from Herod who granted her wish. Therefore, Herodias and her daughter are guilty of the death of John the Baptist. The gospels do not mention the name of Herodias's daughter, and in the Croatian folkloristics she is called Irudica. The belief about Irudica and her mother in the folkloristics of the Croats is in harmony with said gospels. The Croats call Irudica's mother Poganica because she convinced her daughter into asking the head of John the Baptist. In the folkloristics of the Croats, Poganica hides in a cloud, and while St. Elijah chases Irudica with thunders, Poganica hides her so she could not be struck. Irudica's sister is rarely mentioned; people call her a damned person.

²⁶ Žepče 2004, Pava Jozinović (born in 1924).

Owing to the crime she committed, in the folkloristics of the Croats Irudica is a demonic being that brings stormy weather. That is why the Croats recite incantations and pray to God to protect them from Irudica. These incantations and prayers speak of Irudica who is hobbled by the blood of St. John the Baptist. They frequently mention St. Elijah, St. Peter, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The incantations and prayers mentioned and interpreted in this paper have an exceptional aesthetic and existential value, while some of them are even considered anthological.

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DEMONSKA BIĆA IRUDICA I POGANICA U STARINSKIM VJEROVANJIMA, BAJANJIMA I MOLITVAMA

Po predaji Sv. Ivan Krstitelj i kralj Herod Antipa bili su u dobrim odnosima. Međutim, kad je Herod odlučio oženiti ženu svoga brata Filipa, Ivan Krstitelj ga je ukorio da to ne radi. Za vrijeme proslave rođendana kralja Heroda Antipe, Herodijadina kćerka je zanosno plesala te joj je Herod obećao ispuniti svaku želju pa makar zatražila i pola njegova kraljevstva. Kćerka nije znala koju će želju iskazati pa je upitala majku Herodijadu koja joj je rekla da traži glavu Ivana Krstitelja na pladnju. Herod joj je ispunio želju. Prema evanđeljima s velikom vjerojatnošću može se zaključiti da se to dogodilo 29. kolovoza 29. godine.

U hrvatskoj tradicijskoj baštini Herodijada i njezina kćerka pretvorile su se u demonska bića. Hrvati Herodijadu nazivaju Poganicom, njezinu kćerku irudicom a kralja Heroda Irudom.

Prema hrvatskoj tradiciji irudica predvodi olujno grmljavinsko nevrijeme a Sv. Ilija je goni i gađa kako bi je uništio. Međutim, Irudičina majka Poganica svoju kćerku krije u oblacima.

Arhetipskoga je podrijetla u Hrvata bajanje protiv nevremena. Nekadašnje bajalice Hrvati su kristijanizirali i pretvorili ih u molitve. Mnogobrojne su molitve koje i sada starije osobe mole protiv nevremena. Hrvati, također pripovijedaju o Poganici, irudici i Irudu. U molitvama i pričama glavni akteri su poganica, irudica, Sv. Ivan Krstitelj i Sv. Ilija. U nekim molitvama zazivaju se Djevica Marija, Sv. Petar, Sv. Nikola (biskup), Sv. Andrija (Prvopozvani). Molitve još uvijek pokatkad prate drevni pretkršćanski rituali. Hrvatske usmene lirske svjetovne i vjerske pjesme u suglasju su s evanđeljima. Značajan broj tih pjesama ima antologijsku vrijednost.

Četrdesetak primjera u radu, zapisanih u prethodnih tridesetak godina, interpretira se u biblijskom te etnološkom i antropološkom kontekstu.

Ključne riječi: *poganica, irudica, Sv. Ivan Krstitelj, Sv. Ilija prorok, molitve*