THE VISOKO COMPLEX: COMMUNITAS IN THE SHADOW OF THE BOSNIAN PYRAMIDS

By

John Parle

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Supervisors: Alexandra Kowalski

Prem Kumar Rajaram

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Figure 1. Illustration on the wall of a Visoko café

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Abstract

"If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas 1928).

This thesis takes up the case of the "Visoko Complex", simultaneously a physical complex of purportedly archaeological sites, a social complex of various factions, and according to some a psychological complex as well. Close to a decade ago in the town of Visoko in Bosnia, a man declared that what were thought to be hills were in fact buried pyramids. This event prompted a diverse national and international reaction, still in process to this day. I examine the phenomenon in context, and consider in turn the critique from the scientific establishment, the pyramid proponents themselves, and their foreign and local supporters. An argument is made against the mainstream critique, with an alternative approach centred on Victor Turner's communitas concept (1969) offered in its place.

Acknowledgments

At some point in the preparation of this document, I had a dream that I was tasked with guiding an elderly mammoth, a three legged cow, and several lost children through a swamp, a forest and a mountain pass. In the morning my best guess was that the children were my remaining final papers. I could carry them one at a time but not all at once, and they were inclined to run away. The three legged cow was a looming statistics exam, a problem of numbers with no obvious solution. The mammoth was this thesis. He was massive but infirm, inclined to lose his way, and I would have to push and pull him around all kinds of obstacles. It was a miracle he wasn't already extinct. Now, the mammoth has reached his destination. For their help along the way I would like to thank my advisors Alexandra Kowalski, Prem Kumar Rajaram, Vlad Naumescu and Anna Loutfi; and my colleagues Zlatko Custovic, Viktoria Fomina, Marko Balazevic, Roksolana Mashkova and Çiçek Ilengiz; all of whom have left their mark in what follows. I am also much indebted to my family and my good

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Semir Osmanagić and the Valley of the Bosnian Pyramids

In the summer of 2012 I found myself on a train out of Sarajevo, heading northwest. I was on my way to a place called Visoko, to the uninitiated, a relatively inconspicuous town in Bosnia's heartland. I still remember the short journey quite clearly. Enjoying the fine weather and the local hospitality, I shared my cabin with three generations of a local family. As often happened, they offered to share their lunch with me. I asked them via their youngest, a boy with some primary school English: "Do you believe in the pyramid?" My translator grinned and shook his head. His grandfather, however, nodded reverently. Just at that moment he pointed out the window, and there was Visočica, the Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun.

Figure 2. Visočica, better known as "Piramida Sunca"

This striking, angular form rises steeply from the river Bosna. Sporting Visoko's outlying houses on its limbs, a forest on its mid-section and the ruins of a medieval capital on its summit, Visočica has for most of history been regarded simply as a hill, albeit an eye-catching one. After one returned expatriate's fateful visit however, things were to take a turn for the dramatic.

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Semir Osmanagić is a Bosnian from Zenica (Woodard 2009) of mixed parentage, the child of a Bosniak father and a Croat mother (Foer 2007). He left the country on the eve of war in 1993, migrating to Houston, Texas, where he started a successful metal working business (Woodard 2009). By his own account, he first saw something peculiar in the hills around Visoko while being given a tour of the area's medieval heritage in the summer of 2005. While the guide was speaking with enthusiasm about Visoki, the small citadel at Visočica's summit which gives the town its name, he made a throw-away comment about the unusual shape of the hill. Osmanagić recalls, "That remark caught my attention. Nature rarely shapes hills in symmetrical and regular geometrical form. In spite of Visočica being 700 m high (2296.58 ft.), I did not eliminate the possibility that it was a product of a human activity. On the contrary. The more I found out, the more I felt that this phenomenon needed to be explored" (Osmanagić 2005a). The shape and orientation of Visočica and another nearby hill, Plješevica, seemed familiar to this man, who had become an aficionado of Pre-Colombian American civilizations during his time in the United States (Foer 2007). Compelled, he opened a textbook for a comparison, and there he seemed to find his confirmation. "The fact that out of all the pages in the book I flipped to the one that shows a Mexican pyramid wasn't accidental. I learned that that there were no coincidences in life... only signs that should be followed" (Osmanagić 2005a).

Not a man to make idle claims, Osmanagić sought and received permits to make geological drillings that same year, did so at his own expense (Osmanagić 2005a), and soon afterwards commenced more ambitious excavations aimed at exposing the surface of the pyramids amidst national media fanfare. Dissent was sparse amongst Bosnian journalists, one exception being Vuk Bacanovic, who struggled to highlight the controversial ideas in Osmanagić's previous writings (Woodard 2009). These included claims linking the Maya civilization to extra-terrestrials and Atlantis (Osmanagić 2005b, cited in Woodard 2009).

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Nevertheless the nascent project found wider coverage through a charmed international media, including pieces by the BBC, the Associated Press, Agence France-Presse and ABC (Woodard 2009). These outlets playfully recounted how Osmanagić had renamed Visočica hill the "Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun", claiming it as the largest and oldest such structure on Earth. Plješevica likewise became the "Bosnian Pyramid of the Moon". Before long Osmanagić had identified a whole network of monuments in the area – including the Pyramid of the Bosnian Dragon, the Pyramid of the Earth, the Pyramid of Love, a tumulus at Vratnica and a labyrinthine tunnel system, Ravne. He gave this Visoko Complex a tentative age of upwards of twelve thousand years (Schoch 2006; Woodard 2009). The Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun Foundation (hereafter referred to as the Foundation) was established to organise the project, an office was opened in Visoko, and signage set up around the town to direct tourists to the sites.

For many politicians, there was no question that this rare piece of positive attention for the country should be supported. The chairman of the Bosnian presidency, Sulejman Tihic, invited Koichiro Matsuura, the director-general of UNESCO, to send a party to consider Visoko as a candidate for a World Heritage site (Woodard 2009). The Bosnian Pyramids were however met with a swift negative response from international scientific quarters. Most notably, the European Archaeological Association mobilized prominent members to petition the Bosnian government to cease its support. This move succeeded in obstructing the UNESCO application, and likely emboldened concerned members of government. Gavrilo Grahovac, minister of culture of the Bosniak-Croat Federation, moved to suspend the Foundation's digging permits in 2007. He was however overruled by Nedzad Brankovic, the federation's prime minister (Woodard 2009). The matter of excavations on Visočica itself was brought to a provisional conclusion by the Commission to Preserve National Monuments, which extended the protected area around the ruins of Visoki to include the whole hill,

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purportedly after a lack of cooperation from the Foundation (Woodard 2009). As a component of the international semi-protectorate over Bosnia and Herzegovina, the commission's decision could not be overruled by elected Bosnian officials (Woodard 2009). Undeterred, Osmanagić refocused his attention on the Ravne tunnels. These are an alleged artificial labyrinth, which he claims are related to the pyramids. Currently, as he and his tour guides expressed to me in conversation, the main goal of the project is to clear these tunnels of material which filled them partly through natural processes sometime after their construction, and in this way extend them with the ultimate goal of entering the pyramid from below the ground.

Commentator's estimates of monies involved at the height of activity in 2006 vary, from $300,000 (Bohannon 2006) to $500,000 (Foer 2007). As well as investing large sums of his own money, Osmanagić claims the majority of his budget comes from private investors and only about 10% from government grants (Bohannon 2006). By 2009 Osmanagić was quoted as estimating contributions to the Foundation at over $1 million: $220,000 from Malaysian businessman Vincent Tan; $240,000 from Visoko's local government; $40,000 from the federal government; and $350,000 of his own money (cited in Woodard 2009). Nevertheless from my own observations, activities have slowed significantly since the early days of the project, and talk of limited funding was widespread amongst Visoko residents both inside and outside of Foundation circles. During my fieldwork in April 2014, I interacted with only three miners, five tour guides, one security guard and two office secretaries. Most archaeological work is now undertaken in the summer months by international volunteers, who come as part of a summer camp organised by the Foundation each year. Some income is drawn from tourist revenue, which Osmanagić told me he recognised early on as the only way to break even, though supposedly not enough to generate profits.

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After nine years of work this remarkable effort has yet to produce anything accepted by the wider scientific community as archaeological evidence. However, Osmanagić and his Foundation claim they have discovered sacred geometry, ancient masonry and ceramic megaliths, artificially concealed tunnels, and even runic inscriptions. I began to get a sense of how far outside the mainstream the project had located itself when I saw an illustration on a pamphlet of a luminous beam of energy projected from the top of the Pyramid of the Sun. The pyramid "energy" is a purported non-material property of the sites variously assigned healing power and even intelligence.

1.2 Research Focus

Anthony Harding, president of the European Association of Archaeologists at the time of the first events in Visoko, suggested "…there are probably three types of people involved in the pyramids… There are fanatics who want to believe this stuff, there are people who are being misled, and there are people who are leading people along, cynically, for political and financial reasons" (quoted in Foer 2007). This assessment, broadly representative of the scientific establishment, leads to claims of varying degrees of harm being done by Osmanagić's project. The most serious is the allegation that authentic Neolithic, Roman or Medieval archaeology might be damaged (for example as cited in Bohannon 2006; Rose 2006; Woodard 2009). Others argue that attention and funding is being diverted from more legitimate projects such as the maintenance of the National Museum in Sarajevo, or Zilka Kujundzic-Vejzagic's research into the Butmir Neolithic culture (Bohannon 2006; Foer 2007; Woodard 2009). This thesis is unable to investigate these allegations within its space and research time constraints. I focus instead on a deeper implicit claim: that believing in the Bosnian Pyramids is bad in itself, and could therefore only be endorsed by a cognizant cynic out of self-interest or for political reasons, or a delusional fanatic whose ideas are devoid of any value. My research question is whether or not these statements stand up against an

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alternative hypothesis. This thesis argues that while irrational and cynical motives may play a role in Visoko, to reduce the phenomenon to these alone is a counterproductive simplification. As argued by Pruitt (2007), the social mechanisms producing the discourse are thereby ignored. Even in the case that the project is indeed harmful to its host community, the social roots of the issue are not addressed. Deeper investigation or any dialogue with its producers is ruled unnecessary.

Also, as noted by Uosukainen (2013), any complete picture of the phenomenon must examine both its local and extra-local supporters. This thesis adds to this a consideration of the phenomenon's detractors as a third party in the discourse. After outlining the historic and geographic background in Chapter 2, in Chapter 3 I argue that their chief allegations – of fraud or fanaticism – flow in part from a particular tradition and worldview, and (for the purposes of investigation at least) should themselves not be taken as possessing a monopoly on the "truth". In Chapter 4 I offer an alternative theoretical approach using concepts from the social sciences. My hypothesis is centred on communitas (Turner 1969), a periodic human impulse for anti-structure which allows societal transformations to take place. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7 I examine the three parties in the pyramid phenomenon, respectively: the Foundation itself, its international and its local audiences. I question the adequacy of the existing explanations of the movement, and offer communitas as an alternative which encapsulates its three constituent groups. My interpretation has two main implications – firstly that the Visoko Complex may be socially valuable, and second that its future as well as its past may be related to the persistence of a negative structured environment with no better means of address. This thesis contributes to the literature by providing an unbiased and novel analysis of the case, testable conclusions about its origins and future trajectory, and a re-examination of Turner's classic concept which connects it to later theoretical developments.

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1.3 Methodology

This thesis is centred on the results of three weeks of field work in Visoko in April of 2014. During that time I gathered my data primarily through a large number of semi-structured conversations with Foundation staff and associates, local people of different professions and generations, and tourists. Pseudonyms are used except for public figures. I also carried out three surveys – one larger survey in a local school (151 responses from students aged 16 to 18) and two smaller (29 responses from local adults, 18 responses from international volunteers). I focused on the school for logistical convenience as well as the possibility to ask the respondents about the opinions of their family and other authority figures in addition to their own feelings. As I visited Visoko outside of the main volunteer season (June through September in 2014), I surveyed and conversed with volunteers using their Facebook forum.

The limitations of the survey method bear mentioning here; in particular the inability to ask follow-up questions, the possibility of spoiled responses, and issues of wording and translation. I have tried to minimise these by including contingency questions following the main questions (e.g. 9 and 9a, 9b in the local survey in Chapter 7); watching for obviously randomly filled responses; using simple wording, and acquiring the help of a local translator. Balancing these drawbacks, it should be noted that surveys also have certain advantages over interviews, which can be intrusive, reactive, and logistically inefficient (Bernard 2006:257). I have therefore opted for a balance of the two methods.

I was able to carry out some participant observation as a volunteer in the small-scale excavations which continue outside the main season, though the information I could glean was limited due to the small number of staff on duty (three miners, one security guard). I supplement the results of my own field work by reference to the coverage of the Bosnian Pyramids in the media and in some previous academic research.

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Chapter 2. Context

Before examining the case in more detail, it is first necessary to consider its context in time and space. The roots of the phenomenon, the critique of it, and my own theoretical approach are all partly informed by the composition of the population, the recent history of the country, its economic and political conditions, the state structure and the specific situation in Visoko. These are outlined below.

2.1 Bosnia and Herzegovina

Under communist Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina boasted what Amila Buturović has called "a fine and rare example of cultural polyvalence" (2002:1). As the most ethnically diverse constituent of the federation, a mixture of Muslim Bosniaks, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats were dispersed widely over its territory. In spite of this, nationalism was suppressed by the state and the country was economically more or less egalitarian (Bieber 2006:33). After Tito's death however, cracks began to appear. Nationalist movements took power in Serbia and Croatia, and as the federation edged toward disintegration, the battle lines were drawn in Bosnia. The bloody conflict of the 1990s witnessed attempts at ethnic cleansing unheard of in Europe since the Second World War, and the ceasefire finally achieved at Dayton could not avoid freezing and thus in some sense legitimizing a revised, ethnically polarised map of the country (Buturović 2002:1). The high degree of pre-war intermixture had been turned on its head, into a state of segregation (Bieber 2006:29). Forced to cater to wartime anxieties, a complex government structure emerged from Dayton: "stringent and wide-ranging rules for balanced group representation produced seven different types and levels of government, 13 constitutions, more than one hundred ministries, and veto rights at most levels of government" (Bieber 2006:xii-xiii). The result was "…a bureaucratic quagmire with three presidents, one for each of the predominant ethno-national groups… It also created two political entities, Republic of Srpska and the 'Federation,' which is sub-

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divided into a further ten cantons" (Hopkins 2014). This convoluted arrangement achieved peace, but at the price of hobbling the country for the near future. Bieber claims Bosnia is "probably the only country in the world governed by such a complex system..." (2006:144). The failure of the state to provide existential security perhaps creates an appetite for an alternate basis for community, realised in the pyramids. I return to this hypothesis in Chapter 4.

2.2 The town of Visoko

Visoko is a town of roughly 40,000 inhabitants (Federalni zavod za statistiku 2012) located between Sarajevo and Zenica, in the valley of the Bosna and Fojnica rivers. As attested by the ruins of Visoki, the area was an important centre for the medieval Bosnian kingdom. The modern town has its roots in the Ottoman period, which witnessed the arrival of the Dervish tekke that remains active to this day. Visoko has remained a mainly Muslim town. In the 1991 census the distribution was 75% Bosniak, 16% Serb, 4% Croat, and 3.17% calling themselves Yugoslavs (Općina Visoko 1991). Since that time the number of Serbs appears to have decreased while the Muslim population has increased, due to war-time displacements. Local informants generally estimated the current Muslim proportion at around 90%, and this is visible in the town's many mosques. The Catholic Church also has a strong presence in the town owing to a Franciscan monastery established during the Austro-Hungarian period. The Franciscans are widely regarded as pillars of the community. They are especially well spoken of by young people, many of whom receive free educational assistance from the monastery's library. This is one sign of the relatively positive interethnic relations in the town, likely also helped by the strong numerical predominance of one group.

Visoko prospered during the Yugoslav era, in particular as a centre of the leather industry. The KTK leather factory was a major source of employment, and was so successful that the town was honoured by a personal visit by Josip Broz Tito himself. This event is

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fondly remembered in the town along with the Yugoslav era in general, with especially the older generations describing it as a time of plenty, equality and brotherhood. My landlady in Visoko, Lejla (aged 80) kept a picture on her wall of Tito walking through the streets. She frequently expressed her nostalgia for the man and the era. Of the adults I surveyed, 69% also answered that life was better in the old Yugoslavia.

A major consequence of the war of the 1990s has been an economic downturn due in large part to the destruction of industrial infrastructure (Bieber 2006:38). Visoko's KTK factory emerged physically unscathed, but nevertheless has made major cutbacks according to many locals, who frequently blamed privatization and ineffective government oversight. Notably, the Zenica-Doboj Canton in which Visoko is located had 59,763 unemployed people versus 67,635 employed in 2003 and an average wage of just 414.22 KM, the lowest in the country (37). One of those unable to find regular employment was my friend and informant, Ibro (in his early twenties). He expressed his frustration at the lack of progress in the country twenty years after the war. Although Visoko has seen some positive developments such as a new cultural centre currently under construction – a gift from Turkey – he was angry that the government wasn't doing something to open the factories instead: "I need money in my pocket in order to spend it at a cultural centre". In these circumstances, the pyramids may be seen to fill different kinds of material and symbolic voids. In Chapter 3 I examine the largely critical interpretations of international commentators, and in Chapter 4 I provide an alternative approach from a social science perspective.

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Chapter 3. The Critique

Harding's tripartite explanation of the phenomenon is partly informed by the historic, ethnic, political and economic landscape outlined above. In this chapter I firstly examine the three lines of interpretation in further detail and identify their reproduction in the wider critique. In the second section I argue that this critique is in part rooted in a particular world view – the scientific tradition of rationalism. Considering that there exists an alternative, romantic approach to the world, I posit that the opponents of the Foundation judge it by a set of values which it does not share and which are not universal.

3.1 Hoaxers, Sectarians, or Pyramidiots

The monetary attraction of the pyramid project in the economic circumstances is plain, prompting many observers to judge it as simply a cynical, opportunistic deception. A documentary by Fronza video productions, despite focusing on the archaeological credibility of the Visoko sites rather than Osmanagić's motives, used the title "The Biggest Hoax in History?" – the question mark implicitly rendered obsolete by the end of the film (Fronza 2013). The European Association of Archaeologists declared "This scheme is a cruel hoax on an unsuspecting public and has no place in the world of genuine science" (2006). Its president Anthony Harding could not resist using the pun "pyramid scheme" in an article where he quoted the former Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic as saying, "Let them dig and we'll see what they find. Besides, it's good for business" (Harding 2007). Indeed upon entering the town, local businesses' exploitation of the pyramid label is plain to see, for example in the "Pekara Piramida" fast food stand or in the prominent "Motel Piramida Sunca". Some observers added weight to the charges of deception on the part of Osmanagić and his Foundation after inspecting the sites personally. On the subject of ancient runes, Robert Schoch alleged: "I was told by a reliable source that the inscriptions were not there when

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members of the ‘pyramid team’ initially entered the tunnels... The ‘ancient inscriptions’ had been added since, perhaps non-maliciously, or perhaps as a downright hoax” (Schoch 2006).

Others suspect a political motive. “Isn't it obvious? The Muslims are trying to create their own Medjugorje. Why should the Croats get all the tourists?” (quoted in Foer 2007). This statement, allegedly from the mouth of a NATO commander, refers to a Roman Catholic centre of pilgrimage in Herzegovina. Medjugorje was the site of a purported apparition of the Virgin Mary. Although the Church has never officially recognised the miracle, the site has become popular with Catholics and arguably doubles as a kind of ethnic totem for Croats. Uosukainen notes how the European Union Peace Force (EUFOR) deployed over 5000 troops to the Visoko area after the pyramid phenomenon began (2013:8), and suggests this may have been a sign of real concern in the command structure over the possibility of attendant ethnic violence. No such violence ultimately came to pass, yet some observers (for example Woodard 2009) continued to warn of a nationalistic appetite driving the pyramid phenomenon.

One does not have to travel far to find examples of how nationalist factions in a troubled country can manipulate the historical narrative to their own ends. Katherine Verdery (1991) recounts how just such a process took place in socialist Romania, where national soul-searching found an outlet in the story of the ancient autochthonous Dacians and their Roman conquerors. For many the Romans symbolised Europe and the West; the Dacians a heroic and defiant people. The narrative found expression through diverse cultural channels, for example: “the board game ‘Dacians and Romans’ being sold in Romanian toy stores in 1987, which cast the (‘European’) Romans as the game’s villains against the (‘native’) Dacians (Verdery 1991:2). This kind of discourse was particularly attractive in the context of a weak state (83), struggling to balance economic difficulty with national prestige. Not content with an origin story of heroic resistance, Romanian “proto-chronism” was the vehicle for larger claims. The

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movement mobilized intellectuals "to look for developments in Romanian culture that had anticipated events in the better-publicized cultures of Western Europe" (167). For example, Verdery cites the reconstruction of a peasant uprising into a precursor of the French Revolution (227). In the same way the Bosnian Pyramids could conceivably serve as a way for a precariously located ethnic group to reassert itself, constructing a grand historical narrative to bolster its "imagined community", to use Anderson's term (1983). Some observers cite disproportionate attention to Visoko from Muslim countries as evidence of just such a particularly Bosniak claim on the pyramids. Iran, Libya, Egypt and especially Malaysia have flattered Visoko with diplomatic and financial engagement (Foer 2007). Although the pyramids have no obvious connection with Islam, some warn that the site may be claimed "not for a place of worship, but rather as a place to pilgrimage to and boast of, a place that sits like a trophy on the tally board between the Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs" (Pruitt 2007:37).

There is in fact some evidence that the pyramids have been open to politicization even outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Elements of the Hungarian far Right, for example, have claimed that the inscriptions purportedly discovered at the site are evidence of a primordial Hungarian presence in the region (Salqvist 2014). Serbia now also boasts its own pyramid, the hill known as Rtanj near the town of Boljevac. One informant half-jokingly called this "typical Serbian… they don't want Bosnia to have the biggest pyramid".

Where the phenomenon is not seen as serving personal or political interests, the third main line of interpretation is feverish irrationality and fanaticism, a flight from reason. As Woodard (2009) puts it, "Pyramid mania has descended upon Bosnia". Some authoritative figures initially found the Bosnian Pyramids too absurd to even warrant comment. A curator of the National Museum in Sarajevo, Amar Karapus, recalls: "When I first read about the pyramids I thought it was a very funny joke. I just couldn't believe that anyone in the world could believe this" (quoted in Woodard 2009). Anthony Harding characterizes his own first

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reaction: “Since such claims obviously belonged to a fantasy world, I was inclined to ignore the affair…” (Harding 2007). Vuk Bacanovic went further, comparing the movement to an organized fundamentalist faith: “like a religion based on corrupted New Age ideology” (quoted in Woodard 2009). As well as classifying the Bosnian Pyramids as a case of pseudo-archaeology, Pruitt alludes to the term “pyramidiot”: “Pyramid mystics… Egyptologists sometimes uncharitably refer to this group as ‘Pyramidiots,’ but the school continues to flourish despite scholarly anathemas” (Mertz 1964, quoted in Pruitt 2007:29). Although in Pruitt’s case this verdict is accompanied by a consideration of deeper socio-economic factors, the wider trend as exemplified above betrays a readiness to dismiss Osmanagić and his followers as simply unsound if not dishonest.

3.2 Rational versus Romantic

The three lines of critique outlined above can be seen as forms of “boundary work”, to use Gieryn’s term (1999:16, 26). The pyramid discourse is placed beyond the pale and categorised as either a cynical exercise with hidden motives, or an emotional departure from serious engagement with the world. Although such explanations are logical, that the scientific establishment is objective in reaching these conclusions is not in fact self-evident. As Merton notes, the authority of science has become entrenched in the public mind only due to a long track record of demonstrable achievement – that is, socially useful technology (1973:264). Networks of knowledgeable experts, or “epistemic communities” (Haas 1992) are associated with the production of multiple species of capital, a function which endows them with an unparalleled store of the master type, symbolic capital, and thus a pre-eminent position in society (to use the terms of Bourdieu 1985:724).

“Thus fortified, the scientist came to regard himself as independent of society and to consider science as a self-validating enterprise which was in society but not of it” (Merton 1973:268). The sociology of science questions this notion, pointing out that science remains

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subject to social dynamics ranging from personal struggles for prestige to political interference (Merton 1973, Collins 1993, Jasanoff 1996). Just as the scientific field is not immune to subjective interests, there is also the possibility that even its base assumptions, which it presents as universally valid, are in fact the product of a particular culture or world view. Rupert Sheldrake makes exactly this argument in *The Science Delusion* (2012), identifying and scrutinising a "malaise" retarding modern science: a slow strangulation by a materialist and mechanistic world view with which it has been saddled since the nineteenth century (6). Materialism holds that all reality is physical, mechanism, that it is determined by fixed mechanical laws. Sheldrake examines ten resulting "dogmas" of modern science; for example that organisms are essentially robots, that nature is purposeless, that consciousness is an illusion, and that aberrant phenomena such as telepathy simply cannot exist (7). In each case he finds sufficient grounds in the historical record to begin a conversation questioning these assumptions.

Sheldrake argues for the metaphor of the organism rather than the machine, thus positing vitality, internal creativity and teleology in nature (37). With this approach we can discard the unnecessary "division between public rationalism and private romanticism" (40). This means to incorporate or at least consider the intuitive sentiment towards the word – to see it as living and purposeful – as part of scientific inquiry. This argument is not in fact a new one. In his 1896 president's address to the Society for Psychical Research, William James observed: "Religious thinking, ethical thinking, poetical thinking, teleological, emotional, sentimental thinking, what one might call the personal view of life to distinguish it from the impersonal and mechanical view, and the romantic view of life to distinguish it from the rationalistic view, have been, and even still are, outside of well-drilled scientific circles, the dominant forms of thought" (1996, 30-31). As then, where attempts are made today to reconcile science with the romantic world-view, they are cast as controversial at best,

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quackery at worst. What is in fact a valid criticism of rationalism's monopoly may be given expression at the fringes in so called pseudo-science and spirituality, while it remains unchallenged in academia and other established epistemic communities.

James did not hesitate to proclaim mankind's debt to science, which he called "literally boundless" (31). His complaint was that scientists' harsh characterisation of alternate epistemologies; "of pure insanity, of gratuitous preference for error, of superstition without an excuse… is a most shallow verdict" (31). Both judge and defendant here are reassessed by Paul Feyerabend in *Against Method* (1975). This author finds that the notion of a fixed method has been repeatedly violated in the history of science, not least in its greatest moments of discovery (14). Science has in fact been advanced by counter-inductive thinking, which went against the evidence and the established theory (20), thus ignoring the "consistency condition" – the norm that new hypotheses be consistent with well-established theories (24). It is better to test a theory against an incommensurate theory than against the evidence, because "evidence" is unavoidably contaminated with subjective interpretations, quite possibly informed by the theory being tested (21-22). This leads Feyerabend to also challenge the "autonomy principle" – the assumption that facts which would disprove a theory can always be found when approaching the world with that theory (26). The book takes as its core example one of Western science's great luminaries, Galileo. Here we see a man who worked against well-established theories, common sense and the apparent evidence of the senses in the dogged pursuit of an intuition. By contradicting the consistency condition and the autonomy principle, Galileo violates the principle of universalism. This is the first of four core "moral as well as technical" prescriptions of science identified by Merton, together comprising the "ethos of science" (1973:268-270). Universalism is the tenet that "truth-claims, whatever their source, are to be subjected to pre-established impersonal criteria:

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consonant with observation and with previously confirmed knowledge" (270). For Feyerabend this is an impossible demand.

His conclusion: "The only principle that does not inhibit progress is: *anything goes*" (1975:14). For Feyerabend the only true empirical test of a theory is to retain – in fact to actively seek out – the alternatives, and from all corners. The lucid scientist "…will adopt a pluralistic methodology, he will compare theories with other theories rather than with 'experience', 'data', or 'facts', and he will try to improve rather than discard the views that appear to lose in the competition. For the alternatives… they may be taken from wherever one is able to find them - from ancient myths and modem prejudices; from the lucubrations of experts and from the fantasies of cranks" (33). As an example here Feyerabend cites the case of Chinese traditional medicine (including such practices as herbal medicine and acupuncture). Its apparent success casts doubt over the principle of reductionism in Western medicine, the idea that the properties of a substance can be predicted from the properties of its constituent parts, ignoring wholes and contexts (37).

The purpose of the above literature review has been to frame the critique of the Bosnian Pyramids and establish the grounds for withholding judgement and attempting a neutrally minded investigation into the phenomenon. The Foundation's activities may appeal more to the romantic than the rational world view, yet it does not necessarily follow that the enterprise is sinister or devoid of value. In the next chapter I explore concepts from the social science repertoire which can provide an alternative approach to understanding the social practices behind the Visoko Complex.

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Chapter 4. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I detail my theoretical approach. In the first section I identify an analogous case of "structural nostalgia" (Herzfeld 1997:147). I then locate the roots of this type of phenomenon in "communitas", an impulse in agents for anti-structure (Turner 1969). The structure that is opposed to communitas is clarified as including status, nationalism and codified religion using Bloch's "transcendental social" (2008). I therefore suggest that nationalist and religious characterisations of the Bosnian Pyramids may be inadequate. Finally I argue after Giddens' "structuration" theory (1984) that communitas is for the most part semi-conscious, something felt but generally not articulated. It follows that the pyramid discourse may be undergirded by implicit rather than explicit logic, an intuitive engagement with the world which cannot be reduced to simple insanity.

4.1 Structural Nostalgia

As I have suggested in Chapter 3, knowledge production need not necessarily follow the hegemonic rational empirical approach, with its materialistic and mechanistic philosophy. Knowledge might also serve ends outside of itself without necessarily becoming corrupt and valueless, against what Merton's scientific principle of "disinterestedness" holds (1973:275). Archaeology is no stranger to this practice. As Michael Herzfeld asserts: "people deploy the debris of the past for all kinds of present purposes" (1997:24). Charles Stewart provides a vivid example of one such case in his ethnography of amateur archaeology and historical narrative construction on the Greek island of Naxos (2012). The villagers of Koronos received directives in their sleep from the saints, the Virgin Mary, and her mother the Panagia, to dig for buried icons and other holy relics. When several items were in fact recovered, the dreams became a local obsession.

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The three waves of dreaming marked times of social upheaval: state challenges to local control of emery mining and autonomy in religious practice in the 1830s (37), the Great Depression of 1930, and physical displacements in the mid-1990s (207). In this way the Naxos myth was repeatedly returned to out of "a desire for grace, dignity, and enrichment in a situation in which these have been blocked by external forces" (104-105). The dreamers recounted stories of heroic predecessors whose trials mirrored those of their own times: in the 1830s, religious refugees from Egypt (39) in the second period, exiles from Anatolia whose life narratives recalled the population transfer with Turkey after the war of 1922 (191). The phenomenon can be seen as an incidence of "structural nostalgia… a collective representation of an edenic order – a time before time – in which the balanced perfection of social relations has not yet suffered the decay that affects everything human" (Herzfeld 1997:147). The parallels with Visoko are striking – in both cases a stressed community finds a well of strength and spur to action in an imagined past. Projections of the future in the two cases are also paralleled. The fulfilment of the Naxiote dream prophecies were explicitly linked to the future fortunes of the village (103), just as the mainstream acceptance of the Bosnian Pyramids carries an implicit promise of capital redistribution – social, cultural, economic, and symbolic; to again employ Bourdieu's terms (1985:724).

Like Feyerabend and Sheldrake, Stewart questions the universality of Western empiricism, proposing that other epistemologies may be equally valid (2012:197). Throughout the book he does not treat histories as necessarily accurate records, but rather as representations which "may be true in their poetic coherence even if they do not correspond entirely with external facts" (3). The scars of war and economic hardship on the Bosnian collective consciousness may find a just remedy in the new myth invoked by the pyramids, true because it should be true. As Stewart muses, "History aims for the truth, while myth begins from the truth" (104).

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Gieryn points out that ordinary people do not put their faith in science out of direct experience of its validity (1999:27). Rather, they approach knowledge pragmatically, seeking effective advice for life. Providing instructions and predictions, the Naxos myth solved a "quandary of agency" (2012:213). Similarly, the Bosnian Pyramids rally the host community to find new momentum. Another analogue to Visoko can be found within Bosnia itself. In Stone Speaker (2002), Amila Buturović examines the work of a native poet, Mak Dizdar, whose verse invoked the medieval stećak tombstones strewn around the Bosnian landscape in order to reconnect living Bosnians of all creeds with a shared past and shared landscape (5, 164). Visoko has its own protrusions from the earth which are likewise being given voices, though through archaeology rather than poetry. For romantic representations of history and reality of this kind to be destroyed at the hands of rational empiricism is for Paul Feyerabend nothing short of "cultural murder" (1975:4).

4.2 Communitas

Like Mak Dizdar's stećak and the Naxiotes's icons, the pyramids are implicitly the mute witnesses to a time before social stratification. The "time before time" (Herzfeld 1997:147) appealed to in these instances of structural nostalgia recalls Victor Turner's timeless, formless "communitas" (1969). As paraphrased by Rapport and Overing, communitas is "a recognition, however fleeting, of a generalized social bond between all human beings, and between them and the world..." (2000:35). This sentiment appears to arise periodically from an intuition of unity and continuum underlying and opposing the structured world of everyday life. These constitute "two major 'models' for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating" (Turner 1969:360). Turner emphasises the distinction between communitas and structure by alluding to equivalent binary oppositions, for example: transition and state, totality and partiality, equality and inequality, homogeneity and heterogeneity, simplicity and complexity, sacred instruction and technical knowledge, (366)

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the now and the past or future (370). Communitas erupts where structure excludes or is excluded: as well as in "liminal personae" passing through structural interstices, it is manifested at the edges of structure in the marginalised, and beneath it in the socially inferior (372). Turner finds the sentiment evoked in such diverse phenomena as African initiation rites, Christian monasticism (367), modern millenarian movements, and tales of righteous outsiders – from folk traditions of holy beggars to the heroic lone stranger of Western films (369). Turner posits that this dialectic of communitas and structure is not only perennial to human society, but necessary for it to function at all (373).

The recent mass protests in Bosnia appear to carry the tone of communitas rather than the sectarianism one might expect from the country's recent history. Social stratification and division is if anything the target of anger, as argued in open letter to the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina signed by 130 academics (LeftEast 2014). One exasperated protestor's sign read "we are hungry in three languages" (Hopkins 2014), a reference to the policy which panders to nationalism by erecting the mutually intelligible Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian tongues as separate official languages. Eschewing such ethnic politics and recognising the real material inequalities in the country, the riots are rooted in a kind of communal feeling more fundamental than the divisive nationalisms of the nineties. Alain Badiou describes how "historical riots" (durable, semi-organised mass demonstrations) build momentum precisely when they reach out to multiple sections of society (2013:33), rejecting the state sponsored "separating names" which conveniently divide the populace (77). Badiou finds a sentiment for the universal at the root of popular movements: "…in the name of the generic, it succeeds in demolishing the power of the identitarian fiction…" (78). This "generic" is none other than Victor Turner's communitas. For the most part Visoko has not been involved in the recent unrest – social dissent perhaps finding another outlet, a kind of lightning rod, in the pyramids.

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Not only is a sectarian or nationalistic explanation for the pyramid project's local support therefore questionable, it ignores the hugely significant role of the international volunteers, as Uosukainen points out (2013). Their New Age discourse (Uosukainen 2013:32) of a coming reordering of history and social relations has the air of a millenarian movement, which to Turner are examples of mass expression of communitas (1969:369). With its roots in Renaissance esotericism and 19th century occultism (Hanegraaf 2000:294), New Age discourse is varied and unregulated, but distinguished by a common thread of cultural criticism. In particular there is a strong reaction against dualism, whether between body and spirit, Creator and created, or man and nature (291). Holistic alternatives are encouraged. New Agers also argue against reductionism, materialism and mechanism: "the universe does not resemble a dead mechanism but a living organism permeated by a spiritual force, and the dimension of the spiritual itself cannot be reduced to purely material processes" (291-292). This cultural criticism runs parallel to that of the Bosnian protests, linked by the sentiment of communitas.

In one passage Turner expresses the complementary roles of communitas and structure through parable: "…the story of Lao-Tse's chariot wheel may be apposite. The spokes of the wheel and the nave… to which they are attached would be useless, he said, but for the hole, the gap, the emptiness at the centre" (Turner 1969:372). From a cognitive science perspective it can be speculated that a balance between classificatory and anti-classificatory thinking would provide an evolutionary advantage both to groups and to individuals, and could therefore conceivably be selected for both in cultural and genetic evolution. A regular structured society enables division of labour, systematic resource management and military efficiency versus other groups. Periodic dips into communitas provide a kind of mutation space, allowing innovation and transition between categories without undermining the logic of the structured system – as when a chief ascends to his throne through an initiation rite

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which does not break the fixtures of the social structure because it is allowed to happen outside of it. The oscillation between the two modes of thinking might therefore be determined by biology (an evolved cognitive mechanism), or by social structure (shaped in competition with other groups), or a combination.

Communitas brings an important perspective to the case because it may highlight a positive rather than necessarily harmful social process, and because it can be used to talk about both the origins of the phenomenon and its future trajectory. Its resonance with the structurally nostalgic is the reaction against malign political and economic structures, while with the New Age it pushes back against a cultural and epistemological hegemony. The Visoko Complex may be likely to continue so long as the negative structures in the environment persist or so long as no other means of combating them is found.

4.3 The Transcendental Social

The "structure" which Turner puts in a dialectic with communitas can be more clearly defined using a concept developed by Maurice Bloch. Pondering the possible cognitive origins of religion, this author compares the social lives of humans with those of other animals and makes a connection between the presence of religion and essentialized roles or groups in general. In chimpanzees, there is a certain hierarchy based upon an ongoing "process of continual manipulation, assertions and defeats" (2008:2056). Bloch calls this the "transactional social", a social order rooted in immediate circumstances. Humans also employ this system, but we differ in our additional capacity for abstraction, for example the many essentialized roles which exist independently of individuals: man, woman, elder, professor. The transactional capacity of an individual, for example a senile old man, may stand in stark contrast to his abstract status as an elder (2056). Equally, abstract groups such as national, ethnic or cultural corporations – Anderson's "imagined communities" (1983) – are a perennial feature of human societies (Bloch 2008:2057). Bloch calls this system of abstract statuses the

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"transcendental social". This kind of social order is based upon a collective mental projection rather than individual sensory experience.

Bloch argues that along with social status and nationalism, religion can best be understood as a subset of the transcendental social. In this he references the work of Igor Kopytoff (1971), which shows how the word "religion" carries the baggage of Christianity, making it inappropriate even in the study of African "ancestor religions". There, the presumably separate dead ancestors are in fact accorded the same treatment as living elders. "If there is a type of phenomenon that merits the appellation ancestor worship, which suggests the kind of things that have often been called religion, then there is also elder worship or elder religion. And since elders are part of a system, there is in the traditional sense, junior religion, descent group religion, man religion, woman religion, etc." (Bloch 2008:2057). In the same way, "religion" is likely to be a misleading term when applied to New Ageism, as in Visoko. Transformations in structure, i.e. the transcendental social, happen via communitas type phenomena. Positing that New Ageism in general and the Visoko Complex in particular belong to this latter category, then the structured abstract system of religion – and equally of nationalism – may actually be its antithesis.

4.4 Practical and Discursive Consciousness in a Stratified Agent

Anthony Giddens' "structuration" theory helps locate the origins of communitas in terms of agency. Giddens takes the view that the agent is more a "stratification" than a discrete unit opposed to structure (1984:5). Layers of agency exist on a spectrum with structure: unconscious motives, practical consciousness or "what is characteristically simply done" and discursive consciousness or "what can be said" (7). What distinguishes agents is their "reflexive monitoring" of their actions and surroundings, from which they maintain "a continuing 'theoretical understanding' of the grounds of their activity (5). This theoretical understanding sometimes rises to the level of discursive consciousness, but not always. As

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Charles Taylor notes, our everyday understanding of the world is embodied – we may be at ease navigating the streets of a city, but at a loss for words when asked for directions (1992:50).

In one passage, Turner considers the level of consciousness at which communitas is felt: "The notion that there is a generic bond between men, and its related sentiment of 'humankindness,' are not epiphenomena of some kind of herd instinct but are products of 'men in their wholeness wholly attending'" (1969:373). This idea resonates with the embodied, intuitive understanding of the world located by Giddens and Taylor in practical consciousness. A logic of anti-structure can be seen in expressions of communitas, despite the fact that the participants may not be able to articulate it themselves – as in riots without a clear political agenda, or in New Age discourse where the function of social criticism is "often latent and half-conscious" (Hanegraaf 2000:291). Commentators who accuse the pyramid supporters of madness make the assumption that human reasoning occurs at the level of discursive consciousness only.

I posit that when an agent's sub-discursive awareness of the arbitrariness of the transcendental social order is met with a sufficiently negative structured environment – such as the weak state apparatus, depressed economy and polarised ethnic labels of Bosnia – the agent feels the impulse for communitas, and will tend to use whatever resources are available in the physical landscape and cultural "tool kit" (Swidler 1986: 277) to express it. In Visoko, it was pyramids.

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Chapter 5. The Foundation

In this chapter I summarise my experiences with the leader of the Foundation and central figure of the Bosnian Pyramid phenomenon, Semir Osmanagić. I find that neither sectarianism nor fanaticism reveal themselves in his discourse, and I argue instead for the presence of a communitas ethic. Although it is difficult to completely rule out deception, my sense was that the man is sincere in his convictions.

5.1 Liminal Discourse

When I arrived at the entrance to the Ravne labyrinth, I was struck by how much the place had changed since my first visit two years before. A "healing maze" of stones arranged in a spiral had been placed to meet any approaching visitor. Several wooden buildings selling memorabilia and literature had been erected, along with seating areas and several large information displays – prominent among them, a poster showing the Pyramid of the Sun with its energy beam projecting skywards from the summit. Another showed an ambitious planned cultural centre complete with pyramidal buildings. The gift shops offered such curiosities as "energy stones" and supposedly curative bottled water from the tunnels.

I had come to join a tour led by Semir Osmanagić himself. Though older than I recalled from images in the media, he still had all the marks of a charismatic man. Taller than just about everyone else around and wearing his trade-mark fedora, he was the centre of everyone's attention from the moment he stepped out of his vehicle. His personal presence was part of an expensive package tour for a group of over a hundred Arabic speaking tourists. During the two hour walk through the tunnels, Osmanagić presented himself simultaneously as scientist-technician and mystic-visionary. He mixed these credentials for example when speaking about the "Bovis" scale used for measuring energy potential. "A Buddhist temple has 14,000 Bovis, the tunnels have 25,000. A person capable of healing with a touch, 12,000;

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I have 18,000". He would shift seamlessly from this kind of discourse into talk of sending samples to foreign labs, ground penetrating radar, carbon dating and other technical jargon.

I recalled that on my last visit the tour had concluded with a display and short presentation about a strange artificial looking object detected by ground penetrating radar. When I asked Osmanagić what had happened with it, he told me without any hesitation that the effort to unearth it was abandoned after it was found to be impossible to reach without better equipment. "Yes, yes. We were digging there, digging about one meter and didn't find anything. It seemed that, some experts were saying it was some type of reflection… from an object which was much deeper… We know where the place is, maybe we can find some other way to it." The seemingly sincere effort to reach this phantom object, and the lack of any attempt to deny the failure to find it left me feeling that Osmanagić did not act as if he were knowingly deceiving people.

When I asked about politics, he acknowledged that he had been accused of being a "Muslim nationalist", but firmly rejected this claim and noted that the civilization he imagines is far older than Islam: "This is 30,000 years old. We have Islam for 1,300 years. Christianity for 2,000… So it has nothing to do with nationalism or religion." On the subject of Hungarian runes, he also declined to endorse the claim, simply saying that not enough was known about the pyramid builders to assign them an identity, other than to say that they had a far superior technology capable of manipulating "energy".

Returning to archaeology, one of the group asked what he expected to ultimately find. Osmanagić gave an interesting answer: "Archaeologists want to find mummies, treasure hunters want to find gold. These are not so important – I want to find technology. The one who finds technology gets the power to rule the world." He finished the tour by predicting that Bosnia would "take its destiny in its own hands" and free itself from dependency on "the

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West and the IMF". Once the pyramid is proven, "millions of tourists" will come. For Semir Osmanagić, the path to this material revolution is a pre-requisite revolution in knowledge. He sees "energy" as the key to the pyramid builders' technology, and the middle ground between two modes of inquiry: science and spirituality. As he put it to me: "I think the only way to understand sites like this is to view them through three realms: physical, energy and spiritual. Then we can understand places like this. The problem with the physical science, or you know mainstream science, is that they could get some things from spiritual science. The problem with spiritual science is that it is not a science yet, but I would say that the future of humanity is to combine the two." I asked him to clarify what he meant by "spiritual": "Spiritual… spiritual in the sense that, such places – pyramids, tumulus, megalithic site – they expand your aura, if you can expand the aura you develop spiritual sense; you can heal, exchange thoughts through telepathy…"

Robert Merton writes: "the population at large has become ripe for new mysticisms clothed in scientific jargon… the borrowed authority of science becomes a powerful prestige symbol for unscientific doctrines" (1973:264). Osmanagić's discourse in part exemplifies this "borrowed authority". This fact stands against the charges of fanaticism in Visoko – rational methods are at least pretended to, employing a language which is understandably difficult for the layman to debunk. At the same time Osmanagić sets himself against "mainstream science" by rejecting mechanism and materialism and thus appealing to the romantic. New Ageism's cultural criticism is also clearly visible, becoming explicit in his predictions of capital redistribution for Bosnia via a syncretic science. And yet, ethnicity does not feature – in fact it is explicitly rejected. Rather there is a communitas ethic – a change in the transcendental social is being advocated, with hierarchical structures of governance, wealth and epistemology being slated for demolition. At the same time there is not a clear, codified doctrine which could be called a religion. As arguably is the case with New Ageism in

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general, the ideology is liminal and transitional – in the process of rejecting an old structure without quite having arrived at a new one.

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Chapter 6. The Extra-Local Element

Ethnic interpretations are further challenged by the significance of internationals to the project, as will be outlined in the following sections. Hailing from diverse backgrounds, these latter day pilgrims come to experience the Bosnian Pyramids as tourists, or in a more committed and involved way as volunteers. In this chapter I provide an overview of this extra-local element in the Visoko Complex, sampled through semi-structured interviews and survey data. While exemplars of the romantic world view, I find that my interviewees and survey respondents do not fit the picture of "pyramidiots". I also argue that their discourse displays a logic of anti-structure, the communitas ethic, reacting against the hegemony of rationalism.

6.1 Tourists

While climbing the Pyramid of the Sun a few days after my tour of Ravne, I chatted with Wahid (around age 30), a Saudi man who had been translating for Osmanagić. He was formerly an assistant judge, but quit due to the "negative energy" of the job and now works for a legal firm. He told me that he was thinking of moving to Edinburgh, to which I quipped that Scotland might be an independent country by the time he gets there.[1] Wahid laughed and asked me if I really thought so. He found the prospect unlikely, citing economic reasons. For this clearly intelligent, critically minded man, healing pyramid energies were less problematic than an independent Scotland. It transpired that Wahid and a large component of the tour group made regular trips to "spiritual sites" around the world, two each year, the last being to Sri Lanka.

Another member of the same group was a geologist, Akbar (around age 50). He shared with me his keen interest in archaeology, happily chatting about the ruins of the Garamantine[2]

[1] Scotland will hold a referendum on independence from the United Kingdom in autumn 2014.
[2] Unlike Osmanagić's pyramid builders, the Garamantine civilization is uncontroversial in established archaeology.

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civilization in the deserts of his native Libya. During the Ravne tour it occurred to me that someone with both geological and archaeological knowledge would be the perfect debunker. I asked him discretely if he could think of a natural explanation for what we were seeing. At first he chuckled politely and said it was difficult to say, but then seemed to burst. He admitted he thought much of what Osmanagić said was artificially positioned (the megaliths) was actually naturally in situ – he pointed to the layers of conglomerate in the tunnel walls, alternating sand and stones, and said this was a normal, natural flood deposit profile. In spite of the fact that Osmanagić had expressed interest in his opinion, Akbar asked me not to tell him what he had said. A rational critical thinker, Akbar was still interested in the alternative epistemology offered by places like Visoko: the romantic perspective offered something just as important.

My deepest conversations with a tourist were with Danica, a sprightly Croatian in her sixties who spent almost every day of her two week stay in Visoko inside the Ravne tunnels. In the Yugoslav era she was a self-described communist, and spoke very highly of Tito and the sense of brotherhood and equality he fostered. In later years she left a comfortable office job to join the Hari Krishnas, with whom she migrated to Sweden. Later however she developed doubts about the ideology, and so she moved on to other things. Ultimately she became interested in pyramids.

One of Danica's stories spoke of both her own personality and that of the Foundation's tour guides, two of whom had passed it on to her. Once an American tourist came with measuring equipment because he was sceptical of the claims of energy emanating from the tunnel megaliths. To his amazement the reading on his instrument steadily increased the nearer he got to it. Then he produced a ping pong ball. He held it over the stone, released it, and it remained there, hovering in the air. When he returned the following day, the ping pong ball was still levitating. Danica asked me if I had a ping pong ball, or if knew where she could

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buy one to try it out for herself. Another experiment she conducted concerned the stories of "orbs" in the Ravne tunnel. These are blue and white points of light which seem to move intelligently, visible by placing one camera in front of another and looking at the display screen (a method supposedly invented by a volunteer). She showed me a video she had recorded, where what looked like dust particles darted around while an excited tour guide exclaimed "they are energy beings!"

Although her tales were fantastic, Danica sees herself as a sceptic. She follows things she is intuitively drawn to, but readily accepts her mistakes when she meets proof of them. For example, she abandoned the Hari Krishnas after she witnessed a guru break his vow of celibacy by making an aggressive pass at a female disciple. She walked out of an esoteric training course once she was satisfied the gurus could not really levitate. And she noted inconsistencies in the tour guides' accounts of the orbs. For her it is more reasonable to believe until disproven rather than doubt until proven. This is a kind of inversion of the "organized scepticism" identified by Merton as another key component of the ethos of science (1973:277).

The appeal the pyramids hold for an international audience of tourists shows the limitations of an ethnic interpretation of the phenomenon. The personalities of those interviewed above also stand against the verdict of fanaticism – although not adhering exclusively to a rational empirical epistemology, these individuals were clearly in touch with reality. The difference is that they give priority to their intuitive feelings. Employing the stratification model of the agent, these sentiments can be understood as the result of sub-conscious reasoning, occurring in practical consciousness rather than at the discursive level of rational inquiry. It is not clear that one is superior to the other. As with Taylor's everyday example of giving directions (1992:50), practical consciousness can be deep and virtuosic where discursive consciousness is shallow and unwieldy.

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6.2 Volunteers

Antonio, a non-local former specialist with the project, did not support the notion that Visoko had become an ethnic symbol as arguably is the case with Medjugorje for Croats. He did note however that it drew pilgrims of another kind: "…here instead you have the New Age, ex-sixties, hippies, fifty-year-old crisis; old women and twenty-year-old-smoking-pot-all-day people that want to feel some vibration." The most committed of this motley crew come to be a part of what they see as history in the making. The volunteer season in 2014 runs from June 1st until September 21st. This period is divided into eight shifts lasting two weeks each. Volunteers work 36 hours per week, over six days, from 09:00 to 15:00 (Foundation 2014). I can say from experience during fieldwork that this involves heavy manual labour, typically involving digging with pickaxes and shovels and carrying loads of rocks and soil by wheelbarrow. This says something of the enthusiasm required.

Uosukainen, who participated in a volunteer shift in 2012, describes the volunteers as diverse in age and national origin (though mostly Western). A common thread was subscription to a range of New Age and alternative topics; including Eastern mysticism, UFOs, ley-lines, conspiracy theories and past lives (2013:32). After a typical day's work, "Evening hours often featured small groups spontaneously going to one of the nearby sites and meditate. The top of Visocica hill, said to have a huge energy beam shooting into space, was a particular favourite… Alternatively, some would opt for going to the bar, ordering a beer and discussing the possible involvement of Freemasonry or the Illuminati in the alleged mainstream boycotting of the pyramid project" (32). Ibro told me of volunteers sleeping inside the Ravne tunnel "to be close to the creatures", and how one volunteer had believed that by standing on top of Visočica, it was possible to teleport oneself anywhere in the world.

As I visited Visoko outside of the volunteer season, I made a small online survey using the official volunteer Facebook forum. The survey received 18 responses. Though a small

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sample, the respondents were likely to be the more active forum users. I include the results here to corroborate the picture of the volunteers painted above. The format was as follows:

1. What is your gender?
Male | Female
2. What is your age?
16-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60+
3. Do you identify with any of the following religions?
Respondents were provided a list of suggested answers including all major world religions, plus alternatives including Atheist *and* Spiritual but not religious*. They also had the option to provide their own answer.*
4. What is your professional or educational background?
Again, a wide range of suggested answers with the option to enter a new one.
5. Where do you stand on politics?
Left Wing | Right Wing | Centre | Not interested | Unsure, but interested
6. Have you visited sites in Visoko?
Yes | No, but I intend to | No, and I don't intend to
7. Do you agree that these sites were built (in whole or in part) by an intelligence?
Yes | Maybe | No
8. Do you agree that the sites have special energies (for example for healing)?
Yes | Maybe | No

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9. Are you interested in any other alternative kinds of knowledge?
UFOs | Ancient Astronauts | Lost civilizations such as Atlantis, Lemuria or Mu | Parapsychology, ESP and other paranormal abilities| Conspiracy theories | Other (please enter)
10. What is your position on science and spirituality?
Science is more important | Spirituality is more important | Both are important, but they should be kept separate | Both are important, and they complement one another.

Table 1

Most respondents were in the 20-24 and 25-29 age groups, but at least one response was received from all age groups except 16-19. "Spiritual but not religious" was the most popular answer for Question 3, chosen by 59% of respondents, with "Atheism" second at 29%. One respondent expressed irritation at religion being associated with the pyramids at all. A third of the respondents were apathetic about politics, though a greater proportion (44%) described themselves as Left Wing. 65% felt sure that the Visoko sites were artificial structures, while 47% were sure of the sites' special energy properties. All respondents expressed interest in at least one of the other topics in Question 9, and added the new answers "science and quantum physics", "remote viewing and astral projection" and "alternative treatments and free energy". Question 10 revealed a trend towards syncretism regarding science and spirituality:

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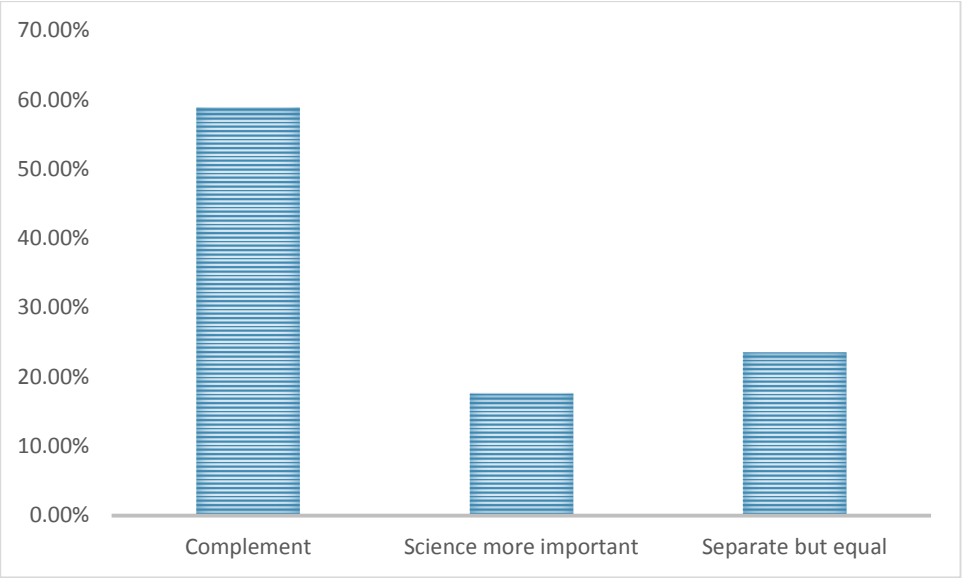

Table 2

The limitations of survey prevent deeper inquiry into the backgrounds of these respondents, but some tentative speculation is possible based on the above results. That most respondents were religious apostates and a third were uninterested in politics indicates a dissatisfaction with the transcendental structures of their home societies. Neither atheism nor political apathy were the dominant responses however. Close to half chose "Left Wing" and over half "Spiritual but not religious". These are imprecise terms, but respectively are commonly understood to imply social equality as political priority, and what can be called a romantic engagement with the world but without a supernatural dogma. These are signs of the communitas ethic which is also visible in the New Age movement at large, a reaction against an excessively rationalised culture and approach to knowledge. The open minded responses to Question 9 show a rummaging through the cultural "tool kit" (Swidler 1986: 277) in search of means to express this sentiment. At the same time, the favourable views of science and the significantly more sceptical approach to energy versus archaeology in Visoko make it difficult to generalize these volunteers as wide-eyed fanatics.

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Chapter 7. The Local Perspective

While the internationals can be presumed to have assembled due to shared interests, the second pillar of support for the Foundation comes from a more varied population, naturally featuring a wide range of personalities – the townsfolk of Visoko. In this chapter I give an overview of local opinion, firstly as sampled in semi-structured interviews, and then as revealed by survey. I analyse my findings on both at the end of the chapter. Neither nationalism, fanaticism, nor cynical exploitation is much in evidence. I find that the New Ageism of the Foundation and the internationals does not encapsulate the local community, however I argue it is linked to the locals' structural nostalgia by a common thread of communitas. Where for the extra-locals the structure opposed is cultural and epistemological, for the locals it is economic and political.

7.1 Word on the street

There is no doubt that the emergence of the pyramids was a landmark event in the lives of many local people. Ibro[3] called 2006 the "golden year". "Just a child" at the time, he recounted fondly to me how the specialists with their arcane equipment, media camera crews and throngs of curious visitors had poured into his small hometown. "Semir Osmanagić was a hero to me". Fascinated by the notion of the pyramids, Ibro however became conflicted when he began to hear stories of "energy". He cited this as the reason he had never tried to become a tour guide with the Foundation – he could not bring himself to tell tourists about something he did not believe in. From my conversations with local people, I learned that Ibro is not alone in his scepticism. One waiter I spoke to joked "if that hill is a pyramid I'll take the trees off it myself". Some in the town have gone further than casual remarks. Goran Čakić, a former supporter and four year veteran of the project, has published scathing criticisms of

[3] All informants cited in this section are from the Bosniak Muslim community.

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what he sees as unprofessional and unsafe working practices and damage to the reputation of the town (Čakić 2013). The Franciscan and Dervish communities are also said to oppose the project – three sources advised me not to even raise the topic with them. I was unable to reach either party for comment, but my informants recounted how the Dervishes opposed the project on religious grounds, making public warnings of evil spirits which could be released by the excavations. The Franciscans – deeply involved in local heritage – are concerned about the lack of attention to medieval archaeology (which notably belongs to the region's Christian past). The current town mayor Amra Babić refused comment, but based on my interview with Osmanagić she is also opposed, refusing to visit the sites.

In my personal interactions however, it was much more common for me to encounter varying degrees of support rather than opposition. Three teachers (in their thirties and forties) in the school where I would later conduct a survey were quick to signal their strong support, and one of them singled out the local and national government for not doing enough to support the project. Hana (late twenties), who works as a cook in a fast food restaurant while studying law, spoke for many when she strongly defended Osmanagić. She stressed the fact that he invested heavily with his own money, and doubted that he could turn a profit from the project. She claimed that initially people were unsure what to think of him, but before long came to accept and embrace him. Faris (late twenties), a civil engineer and small business owner, did not believe in the pyramid "energy" and called it a marketing ploy. However, he went on to say that he found Osmanagić persuasive to listen to. The fact that one can breathe easily even deep inside the Ravne tunnel was sufficient evidence for him of something artificial - "there must be something there". Faris noted that he spoke from his professional experience as an engineer. He mentioned that his professors in Sarajevo do not take the project seriously, and that supporting it vocally in his university could be damaging.

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Nevertheless he found many local people doubted Bosnian expert critics, seeing the foreigners allied with the Foundation as more authoritative and widely travelled.

Some locals I spoke to were more open to the energy concept. Lejla offered the story of a Belgian couple who stayed with her previously – the woman apparently left Visoko relieved of arthritic pains in her legs. Also of interest were the opinions of the three miners working in Ravne during my visit. When I joined them to work a shift, one of the miners (Mehmet, late thirties) likened the tunnels to a living organism, and claimed only certain people could resonate with their energy. He said that he got "energy boosts" whilst working on the Pyramid of the Sun, going for many hours without rest. Interestingly he felt the opposite effect on the Pyramid of the Moon. Most strangely, he told me that at the age of 19 he had had a dream prophecy of the coming war, and of being in a tunnel inside a pyramid. The other two miners are apparently content just to work, and don't talk about energy. One of them however is afraid of the orbs, and refuses to look at videos of them.

The town museum holds a small but quite impressive collection of medieval stone reliefs, an arch and other pieces of masonry from the capital on Visočica. I initially took the absence of pyramid paraphernalia for conflict, but in fact it appears relations with the Foundation are cordial. Emira (forties), a museum staffer, told me the museum will accept archaeological finds, if any do turn up, and in fact did host a temporary exhibit of the project's finds in 2013. The museum was involved with the project in the beginning, and after a pause resumed cooperation in that year. The exhibited objects are currently stored in the Foundation's Visoko office. Emira said she "wants Semir to be right", but was doubtful because of the energy discourse. On the other hand, she was encouraged by the reports of experts that support him. She noted that the project was at least a positive thing for the town, bringing foreign visitors. "This is good for the whole country, not just Visoko".

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This theme of cross-denominational benefit was strong. Faris said that although the town is 90% Muslim, attitudes towards the pyramid are not different with the Christians. In fact, he claimed it was hard to find anyone in Visoko who didn't support the project to some degree. If the pyramids were ethnicized anywhere, he claimed, it would be in other parts of the country. Sara (early twenties) also spoke about the good inter-ethnic relations in the town. She told me how her Christian friend had just recently come to give her an Easter egg – a tradition my landlady Lejla also made a point of sharing with me. When speaking about the war, Sara did not hesitate to acknowledge that all sides had committed wrongs, "including my people" and argued that it was time to forgive and move on. She felt that Bosnia's ethnic divisions were superficial: "we are all one people, our history is the same". She did not believe the pyramid builders were ancestors to modern Bosnians, but rather a totally extinct and lost civilization. In spite of this – or perhaps because of it – the pyramids were to her something positive, a tool for the country to move forward. This use parallels other means of resistance to ethnicization identified in Kolind's ethnography on the Muslims of Stolac (2007). This author reveals how ordinary Bosnians frequently shun ethnic blame games and assign responsibility for the disaster of the previous decade to "politika" – the malign influence of politicians in general (128). Kolind also makes note of the commonplace tales of "pošteni ljudi" – decent people – those on the other side who acted honourably under the circumstances they were forced into (131). These stories serve as a way to emphasize the humanity of the ethnic other and their shared tragedy.

Antonio also saw the phenomenon as politically benign at the local level: "I think the idea is non-ethnic. Which is one of the things that I kind of support. All right that's a good point – there's nobody saying this is a Muslim or Orthodox or Catholic thing, they're just saying it's older than anything else. And it should kind of bring together people. And it's a good thing. In the sense that you have Serbian, Croatian and Bosniak working together here.

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And that is a puzzle. When you bring it down to the people, then this project works. When you're talking people, not the higher ranks, the political conspiracies and spiritual shit. Bugger that. I've got quite a… if not negative, mostly negative vision of the whole thing. But when we're talking about the people, it's a beautiful part of it I must say. I've met the most fantastic people ever. That's for sure."

7.2 Local Survey

I carried out two surveys amongst local people in Visoko, the first in a local school with students aged 16 to 19, gathering 151 responses, and a second smaller survey amongst adults aged from 20 upwards, gathering 29 responses for a total sample size of 180. The format was mostly shared, with some differences which are noted with an asterisk below. Both surveys were translated into Bosnian with the help of a native speaker. Respondents were asked to circle the applicable suggested answer. Where the option "Other (please write)" prompted new answers from the respondents, I have underlined their contributions.

1. Your gender?
Male | Female
1a. Your age? **Adult survey only*
16-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60+
2. Your religion?
Muslim | Catholic Christian | Orthodox Christian | Other (please write): Unaffiliated
2a. Are you religious / practicing?
Yes | No
3. What is your field of interest or occupation? (You can choose more than one)
Art | Music | Sports | History | Sociology | Archaeology or Anthropology | Nature | Science | Mathematics | Business and Economics | Practical skills | Other (please

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write): Law | Engineering | Agriculture| Informatics | Psychology | Languages | Teaching | Medicine | Geography
4. Where do you plan to live in the future?
Visoko | Somewhere else in BiH[4] | Another country
5. Which of these sites in Visoko have you visited?
Pyramid of the Sun | Pyramid of the Moon | Ravne Tunnel | Vratnica Tumulus | KTK Tunnel
6. Do you agree that some or all of these sites were made by ancient people?
Yes | Maybe | No | I don't care
6a. If Yes or Maybe, who do you think these ancient people were?
Bosnians | Slavic people | Illyrians | Ancient Europeans | Greeks or Romans | Aliens | Other (please write): Unknown civilization
7. Do you agree that these sites have special energies (for example, for healing)?
Yes | Maybe | No | I don't care
8. Of the people you know, who supports Semir Osmanagić's project? (You can choose more than one)
Father | Mother | A brother or sister | A grandparent | A neighbour | A teacher | A friend | A religious leader
9. Do you think the project should continue?
Yes | Maybe | No | I don't care
9a. If Yes or Maybe, why? (You can choose more than one)
There might be a discovery in the future | It will bring tourists | It will create jobs | It will give BiH a good reputation in the world | It will change history | It could solve

[4] Commonly used abbreviation for *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

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economic problems in BiH | It could solve problems between the different nations in BiH | Someone I respect supports it
9b. If No, why? (You can choose more than one)
They will not find anything | They are lying to people | It will give BiH a bad reputation in the world | The money it brings does not reach people in Visoko | It is against my religion | Someone I respect is against it
10. Was life better under communist Yugoslavia and Tito? **Adult survey only*
Yes | No | Unsure

Table 3

Limitations and Caveats

In addition to the limits of the survey method identified in Chapter 1, some caveats specific to this survey bear mentioning. The sample is not ideally heterogeneous, being 72% female, 84% aged 16-19, and 95% Muslim. As will be detailed below however, patterns identified among females repeat themselves in the males. The religious and ethnic homogeneity of the sample is rendered less problematic by the fact that it is roughly representative of the town's population. It is also offset by the rough balance achieved between active religious practitioners and nominal adherents (43% to 57% respectively).

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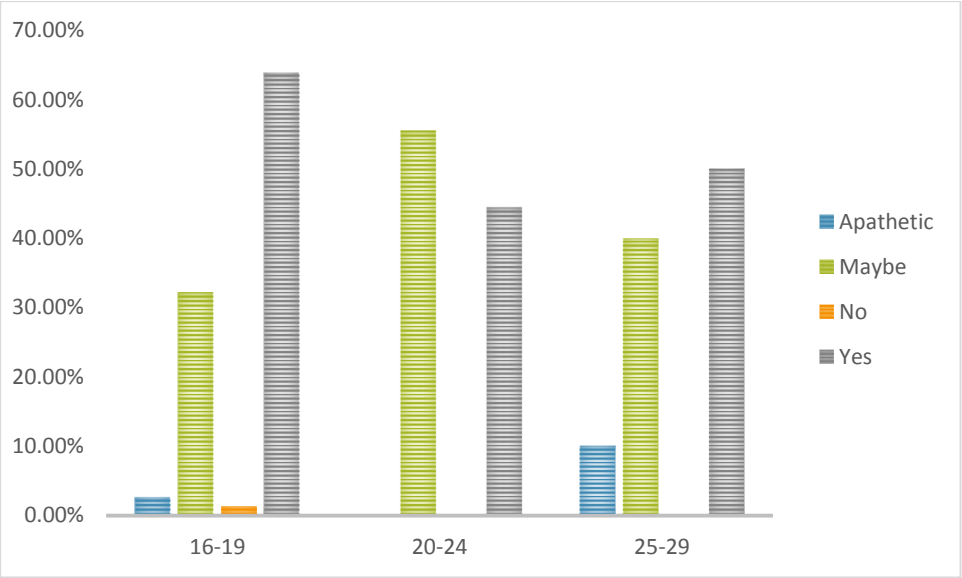

Table 4

The most significant limitation of this survey is the age range. In the above graph the 16-19 age range is compared with two other age groups in their answers to Question 6. Only small samples were drawn from the two older groups displayed (9 and 10 responses respectively) and these are therefore not authoritative. I use them here to illustrate the plausibility of tentative generalizations about the total population based on the 16-19 group. The younger group's responses differ, but are similar in important respects – in particular the very low incidence of "No". The lack of variation in ages was also partly dealt with by asking respondents to characterise the stances of older family members and authority figures, the results of which are detailed in a following section. Nevertheless, the survey results should be read with the age bias of the sample in mind. In what follows, the respondents' orientation towards the Bosnian Pyramids (probed by questions 6, 6a, 7 and 9) is assessed in relation to the other variables.

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Natural or Artificial?

Question 6 was aimed at determining the archaeological validity of the pyramid project in the eyes of local people. A large majority (64%) believed that some or all of the various sites around Visoko were indeed constructed by intelligent hands in the far past. The

second largest group (32%) were unsure but apparently open to the idea, answering "Maybe". Just 1% rejected the notion, less than those who were apathetic (3%). As can be seen in the graph below, the average pattern was stable across gender.

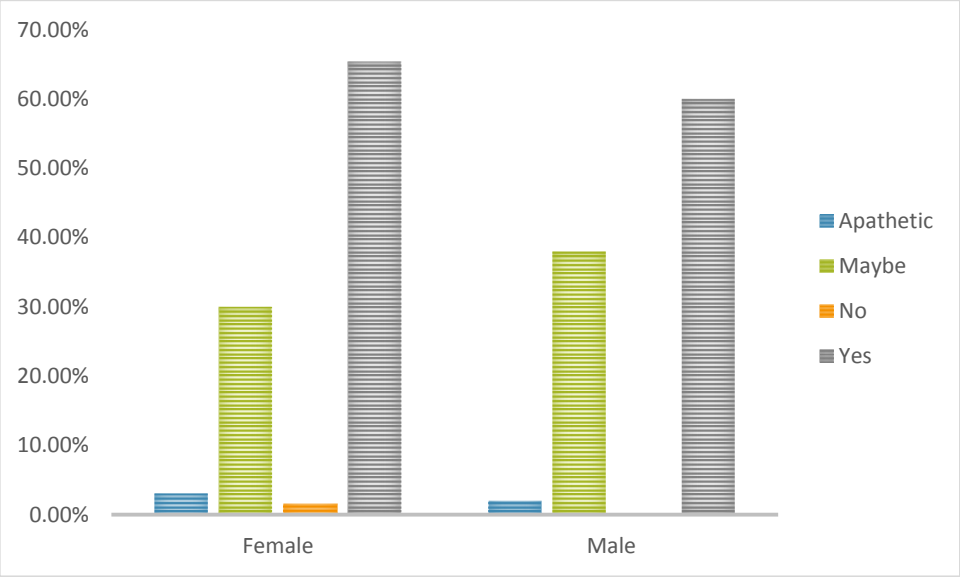

Table 5

The first data point which challenges the political and religious explanations of the pyramid phenomenon is the resilience of the same pattern across religiosity. Those who described themselves as actively practicing their religion were 7% more likely to answer "Yes" and about 2% less likely to answer "No", "Maybe" or "I don't care". While noticeable, this difference is not more significant than the disparity between genders: men were 8% more likely to answer "Maybe", 5% less likely to answer "Yes", 1% less likely to answer "No" or "I don't care".

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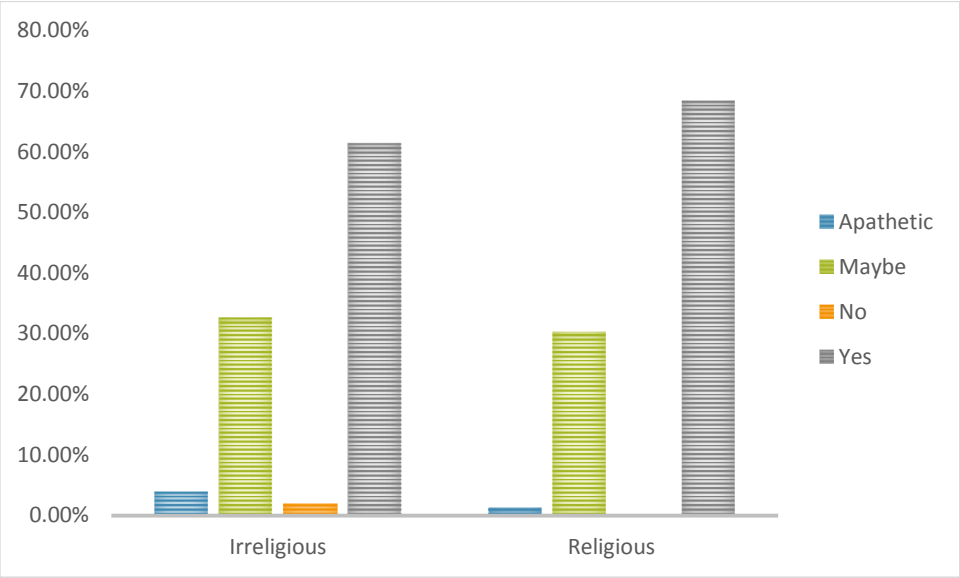

Table 6

Interpretations which see endorsement of the pyramids as cynical and self-serving are also challenged by the repetition of the main pattern regardless of the respondents' future plans. Those who intended to live abroad were about 5% more likely to return apathetic responses and 8% less likely to answer "Yes" than those planning to remain in Visoko.

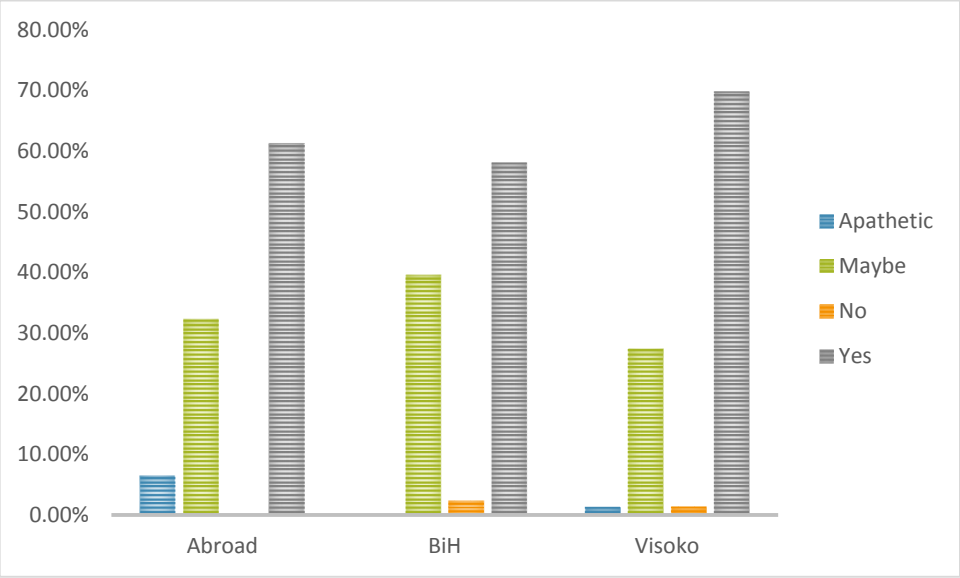

Table 7

This variation may indicate that self-interest plays a certain role, but it cannot account for the much broader agreement between the groups. Furthermore, those expecting to leave Visoko but remain in Bosnia and Herzegovina were the least likely to answer "Yes" at 58%

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and the most likely to answer "Maybe" at 40%, making one's projected material attachment to Visoko a poor indicator of belief in the pyramids' authenticity.

Identity of the Pyramid Builders

The first indication that identity politics might not be a sufficient explanation for the Bosnian Pyramids is Osmanagić's own discourse. He consistently refers to the pyramid builders in politically neutral terms, like "ancient Europeans", "Illyrians" or "pre-Illyrians" (for example 2005a). Question 6a aimed to uncover any ethnic or political claims that might have nevertheless become attached to the pyramids, using a variety of options in order to make the inquiry less overt or off-putting. I also avoided using the explicitly ethnic term "Bosniak" for this reason, instead offering the ideologically more flexible "Bosnian". As can be seen in the chart below, the most popular answers were in line with Osmanagić's statements.

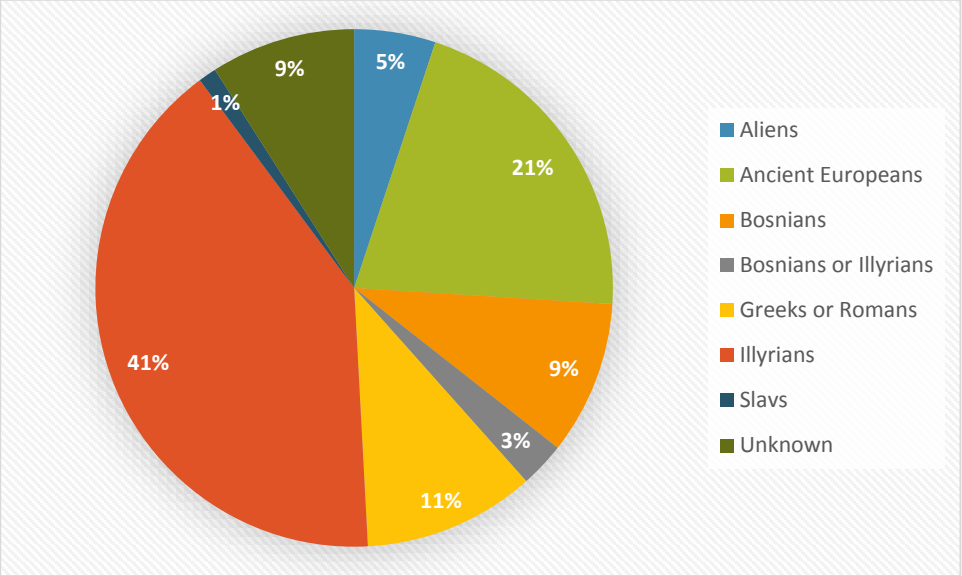

Table 8

The pyramids were as likely to be attributed to a completely unknown civilization as to Bosnians, and much more frequently were assigned to peoples to which Bosnians make no identity claims: known classical civilizations, generic "ancient Europeans", and most commonly of all the Illyrians. Although the term "Illyrian" has become politicised elsewhere

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– specifically in Albanian nationalism (Sotirović 2013) – my Bosnian informants appeared to treat it as simply a name for a mysterious race of precursors unrelated to their Slavic ancestors.

Energy

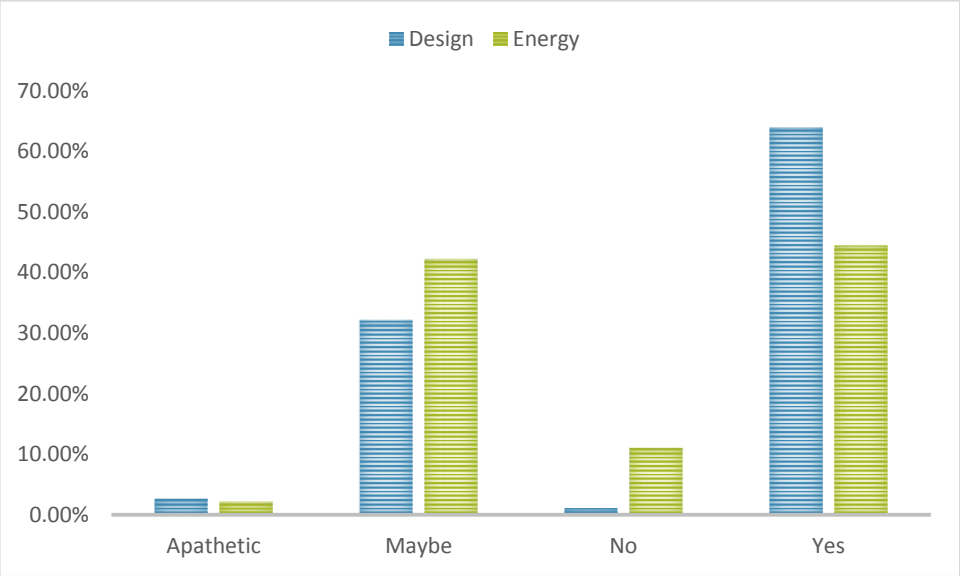

Table 9

Question 7 revealed that respondents were significantly more sceptical about "pyramid energy" than pyramids. 42% of respondents replied "Maybe" to the possibility of supernatural energies at the Visoko sites, 44% replied "Yes" and 11% "No". Again, men and women both adhered tightly to the pattern, neither deviating from the average by more than 2%. Religiosity was again also a very weak indicator of belief, which is doubly surprising as from one perspective it might be expected to make respondents more open to supernatural concepts (as well as bolstering ethnic identity), on the other it might be expected to discourage them as blasphemous.

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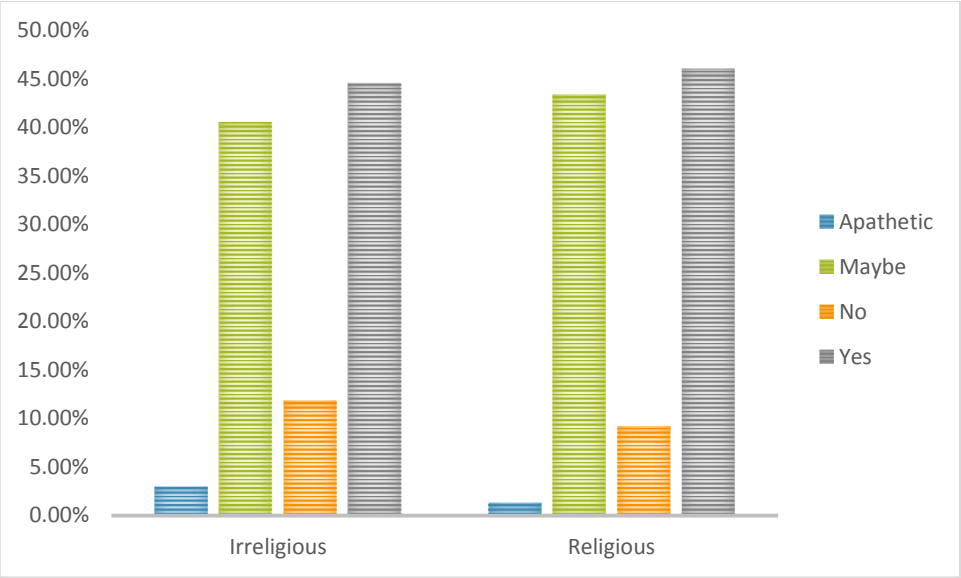

Table 10

This again renders political and religious interpretations of the phenomenon problematic. Also, the 20% drop in affirmative answers compared with Question 6 and the high proportion of "Maybe" answers to both questions shows that the entire discourse is not simply accepted without question, making it difficult to reduce the phenomenon to "mania".

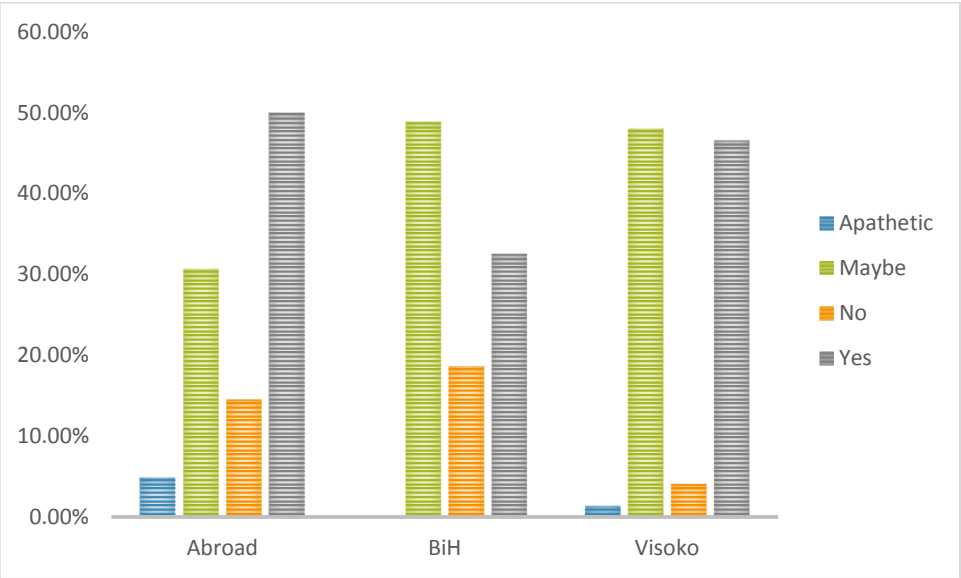

Table 11

As can be seen above, those planning to remain in Bosnia and Herzegovina but move outside Visoko showed themselves to be the most sceptical group (even more so than with Question 6), with the lowest rank in Question 7 for "Yes" (33%) and the highest for "No"

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(19%). A tentative explanation for this trend might be a greater tendency towards critical thinking – considering options outside the hometown but also ruling out less practical ventures abroad. It might also derive from relationships with more sceptical contacts in Sarajevo and other parts of the country, though it cannot be taken for granted than Bosnians outside Visoko are less credulous without a wider survey.

Endorsement of the Project

An overwhelming 92% responded "Yes" to question 9, endorsing the continuation of the pyramid project. 5% said "Maybe", and 3% were apathetic – somewhat remarkably, not a single respondent in this sample replied "No". Those in the "Yes" category gave their reasons as follows:

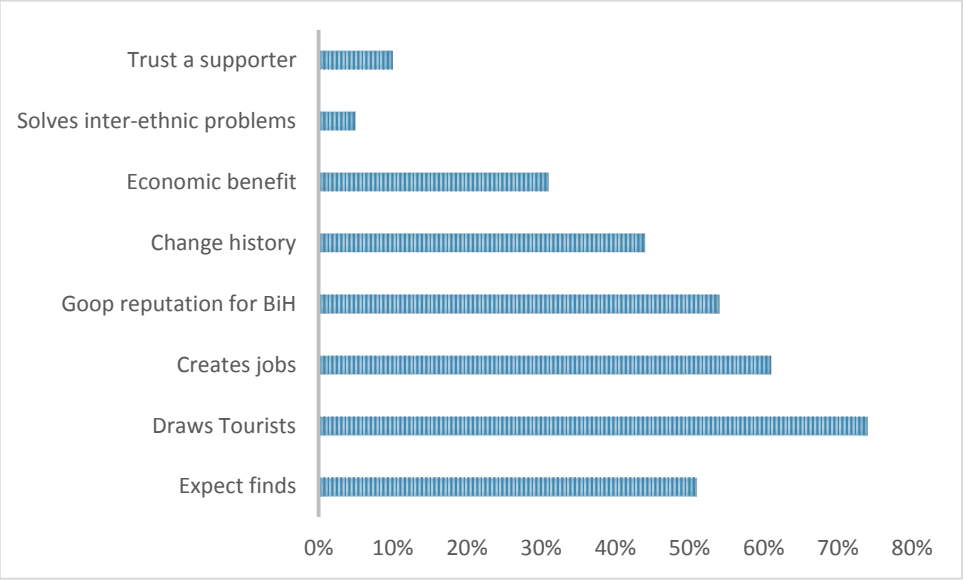

Table 12

Economic motivators feature prominently, but are mostly accompanied by an expectation of archaeological finds or notions of changes to the historical narrative and Bosnia's place within it.

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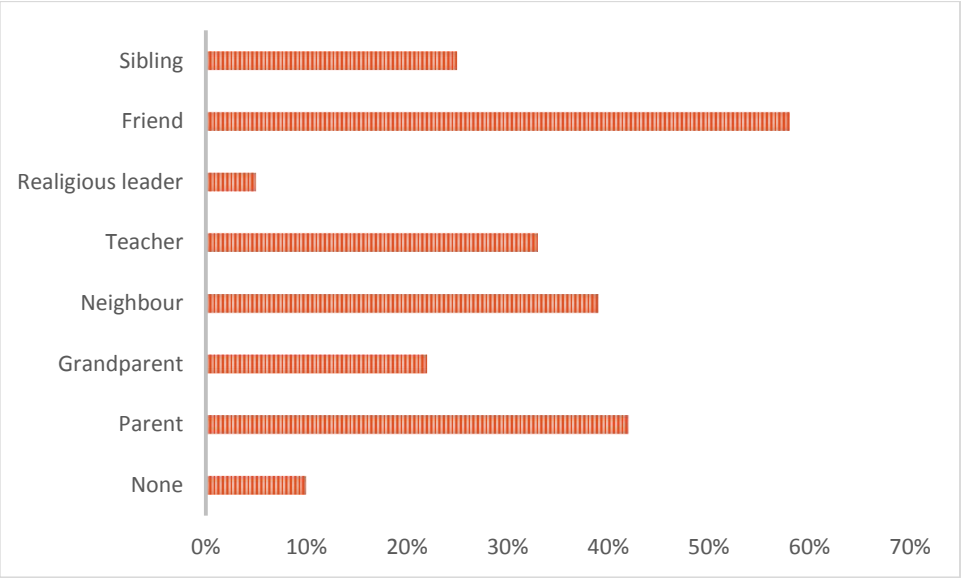

Table 13

Only 10% of respondents did not have a family member or acquaintance whom they characterised as supporting the pyramid project. 42% noted support from one or both parents, 22% from a grandparent and 33% from a teacher. Religious leaders seem to be unenthusiastic.

Findings

In all, the results of my surveys and interviews reveal strong support for the pyramid project among local people, with the unconvinced reluctant to decisively oppose it. Although the economic potential of the pyramids is clearly a major motivator for support, it was rare for respondents to cite this as their sole reason, nor did material attachment to Visoko correlate with support. The more cautious approach to energy and the reasoning that relatively balanced scientific authorities are in conflict show that local people do not indiscriminately endorse the project, making it difficult to generalize them as "pyramidiots". Neither is any correlation with a more religious personality revealed.

An ethnic claim to the pyramids is not ruled out as a factor, but it appears to be seriously undermined as a motivator in the great majority of the local population, who do not associate the pyramid builders with Bosnians. On the contrary I find that the pyramids fit more as a strategy of resistance to ethnicization. This claim may be challenged in Question 9a,

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where few respondents replied that the pyramids served as a way to solve ethnic tension. In hindsight I would argue that the phrase is too reactive – Bosnians would be equally unlikely to agree that their stories of "politika" and "pošteni ljudi" in Kolind's ethnography (2007) were designed for political rapprochement. At the discursive level of consciousness, the explicit statement that the pyramids solve ethnic issues might be perceived as too political a claim, detracting from their perceived intrinsic value.

In addition, I find that the wider trend in the interviews and survey data above – and in the greater Bosnian discourse as exemplified in the protests mentioned in Chapter 4 – speaks of a rejection of the ethnic topic. Indeed, the principle of inclusion and the rejection of divisive identity structures is even visibly aspired to in the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Eschewing the old pan-Slavic red, white and blue (retained by Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, and also used by Russia) the new standard uses yellow and blue, the colours of an inclusive and forward looking Europe. Osmanagić attaches himself to this holistic version of nationalism visually as well as verbally - the Foundation's logo is a pyramid merged with the yellow triangle of the national flag (Pruitt 2007:33).

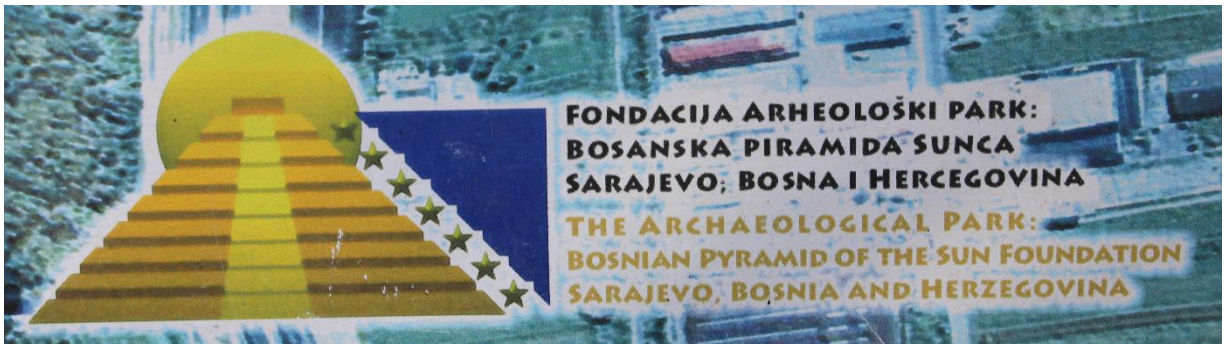

Figure 3. The Foundation Logo

The appeal to a purer time before over-structuration already exists in the country as nostalgia for the Yugoslav era, visible in the results of the adult survey as mentioned in Chapter 2, and in conversations with older individuals such as Lejla and Danica. The pyramids perhaps channel this structural nostalgia even more effectively by providing a

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visible symbol and ongoing spur to action. Although the locals do not share with the internationals the same penchant for New Ageism, the communitas ethic expressed in the local structural nostalgia and resistance to ethnicization represents a common theme. The structures opposed here are economic and political stratification.

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Chapter 8. Conclusion

While drinking a coffee in a newly refurbished Visoko café, a mural on the wall caught my eye. In the image prefacing this thesis (Figure 1) a lone hero walks with pyramids at his back. I was immediately reminded of Turner's allusion to the "stranger" of the spaghetti Western (1969:369), a nameless manifestation of communitas come to free society from structural bondage. In researching the Visoko Complex, a space where the romantic and the intuitive predominate over the rational and the empirical, it is perhaps apt that I came with a gut feeling of my own. In the preceding chapters I have used this intuitively appealing theory of communitas in the manner of Feyerabend – as an alternate basis of inquiry intended to reveal data which might not be found or even sought out if starting from the established theory – the critique from rational scientific quarters. I find that their tripartite explanation of the phenomenon as hoax, sectarianism or fanaticism, while not unfounded or illogical, is a narrow and shallow view. Narrow because it does not engage with the entire context – leaving out the internationals – and simplistic because it jumps to conclusions and paints the phenomenon in broad strokes without deeply engaging with it. While cynicism and emotion may be factors in the Visoko Complex, I have argued that its broad base of support comes from its appeal to communitas, a pre-discursive reaction against the inhabited transcendental social order. This principle can be used to explain the initial emergence of the phenomenon with Semir Osmanagić's Foundation, and its resonance with both an international New Age audience (against cultural and epistemological structures) and a structurally nostalgic host community (against economic and political structures). The Visoko Complex therefore arguably possesses social value: in its practical functions for its producers, in the implicit social and epistemological commentary it may provide, and in its potential role as metaphor in understanding other plays of structure and anti-structure. Another consequence of the communitas hypothesis is that the pyramid phenomenon may continue so long as its negative

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structured environment is not ameliorated, or so long as no more efficient channels for communitas are found.

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