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Modalities of the sacrosphere in a semiotactic study of wayside shrines

The presentation tackles the topic of intercultural visual communication in the sacrosphere. The term 'sacrosphere' is modelled on Lotman's (1992) concept of the semiosphere, which, like the biosphere, enables the cultural life of a human being. The sacrosphere is understood here as the part of the semiosphere relating to the religious experience of an individual. I argue that to a large extent, signs and cultural phenomena in general undergo processes which can be captured by analytical procedures devised for studying sound changes and sound occurrence restrictions. I propose to name this perspective, couched within a larger meta-paradigm of linguistic semiotics (e.g. Wąsik 2014), 'semiotactics'. The term, first presented during the PLM conference in 2009, is modelled on the perspective called 'phonotactics': a branch of phonology investigating the restrictions on and the possibilities of phoneme combinations in languages (cf. e.g. Dziubalska-Kończyk– Zielińska 2011). In this sense, semiotactics denotes a branch of semiology investigating co-occurrence restrictions amongst signs and, in a larger sense, co-occurrences amongst postulated sign constituents (see e.g. Haładewicz-Grzelak 2012, 2014).

The presentation is part of a larger semiotic study on the dynamic nature of the *sacrum* and *profanum* dimensions in culture. The study draws on digital documentation of wayside shrines and religious markers on churches collected by the author in various European countries and in Turkey (2009-2015). Treating the collected visual material as religious discourse, the analysis traces the structuring, markedness, co-occurrence restrictions and implicational preferences of semiotic distribution of some religious markers across cultures. In the first part of the talk I will present a proposed structuring of the sacrosphere into three modalities. Then I will analyze permutations of the base form, textuality, underspecification and propose linguistic interpretations in terms of binary and privative primes.

In the adopted perspective, wayside shrines in Poland are analytically interpreted as a recessive sign (the existing ones are not eliminated, although new ones are hardly ever erected), while the same marker in e.g. Greece is preferentially a productive sign, additionally possessing [+locus] [-active] feature. I also consider several alternative analytical procedures. The first, still within the binarity perspective, consists of proposing a feature [vacuus], which would result in the compilation [-active][-vacuus] [-mobile] in Poland and e.g. Slovakia; in Broumovsko region:

[-active][+vacuus] [- mobile]; in Greece: [+active][+vacuus][+mobilus]. In terms of recently popular privative terminology (instead of binarity), we can postulate e.g. *locativity* (L) as a privative feature, which will be missing in for example, the Greek sacrosphere. The latter analytical procedure also involves proposing the feature [operandi]. In the privative analysis we would thus obtain the following representations: Poland (L, O), Greece (A, O), Broumovsko (L). The third proposed procedure sets off not from activities but from processes.



Fig. 1. Sample tokens from the collected corpus. (left) Czech Republic (Broumovsko region, 18th century). Middle: Greece. Right : the façade of a contemporary wayside shrine dedicated to St. Nicholas, Croatia. Source: Author.



Fig. 2 An orthodox church in Montenegro as a case in underspecification of the form of the cross in that region.

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