



The Ritual Year WG Autumn 2020 Seasonal Webinar

15 October 2020, 13.00-15.00 GMT, via MS Teams

Moderators:

Irina Sedakova, Chair, RY WG · Mare Kõiva



Emily Lyle

University of Edinburgh

Founder & Honorary Chair, RY WG

A spark of hope: Needfire as a response to crisis

The use of newly created fire marks a fresh beginning and it occurs calendrically before a new season, a new year, or a new era, one striking case being at the Aztec transition between 52-year cycles. In Europe, it was condemned by the Christian churches in the secular context but most of the churches incorporated it in the symbolism of Easter and Lévi-Strauss has explored the contrasts of darkness and noise as opposed to the light and harmonious sound that celebrated the Resurrection. The fact that people believed in its magical power to heal through the establishment of a new era is shown by its being considered the appropriate response to the life-threatening crisis of cattle disease which was met at the level of the total community.

Earth day: Against the silent spring

The liberalization of calendar anniversaries gave rise to feasts that focus on human-environmental relations and draw attention to critical environmental issues. On April 22, 1970, 20 million people, 10% of the U.S. population, gathered for the Earth Day to protect our planet from the silent spring and to put an end to negligent attitude to the environment. This is the largest grassroots protest ever, the main features of which have remained the same to this day: cleaning up plastic and rubbish, focusing on protecting indigenous culture, taking action against the planet becoming a desert, and so on.

The Earth Day is celebrated in 193 countries and includes folklore festivals, local food demonstrations and other features that belong to the anniversaries of the Ritual Year. Should the Earth Day be one of the anniversaries of the ritual year and why? Which are its global messages and how is it celebrated in various countries (Italy, Estonia, etc.)



Mare Kõiva

Centre of Excellence in
Estonian Studies, Tartu

Member, RY WG



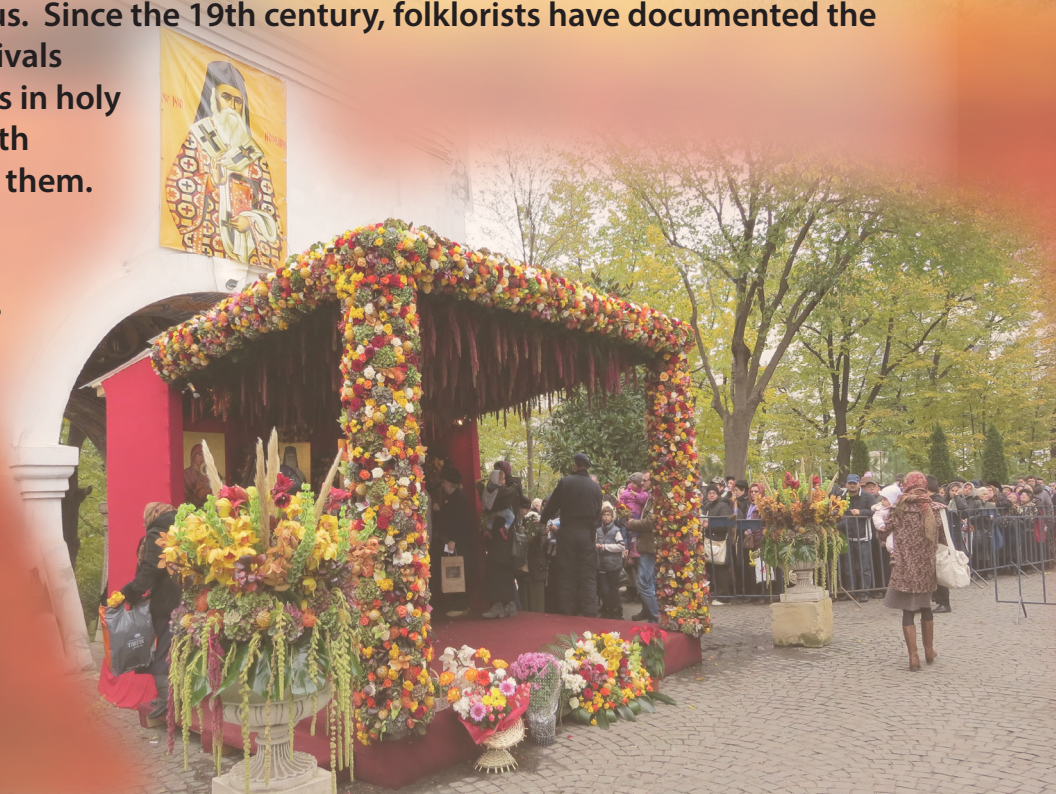
Laurent S. Fournier

Aix-Marseille University

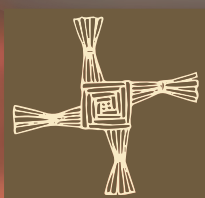
co-Chair, RY WG

Holy healers in Provence (France): From folklore to anthropology

In Provence as well as in other parts of Mediterranean Europe, numerous Catholic Saints are considered as holy healers and the people ask them to cure them of certain health problems and diseases. Asking a Saint for intercession is part of the popular religion but it has often been frowned upon by the Church who considers it as irrational and superstitious. Since the 19th century, folklorists have documented the local cults and have interpreted them as survivals of primitive culture. In this context, the beliefs in holy healers have rapidly decreased during the 20th century, even if some festivals still remember them. In this talk I will analyze the anthropological relevance of the traditional rituals involving the holy healers and their renewed meanings in today's world.



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